

The Cosmos in the Making: Humans, Gods and Animals in Early Greek Theogonies

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Philosophy at the University Of Dublin Trinity College.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations of ancient authors and works follow those of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 4th edn. Oxford. 1999.

DK: Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, 7th edn. Diels, H. ed. with additions and Nachträge by Kranz, W. Berlin. 1954.

FGrH: Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker. Jacoby, F. et al. ed. Berlin and Leiden. 1923.

GRBS: Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies.

IG: Inscriptiones Graecae. Kirchhoff, A. et al. eds. Berlin, 1873–.

KRS: The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts. Kirk, G. S., Raven, J. E. Schofield, M. Cambridge. 1983.

LSJ: Liddell and Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, 9th edn. revised Stuart Jones, H. and McKenzie, R. Oxford. 1940.

MW: Fragmenta Hesiodica. Merkelbach, R. and West, M eds. Oxford. 1967.

OF: Orphicorum et Orphicis similium testimonia et fragmenta. Poetae Epici Graeci. Pars II. Fasc. 1. Bibliotheca Teubneriana. Bernabé, A. ed. München/Leipzig. 2004.

OF K: Orphicorum Fragmenta. Kern, O. ed. Berlin. 1922.

PCG: Poetae Comici Graeci. Kassel R. and Austin. C. Berlin. 1983–.

OH: The Orphic Hymns. Athanassakis, A. and Wolkow, B. Johns Hopkins. 2013.

SVF: Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta. von Arnim, H. ed. Leipzig. 1903–5.

ZPE: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik.

A Pomak Legend About how Man and Dog were created (Hasan Patiuvski, Petkovo, Bulgaria)

Първият човѣкъ на земята Господъ сторилъ отъ калъ тѣй, както му посочвалъ единъ ангелъ. Когато билъ сторенъ човѣкътъ, изправили го да стои правъ, ала без душа. Въ това врѣме прѣзъ това мѣсто миналъ дяволътъ и като видѣлъ човѣка, заплюлъ го. Плюнката паднала на корема и тамъ се залѣпила. Ангелътъ тогава отишълъ при Господа и му казалъ за случката. По негова заповѣдь извадили прѣстѣта от мѣстото, дѣто паднала плюнката, и останалата празнина образувала пѣпѣтъ. Ала когато сетнѣ Господъ турилъ на човѣка душа, та оживѣлъ, хвърлената прѣстъ с плюнката станала куче. Затова сега кучето толкова обича стопанина, си, па дори и тогава, когато той го бие.

God created the first man on Earth from mud, in the way an angel showed Him. When man was created, they made him stand upright, yet he had no soul. At that very moment, the Devil passed by this place and when he saw man, he spat on him. The spittle fell on his belly and got stuck there. Afterwards the angel went to God and reported what happened. Under his order, they [the angels] took the soil from the place where the spittle fell and the remaining emptiness formed the navel. However, when God later put a soul into man and brought him to life, the soil with the spittle which had been thrown away became a dog. That's why the dog now loves his master so much, even if he beats him.¹

¹Trans. Badalanova Geller (2008) modified.

Introduction

Protagoras and the Scientific Study of Man

ἀλλ', ὦ Σώκρατες, ἔφη, οὐ φθονήσω: ἀλλὰ πότερον ὑμῖν, ὡς
πρεσβύτερος νεωτέροις, μῦθον λέγων ἐπιδείξω ἢ λόγῳ διεξιελθών;

πολλοὶ οὖν αὐτῷ ὑπέλαβον τῶν παρακαθημένων
ὁποτέρως βούλοιτο οὕτως διεξιέναι.

δοκεῖ τοίνυν μοι, ἔφη, χαριέστερον εἶναι μῦθον ὑμῖν λέγειν.

‘I wouldn’t think of begrudging you an explanation, Socrates,’ he replied. ‘But would you rather that I explain by telling you a myth, as an older man to a younger audience, or by exposition in a *logos*?’

Many of those who were sitting responded that he should proceed in whichever way he wished.

I think then, that it would be more pleasant,’ he said, ‘if I told you a myth.’¹

Protagoras 320c.

These are the words of the great Sophist, Protagoras. Arriving in Athens, Protagoras finds himself in a heated debate with Socrates on whether or not virtue can be taught. Yet rather than defend himself by way of a λόγος, or an argumentative demonstration, standing amidst the intellectual elite with a voice like Orpheus (315a), he tells a cosmology narrating the birth of mankind, animals and their struggle to survive in an unforgiving world.² The narrative begins with nameless gods moulding mortal creatures out of a mixture of fire and earth. These animals are difficult to imagine and lacking any distinguishing features, they appear as homogenous beings in potential. Having finished their work, the unnamed gods recede, leaving the task of differentiation to the Titans, Prometheus (‘Forethought’) and Epimetheus (‘Afterthought’). Epimetheus sets to providing each animal with the necessary skills for survival. To some creatures he gives strength, to others speed and so on, ensuring that each is provided with a ‘nature’ (φύσις) to be able to protect themselves. However, when it comes to humanity, Epimetheus realises that he has squandered his resources and left man a being in potential, naked, unshod, unbedded, unarmed. When Prometheus discovers Epimetheus’ fault he is furious. Wishing to help mankind and correct the error, he steals the arts and fire from the Olympian gods. Now armed with the divine spark of cultural know-how man establishes

¹ Trans. Lombardo and Bell (1997) modified.

² On the history of the Greek terms λόγος and μῦθος see Lincoln (1999).

(ἐνόμισεν) the worship of the gods, their altars and divine statues, begins speaking, and invents all the necessary attributes he lacks by nature. Despite these new-found skills, mankind still lacks justice and is unable to live in communities. Zeus, afraid that mankind will destroy itself once and for all, presents him with a final gift, ‘justice’ (δίκη) and ‘reverence/shame’ (αἰδώς), which he gives to all alike and prescribes the death penalty for those who fail to obey (320c-322e).

Protagoras’ myth was both familiar and strange to his listeners, a tale where traditional ideas such as the theft of fire were juxtaposed with contemporary politics and a teleological cosmic design.³ Despite these innovative elements, Protagoras does not claim to be inventing a new tradition but considers his views part of an illustrious lineage of Sophists including Hesiod, Homer and Orpheus (315a). Whether Hesiod and Orpheus considered themselves to be Sophists is doubtful, but there are clear continuities between Protagoras’ cosmology and those of the early poets. In Hesiod’s *Theogony*, the Titan, Prometheus, part human benefactor, part trickster, was also a god closely associated with defining man’s cosmic position. Hesiod’s myth takes place in Mekone, where the Titan, Prometheus, and Zeus negotiate mankind’s destiny through the apportionment of sacrificial meat. Prometheus attempts to trick Zeus with deceptive shares and as a result mankind is punished. Following this act, Prometheus steals fire and gives it to mortals. Zeus, however, punishes this second act of deceit through the creation of woman (*Theog.* 535-616). The Orphics told another version of this myth, describing how the Titans (Prometheus is not specified) gather together and instead of an animal, sacrifice the god, Dionysus. Zeus in retribution strikes them with a lightning bolt and from their ashes, mankind is born. Although there are many differences between these myths, Hesiod, Orpheus and Protagoras all focus on the struggle between the Titans and the Olympians and humanity’s ontological standing amongst the gods and animals.⁴ These are more than variant details. The key argument of this thesis is that Hesiod, Orpheus and Protagoras are using this similar material to describe very different worlds. In his influential study of Hesiod’s Promethean myth, Vernant argues that man is part of a hierarchal chain above the animals and below the superior gods.⁵ The Orphic myth offers a similar triadic hierarchy of being. However, rather than separating the individual links, the ontological boundaries are far more permeable. Man is born from divine ashes and retains a divine

³ McNeil (1986) 316 discusses Anaxagorean and Empedoclean influences and Betegh (2009) 93 discusses Platonic teleology. Fire and earth (320d) are also present in Plato’s *Timaeus* where the demiurge fashions the universe out of fire, earth, water and air (32b-c). Parmenides’ cosmology combines light and dark which Aristotle (*Ph.* 188a) refers to as ‘hot and cold, or fire and earth.’

⁴ On the details and reconstruction of the Orphic myth see Chapter Four.

⁵ See Vernant (1980). See also Lloyd (2012) 8-31.

element within himself. Indeed, in Orphic thought, even animals are considered to be part of a single continuous divine whole. Protagoras' view presents another important configuration of the ontological furniture; rather than describe a continuous realm or a hierarchal chain, his Promethean tale is framed in terms of a struggle between a 'nature' (φύσις) shared with animals and a divine spark 'custom' (νόμος) which raises mankind above his bestial nature. During the fifth century Protagoras' myth was one amongst many and there was little indication that it would ever surpass its cosmological competitors. However, for the West, Protagoras' myth and its unique configuration of animals, gods and men was to become the dominant ontological framework and prism through which the world at large was understood. Although, I will question the universality of this myth, before discussing alternative cosmological possibilities, it is first necessary to explore the appeal of Protagoras' narrative.

Nature, Culture and Supernature in Sophistic Thought

Protagoras' cosmos was based on the dichotomy between νόμος ('custom') and φύσις ('nature'). In sophistic thought φύσις reflects the raw material and dispositions which all mortal beings, man and animal alike, share. Νόμος reflects the human difference, the additional element which differentiates humans from animals and Greeks from savages.⁶ As Protagoras later points out in Plato's dialogue, even the most wicked man 'reared by human customs' (ἐν νόμοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις τεθραμμένων) would appear a saint compared to a those living in the state of nature (327e-d):

οὕτως οἶου καὶ νῦν, ὅστις σοι ἀδικώτατος φαίνεται ἄνθρωπος τῶν ἐν νόμοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις τε θραμμένων, δίκαιον αὐτὸν εἶναι καὶ δημιουργὸν τούτου τοῦ πράγματος, εἰ δέοι αὐτὸν κρίνεσθαι πρὸς ἀνθρώπους οἷς μήτε παιδεία ἐστὶν μήτε δικαστήρια μήτε νόμοι μηδὲ ἀνάγκη μηδεμία διὰ παντὸς ἀναγκάζουσα ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, ἀλλ' εἰεν ἄγριοί τινες οἰοίμην οὓς πέρυσιν Φερεκράτης ὁ ποιητὴς ἐδίδαξεν ἐπὶ Ληναίῳ.

likewise in the present case you must regard any man who appears to you the most unjust person ever reared among human laws and society as a just man and a craftsman of justice, if

⁶ As de Romilly (1992) puts it, 'there exists on the one hand the domain of nature, on the other the artificial rules which are imposed by human beings and which run contrary to the state of nature' (114). In sophistic thought these terms are often strongly polarised. Elsewhere in the dialogue Hippias states this view in crystalline terms (337e-d):

οἱ παρόντες, ἡγοῦμαι ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς συγγενεῖς τε καὶ οἰκείους καὶ πολίτας ἅπαντας εἶναι φύσει, οὐ νόμῳ: τὸ γὰρ ὅμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ φύσει συγγενές ἐστίν, ὁ δὲ νόμος, τύραννος ὢν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, πολλὰ παρὰ τὴν φύσιν βιάζεται.

'Those who are here present, I regard you as kin and family and fellow-citizens by nature, not by convention: for like is akin to like by nature, whereas convention, despot of mankind, often constrains us against nature.' Trans. Lamb (1967) modified. The phrase 'fellow citizens by nature' may sound paradoxical, but as it encompasses Athenians and foreigners such as Protagoras, it is likely intended as reference to a more abstract citizenship of the world, to be contrasted with the limitations of legal citizenship. The phrase echoes the words of the fifth century sophist Antiphon (DK 87 B 44 b) and probably should be read in the same way.

he had to stand comparison with people who lacked education and law courts and laws and any constant compulsion to the pursuit of virtue, but were a kind of wild folk such as Pherecrates the poet brought on the scene at last year's Lenaeanum.⁷

This is part of his later philosophical discussion, but a similar opposition appears in the myth in terms of the distinction between animals who by nature are equipped to protect themselves (320e) and man as a dualistic being who ‘partakes of a divine share’ (θείας μετέσχε μοίρας) through which he acknowledges (νομίζω) the gods and builds their altars. For Protagoras it is the presence of this divine spark or νόμος which allows man to flourish as a cultural being and create all that he lacks by nature (322a). Intelligence without morality, however, is dangerous and Protagoras insists that mankind also needs ‘justice’ (δίκη) and ‘reverence/shame’ (αἰδώς) to complement human skill and socially flourish.

Protagoras’ myth appears as part of a fictional dialogue by Plato, but is often assumed to reflect a genuine Protagorean work.⁸ Distinguishing Plato’s contribution from Protagoras’ is now impossible, yet given its central themes and sophistic content it is certainly something that the historical Protagoras could have said. A parallel sophistic example of the transition from nature to culture is preserved in the fragments of the fifth century philosopher, Prodicus. Prodicus, however, offers an innovative twist on the place of the gods in society. In Protagoras’ myth, at least as Plato tells it, the gods create culture. It is a gift bestowed on men by Prometheus and later Zeus. Prodicus inverts this position and argues that it is precisely culture that creates the gods. For Prodicus (DK 85 B 5) the immortal gods were fabricated by men with the introduction of cultural practices and the deification of the skills and resources considered useful to the survival of the human race.⁹ If, for Prodicus, the gods were useful fictions, others, such as the disputed writer of the tragic drama *Sisyphus* (DK 88 B 25), took a more cynical view of the gods. Like Protagoras and Prodicus’ myths, the *Sisyphus* fragment starts by describing an impoverished vision of humanity and how the discovery of the gods

⁷ Trans. Lamb (1967).

⁸ The common consensus remains that the core details of the myth are genuinely Protagorean. Lampert (2010) 50 n. 54; Morgan (2000) 132; Guthrie (1971) 63; De Romilly (1992) 162. The text may be mentioned by Diogenes Laertius (9.55) who refers to a work by Protagoras Περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως. Guthrie (1971) 64 translates this as *On the Original State of Man*. Similar views of Prometheus as a culture bringer also occupied a pivotal role in tragedies such as Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* (436-506) and the *Homeric Hymn to Hephaestus* which describe Prometheus, and sometimes Hephaestus, as a defiant benefactor who help differentiate man from the animals through cultural gifts. One of the earliest versions of this myth could have been associated with the atomist and compatriot of Protagoras, Democritus. See Cole (1967). Similar myths also appear in a number of later accounts including Diodorus (1.7-8) and Lucretius (5.925-1436) who discuss these events as a stage within wider cosmologies including the formation of the earth, and animal life. For a collection of the antiprimitivist fragments see Lovejoy and Boas [1935] (1997).

⁹ As Drozdek (2007) puts it ‘religion was considered a human invention, socially desirable and useful but of little metaphysical significance’ (109). See Drozdek (2007) 109-20. The idea in some respects goes back to the sixth century BC and Xenophanes’ (DK 21 B 16) observation that the gods of the Ethiopians and Thracians suspiciously resemble their worshippers.

helped save man from this miserable condition. However, rather than view the gods as useful beings, the gods are discussed in terms of their coercive and punishing gaze which strikes fear in the hearts of wrongdoers and dissuades them from socially harmful actions.¹⁰ Although there are significant differences in these sophistic narratives, all three agree on some central points including the view that man is a dualistic being united with animals by ‘nature’ (φύσις) and separated, for better or worse, by ‘culture’ (νόμος).¹¹ The νόμος/φύσις dichotomy in turn has important repercussions on a more general sophistic conception of the gods. For Hesiod, the gods are the pinnacle in a hierarchal chain of being. For Orpheus, the gods permeate all corners of the natural world. For Prodicus and Protagoras, whether the gods are conceived of as fictions or creators, we see the beginnings of a very different theological position. The gods are not beings integrated into the same world as everything else. They are not presences felt or seen. Rather they are entities, real or fictional, that exist above and outside the natural world. They are supernatural beings.

Protagoras’ Legacy

Although Protagoras’ myth was one among many in the ancient world, it was to have a lasting impact on the West in terms of a strict ontological division between nature, culture and supernature. The roots of this view are complex and debated.¹² Some strands can be traced to Greece and Sophists like Protagoras. Others draw on the Abrahamic religious traditions and a view of God as a deity separated from the world.¹³ This idea is most clearly associated with Augustine who in his *Confessions* (10.6) looked to the world and said:

Et quid est hoc? interrogavi terram, et dixit: non sum; et quaecumque in eadem sunt, idem confessa sunt. interrogavi mare et abyssos et reptilia animarum vivarum, et responderunt: non sumus deus tuus; quaere super nos. interrogavi auras flabiles, et inquit universus aer cum incolis suis: fallitur Anaximenes; non sum deus. interrogavi caelum, solem, lunam, stellas: neque nos sumus deus, quem quaeris, inquit.

¹⁰ *Prometheus Bound* is usually attributed to Aeschylus. *Sisyphus* is usually attested to Critias or Euripides. For a collection of the antiprimitivist fragments see Lovejoy and Boas ([1935] 1997).

¹¹ How we should view the gods in Protagoras’ myth is debated. Guthrie (1980) for example, argues that divinities such as Prometheus and Hermes should be seen as colourful additions ‘to make it more entertaining’ (266) rather than active players. This is a fair conjecture when it comes to a man who famously said (DK 80 B 4):

περὶ μὲν θεῶν οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναι οὔθ’ ὥς εἰσὶν, οὔθ’ ὥς οὐκ εἰσὶν: πολλὰ γὰρ τὰ κωλύοντα εἰδέναι, ἢ τ’ ἀδηλότης καὶ βραχύς ὢν ὁ βίος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

‘As to the gods, I have no means of knowing either that they exist or that they do not exist. For many are the obstacles that impede knowledge, both the obscurity of the question and the shortness of human life.’ Trans. Hicks (1925) modified. That the gods are ‘colourful additions’ is certainly possible yet Drozdek (2007) notes Protagoras does not deny the existences of the gods but rather ‘pronounces his inability to have definite knowledge concerning this theological issue, but he leaves open a possibility that some positive pronouncements about the gods can be made’ (109). The myth and in particular the nameless gods who create mortal life may be part of a more ambiguous theological position.

¹² See Foucault [1966] (1989); Descola (2013a); Sahlins (2008).

¹³ See Sahlins (1996).

And what is this? I asked the earth, and it answered me, "I am not He"; and whatsoever are in it confessed the same. I asked the sea and the deeps, and the living creeping things, and they answered, "We are not thy God, seek above us." I asked the moving air; and the whole air with his inhabitants answered, "Anaximenes was deceived, I am not God." I asked the heavens, sun, moon, stars, "Nor (say they) are we the God whom thou seekest."¹⁴

Although Augustine's theology is far from identical to that of the Sophists, there is a broad agreement in the idea that God(s) is something outside of the world, a transcendent or supernatural being. During the middle ages, God's separation from the world was softened by a chain of intermediary beings such as angels which facilitated a kind of continuity with lower beings.¹⁵ However, the idea of a transcendent God was there and nicely dovetailed with the scientific turn to Nature and new kind of theologising beginning in the 17th century. As Descola outlines:

what now came into existence was a notion of Nature as an autonomous ontological domain, a field of inquiry and scientific experimentation, an object to be exploited and improved; and very few thought to question this.¹⁶

One of the most influential examples of this new theology appears in the writing of Descartes, who, much like the Sophists, argued for a view of nature which encompassed the whole world including human bodies and animals. However, in his *Sixth Meditation*, he famously separated Mind from Body, describing the former as a divine substance reserved for man alone. In other words, man is an animal by nature, but also possesses a divine spark in common with a transcendental God. Descartes did not write a speculative biography on the origins of mankind, yet just ten years after his *Meditations* (1641), Hobbes published his *Leviathan* (1651) describing, in strikingly sophistic terms, his social contract:

Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man. For WARRE, consisteth not in Battell onely, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the Will to contend by Battell is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of Time, is to be considered in the nature of Warre; as it is in the nature of Weather. For as the nature of Foulle weather, lyeth not in a showre or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many dayes together: So the nature of War, consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE.

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall. In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.¹⁷

¹⁴ Pusey (1838). See Sahlins (1996) 411.

¹⁵ See Lovejoy (1936) 80.

¹⁶ Descola (2013a) 69.

¹⁷ Hobbes (1651) 1.13.

As in the Sophistic myths, the way out of this state of nature was through the development of cultural practices and a social contract amongst men. Religion also played a key role in the humanity's separation from nature. As Tuck puts it, for Hobbes, 'the sovereign should institute his religion because of its beneficial social and psychological effects, and because it was an extension of what the society already believed, and not because it was true.'¹⁸ It is not coincidental that Hobbes' vision echoes the sophistic myths.¹⁹ Hobbes was well aware of his ancient precedents and translated the first English language edition of the often sophistic history of Thucydides.²⁰ It could of course be argued that Hobbes was only one amongst many and that his negative view of human nature was to some degree counterbalanced by the writings of Rousseau and de Montaigne.²¹ Although these figures were of comparatively marginal influence,²² it should be stressed that the νόμος/φύσις dichotomy is not a specific view so much as a core and unconscious assumption which underlies many different and contrasting approaches. This is as true for the Enlightenment, as it was for ancient Greece. Protagoras' myth argues for the necessity of laws to curb an innately destructive nature, yet a number of philosophers took the opposite path and discarded the artifice of νόμος in favour of living according to Nature itself. Antiphon the Sophist (DK 87 B 44b) turned this into a noble ideal describing how cultural differences are only superficial, and by nature humanity, Greek and barbarian, is one. Some considered gods to be part of the supernatural realm, apart from nature, others that the supernatural is the creation of man. Others took a view in line with another notable Classicist, Machiavelli.²³ The sophists Callicles (Pl. *Grg.* 482d–484b) and Thrasymachus (Pl. *Resp.* 338c) argued that νόμος was for the weak and that strong natures will live according to nature. Others still embraced νομοί in all their diversity. Herodotus (3.38), somewhat like Montaigne and later many anthropologists, seemed entirely unperturbed by the plurality of cultures and adopted a multicultural attitude based on the tolerance of difference.²⁴ It is pivotal to understand that although the conclusions of these thinkers could

¹⁸ Tuck (2003) xliii.

¹⁹ For the social contract reading see Guthrie (1971) 136; Kerferd (1981) 147; De Romily (1992) 166. Although Protagoras does not call it a social contract de Romily (1992) notes 'the seed of what was, centuries later, to be known as 'the social contract' is clearly detectable in his thinking' (166). Guthrie (1971) is similar: 'The records of Protagoras do not contain the actual word 'compact,' but when the gods are removed from his parable (as in view of his agnosticism they must be), we have a picture of men perishing for lack of the art of living together in cities and by hard experience learning to act justly and respect the rights of others and so founding political communities' (136-7).

²⁰ Sahlins (2008) 87.

²¹ i.e. Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762) and Montaigne's earlier 16th century work *Of Cannibals* (1570-92).

²² On the presence of an innate selfishness in man's nature as the dominant theme in Western history see Sahlins (2008).

²³ *Discourses on Livy* (c. 1517).

²⁴ Montaigne *Of Cannibals* (1570-92).

scarcely be more different, they nonetheless share the same basic assumptions and spiritual taxonomy. Nature, whether positive or negative, is our defining essence shared with animals. Culture, positive or negative, is the variable, artificial and to some degree unreal element which sits on top. God in turn, real or fictional, is allocated a special status outside of nature in the supernatural realm. For better or worse, the Protagorean contrast between φύσις and νόμος, or more accurately their new anthropological equivalents nature and culture, set the cornerstone for modern anthropological speculation.²⁵ As Holbraad puts it, a dualistic vision was now firmly in place where ‘there exists a world, whose main property is to be single and uniform. And there exist representations of the world, whose main property is to be plural and multifarious depending on who holds them.’²⁶ In other words, the whole world was considered to be reducible to Protagoras’ myth and taxonomy of human and non-human relations. Lévi-Strauss, himself a firm advocate of a universal nature/culture dualism, even described how Protagoras’ ‘myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus could have been Brazilian!’²⁷ Lévi-Strauss was, by this stage, one amongst many and almost everyone agreed that all societies could be analysed in the same terms Protagoras and the other Sophists had set forth.

Questioning the Dichotomy

If anthropology was founded on a nature/culture distinction and an implicit theological hierarchy of animals, humans, and supernatural gods, beginning in the 80s the dichotomy came under repeated scrutiny. One of the earliest critiques was made by Strathern who argued that the Hagen of New Guinea have no concept of culture and nature.²⁸ This is not to say that the Hagen have no concept of the regularity of growth in plants, seasons, animals and people, nor that they lack classificatory systems. The Hagen, like all human societies, classify the world in complex ways. They even possess a distinction between the cultivated (*mbo*) and the wild (*rømi*) that in some respects approximates the terms nature/culture. However, these terms also show important differences to the Protagorean dichotomy. Strathern explains that ‘*rømi* in Hagen comprises neither a domain of given features in the environment, nor innate propensities in people.’²⁹ In other words, there is no idea of Nature as an independent entity, no notion of humanity as a dualistic compromise between an innate savagery and an imposed

²⁵ Descola (2013a) 74-5.

²⁶ Holbraad (2008) 34.

²⁷ Lévi-Strauss (1995) 227. I am guilty of taking his point somewhat out of context and should point out that Lévi-Strauss is referring in this case to the Amazonian concept of twinship based on opposition against what he saw as a European focus on the identity of twins.

²⁸ Strathern (1980).

²⁹ Strathern (1980) 196.

culture and no vision of spirits as supernatural beings living outside of this order.³⁰ Descola has also questioned the presence of the dichotomy among the Amazonian community, the Achuar, where rituals and speech are characteristics held by humans, gods and animals alike.³¹ This model is in many ways the very opposite of the sophistic division. For the Achuar humans and animals differ in terms of their bodies, but share a ‘common inner disposition [where] nonhumans behave as full social beings: they abide by kinship rules and ethical codes, engage in ritual activity, organize feasts, and procure their subsistence, just like humans.’³² A related view called perspectivism has been proposed by Viveiros de Castro. Perspectivism starts from the assumption that animals and spirits possess cultural traits such as speech and rituals. However, because animals differ in their physical forms these traits are not visible from the human’s perspective. Rather they exist from the animal’s point of view. Viveiros de Castro explains:

In normal conditions, humans see humans as humans, animals as animals and spirits (if they see them) as spirits; however animals (predators) and spirits see humans as animals (as prey) to the same extent that animals (as prey) see humans as spirits or as animals (predators). By the same token, animals and spirits see themselves as humans: they perceive themselves as (or become) anthropomorphic beings when they are in their own houses or villages and they experience their own bodies and characteristics in the form of culture – they see their food as human food (jaguars see blood as manioc beer, vultures see the maggots in rotting meat as grilled fish, etc.), they see their bodily attributes (fur, feathers, claws, beaks, etc.) as body decorations or cultural instruments, they see their social system as organized in the same way as human institutions are (with chiefs, shamans, ceremonies, exogamous moieties, etc.). This ‘to see as’ refers literally to percepts and not analogically to concepts, although in some cases the emphasis is placed more on the categorical rather than on the sensory aspect of the phenomenon.³³

To summarise a complex idea in very simple terms, perspectivism requires that we see the world in terms of perspectives rather than in terms of substances with fixed properties. It might help to consider how one would explain the English term brother to someone who has no such concept.³⁴ If I say that John is a brother, I will have explained very little. John does not possess any individual qualities which make him a brother, but is a brother only in relation to someone else. In a related way, perspectivism invites us to imagine that not only brothers but also everything, beer, jaguars, spirits and salmon are perspectival terms. They make sense only from the point of view of the Other. These examples may seem remote, yet alternative configurations of the nature/culture dichotomy are not limited to small societies; they are also found amidst large Empires. Lloyd and Sivin point out that until quite recently there was no word which corresponded with Nature in Chinese. Some terms such as ‘*tzu-jan*’

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Descola and Pálson (1996) 7.

³² Descola (2013a) 39.

³³ Viveiros de Castro (1998) 470.

³⁴ The term brother is not in fact universal and as Wierzbicka (2014) 36 discusses many societies do not have words for brothers or sisters but may use words referring to older or younger siblings.

have been often translated as ‘nature’ but as Lloyd and Sivin note ‘*tzu-jan*, meant simply “something that exists or is the case (*jan*) without something else causing it (*tzu*).”³⁵ This in turn is related to a very different configuration of relations between gods, animals and humans. As Sterckx argues ‘the classic Chinese perception of the world did not insist on clear categorical or ontological boundaries between animals, human beings, and other creatures such as ghosts and spirits’ rather these beings ‘were viewed as part of an organic whole in which the mutual relationship among the species were characterized as contingent, continuous, and interdependent.’³⁶ China is by no means alone; the use of the opposition nature, culture and supernature has also been questioned in relation to Japan and India.³⁷ In short, the dichotomy once found everywhere has become increasingly idiosyncratic. Protagoras’ myth, of course, is a clear testament to a similar position in fifth-century Greece and we should not exclude that other non-Western societies may have developed analogous positions. However, Protagoras’ view was of marginal significance in Greece and even here it has a history. Indeed Lloyd argues that in Homer and Hesiod there was ‘no overarching concept or category that picks out the domain of nature as such - as opposed either to ‘culture’ or to the ‘supernatural.’³⁸

The lack of a nature and culture divide in many societies and early Greece is not, of course, an argument that the dichotomy should be abandoned. Clearly the West, by isolating a natural realm, has made great advancements in technology and science. It could also be argued that the societies mentioned, despite their own classification systems, are still analysable in terms of a nature/culture divide. As Holbraad points out:

the ontological significance of Marilyn Strathern’s claim that the distinction between nature and culture has little purchase in Mount Hagen is easily nullified by saying that the culture of Mount Hageners is one in which nature and culture are not distinguished.³⁹

In other words, despite their own classificatory systems and animal and spiritual taxonomies, these ideas should nevertheless be viewed as cultural representations, which continue to sit on top of a common natural basis. This view is pervasive and a number of prominent studies argue that humanity is basically the same everywhere, that genetic factors outweigh cultural

³⁵ Lloyd and Sivin (2002) 200. Another potential contender Tao, sometimes translated as the Way, tended to encompass natural and cultural aspects and in this respect is closer to Heraclitus’ understanding of a divine νόμος. On the comparison with Heraclitus, albeit in terms of the phases see Lloyd (2012) 23. The Tao has also frequently elicited comparisons with Heraclitus’ divine Logos. See Yu (2015).

³⁶ Sterckx (2002) 5.

³⁷ Descola (2013a) 28-9.

³⁸ Lloyd (2000) 22. For a discussion on the emergence of the ideas of nature and culture in Greece, see Appendix Two.

³⁹ Holbraad (2008) 36.

factors; that the architecture of the mind was established in the Pleistocene;⁴⁰ that all languages share the same universal grammar;⁴¹ that all people have the same basic emotions etc.⁴² In short, there is a major strand in Western thought that argues that cultural difference is superficial and whatever the Hagen, Hesiod or anyone else says does not change this basic fact. There are many possible responses to such an insistence. For a start, even if all human cognition were reducible to a combination of a common nature and cultural variation, this universality should not be mistaken as an expression of the natives' own views. In this respect, the anthropologist's task would remain the attempt to record and analyse the native's point of view, a task which would only be hindered by approaching the society in question with a ready-made dichotomy. This is especially the case with the gods. I noted earlier that Abrahamic religions and in particular the view of God as expressed by Augustine facilitated the spread of naturalism in the West. The West may not be alone in viewing the god(s) as supernatural beings, but what about figures such as Anaximenes who, according to Augustine, did not rigidly separate god(s) from the natural world (*Conf.* 10.6). If we assume that god(s) are cultural posits existing outside of nature can we even comprehend this idea? Can we make sense of a world where rivers, abstract qualities like Love, and even Nature are gods?⁴³

Descola and the Ontological Turn

Taking the natives seriously is not simply a methodological issue. Lévi-Strauss describes how 'every civilization tends to overestimate the objective nature of its own thought and this tendency is never absent.'⁴⁴ Recognizing the limitations of our own classificatory systems is far from a call to believe everything the native says. It is an acknowledgment that every society combines empirical and classificatory knowledge and every society makes mistakes.

⁴⁰ Cosmides and Tooby (1992).

⁴¹ Pinker (1994).

⁴² Ekman (1999).

⁴³ See *Orphic Hymn* 10. When we face such radically different ideas the issue becomes more a problem of translation than belief. As Viveiros de Castro (2015) describes it: 'When told by his indigenous interlocutors (under conditions that must always be specified) that peccaries are humans, the anthropologist should ask herself or himself, not whether or not 'he believes' that they are, but rather what such an idea could show him about indigenous notions of humanity and 'peccarity.'" (32). As Viveiros de Castro outlines, we should not assume that the native is mistakenly saying that peccaries are humans as we understand the terms. Rather, the native is using the terms peccaries and humans in a way we do not understand and therefore the onus is on us, if we wish to enter into meaningful dialogue, to reposition our ideas about men and peccaries. The Greek gods present us with an identical situation. It is very easy to state that they are cultural posits, yet I argue that we are not even in a position to believe or doubt, before we come to terms with what the Greeks actually mean when they speak about the gods and how they envision their relations with the rest of the world. The end result of such an exploration may still be doubt and I would be surprised if I convince anyone that humans are peccaries or that rivers are gods. Nevertheless, this doubt is very different from the original dismissal of gods as mere cultural posits or even supernatural beings and if I can undermine one idea, it is that such a thing as a mere cultural posit exists at all.

⁴⁴ Lévi-Strauss (1966) 3.

The West is no exception. Despite its advances in many areas, there is a growing consensus that the nature/culture dichotomy is neither methodologically nor cognitively useful when it comes to the study of man. Indeed many of the experiments mentioned above, which purport to show the universality of cognitive processes, have focused exclusively on Euro-Americans and simply assumed the validity of their observations elsewhere.⁴⁵ Moreover, despite the popularity of universalist positions, there are very few universals which are uncontroversial in developmental studies. Genes, for example, do not exist in a one to one relationship with particular social traits but form one strand in much more complex biological and social processes.⁴⁶ The idea of the universal mind based on specialised modules established during the Pleistocene is currently being re-evaluated in terms of the plasticity of the mind.⁴⁷ The related Chomskian linguistics is increasingly being rejected as Neo-Whorfian experiments marshal powerful evidence for the influence of different languages on thought in areas as diverse as space, colour and time.⁴⁸ Not only spatial thought but emotions also appear to vary across different cultures.⁴⁹ In his recent survey of the nature/nurture debates Prinz summarises:

If we want to understand human behaviors, it is important to remember that human capacities and motivations are biologically constrained. But, when we focus on those biological constraints, we miss out on the headline news. What makes our species most interesting is that we exhibit astonishing variations.⁵⁰

The presence of cognitive variation challenges the idea that all societies live in the same world, see the same colours, feel the same emotions or worship the same gods. At the same time we must be equally cautious in avoiding the other extreme and adopting a relativist position.⁵¹ I stress that the presence of diversity does not mean the end of universals. Indeed, in almost all of the above mentioned studies diversity appears within limitations. Colours and emotions, for example, show a good deal of nuance and even the occasional untranslatable term.⁵² This should not, however, distract us from the regularity and near overlaps colour terms show elsewhere.⁵³ The same appears to be true of spatial awareness. Although Levinson discusses some incredible examples of the influence language can have on thought, his

⁴⁵ Henrich et al (2010) describe how developmental psychologists have repeatedly focused on WEIRD people, that is on white, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic groups.

⁴⁶ See Prinz (2012) 17-52.

⁴⁷ Everett (2016) 23-61.

⁴⁸ Evans and Levinson (2010). For a survey of Neo-Whorfian effects see Everett (2013).

⁴⁹ Feldman Barrett (2017).

⁵⁰ Prinz (2012) 4. See in addition Lloyd (2007) and Sahlin (2008).

⁵¹ The popular literature on the subject is often presented in extreme terms. Take, for example, the titles of two recent works for and against the idea of linguistic relativity, McWhorter's *The Language Hoax* (2014), against the motion and Evans *The Language Myth* (2014), for the motion.

⁵² For example, the Ilongot term *liget* which describes a violent anger, feelings of competition and solidarity and desire to avenge. It is not considered to be negative but a positive force. See Rosaldo (1980).

⁵³ For a survey of these debates see Lloyd (2009) 9-23 on colour perception and 58-86 on the emotions.

findings suggest limited variability and the repeated presence of three or so key means of orientation found in different parts of the world.⁵⁴ When it comes to complex social phenomena such as languages, social organization and spiritual taxonomies we understandably face much greater variation. Yet even here we find surprising similarities among historically unrelated societies. The pantheons of the Maori and the Greeks as Schrempf points out show a number of striking resemblances.⁵⁵ Likewise Viveiros de Castro's seemingly idiosyncratic Amazonian perspectivism is surprisingly widespread and present, for example, among the Chewong of the Malay Peninsula.⁵⁶ In other words, variation even in respect to cultural practices is not unlimited. This is not really surprising and despite the often fierce debates, if pushed, most anthropologists, psychologists and neurologists, would probably agree that human cognition can no longer be neatly divided into a natural biological basis and an isolatable cultural veneer, but should be understood in terms of a continuity where cognitive universals and learned activities continuously interact and shape each other.⁵⁷ Despite this there is very little agreement on the precise mechanism of such interactions and given our current knowledge of human cognition, any discussion will remain hypothetical. I would like, however, to discuss one innovative attempt in more detail, Descola's influential work *Beyond Nature and Culture* and an idea he calls 'relative universalism'.⁵⁸

Relative universalism for Descola is an attempt to navigate a middle ground between cognitive universals and the diversity of views and configurations of humans and non-humans found in the ethnographic record. His starting point is the simple question of why certain societies which have no historical connections develop similar institutions and lack others? Why do the ancient Greeks and pre-Christian Hawaiians, for example, sacrifice to highly structured pantheons of gods, whereas animist societies, like the Achuar, lack rigidly hierarchal pantheons and sacrifice altogether? Victorian anthropologists and modern

⁵⁴ Levinson (2003) The most impressive example appears among societies such Guugu Yimithir, North Queensland and Tzeltal, Los Altos, Mexico. These languages lack terms for left and right and requires the use of cardinal directions. Levinson (225-45) discusses how during trials Tzeltal speakers have been shown to be able to consistently navigate themselves in terms of cardinal directions even in unfamiliar territory.

⁵⁵ Schrempf (1992).

⁵⁶ See Howell (2014). Anthropologists have for long while turned away from comparativism or what Leach (1961) called 'butterfly collecting'. This may have been an appropriate term for much of the comparativism undertaken at the time; however, by abandoning comparativism altogether, anthropologists arguably opened unchallenged space for evolutionary models of social development to flourish.

⁵⁷ Compare for example the very different approaches offered by Ingold (2011), Lloyd (2007) and Bloch (2012).

⁵⁸ According to Descola (2013a) 'relative universalism takes as its starting point...the relations of continuity and discontinuity, identity and difference, resemblance and dissimilarity that humans everywhere establish between existing beings, using the tools that they have inherited from their phylogenesis: a body, an intentionality, an aptitude for discerning differential gaps, an ability to weave with any human or nonhuman relations of attachment or antagonism, domination or dependence, exchange or appropriation, subjectivization or objectivization' (305).

adherents of the Axial Age have argued that these represent stages of cultural development, which are passed through on the path to modernity.⁵⁹ Most anthropologists ignore the question altogether. Descola does away with the ethnocentric idea of stages of development and instead sees these similarities in terms of spontaneous developments due to similar cognitive schemas or what he calls ontologies. His cognitive assumptions are founded upon what he considers a universal duality based on a particular configuration of physicality and interiority.⁶⁰ These terms are deliberately general as to incorporate a wide range of conceptions, but for simplicity's sake one would not go far wrong in understanding them in terms of body and soul. This body/soul dualism he argues is not only well supported by developmental studies,⁶¹ but, more importantly, is repeatedly adhered to in the languages and cultural practices of humans from all corners of the world and Descola argues that 'every human perceives himself or herself as a unit that is a mixture of interiority and physicality.'⁶² If this dualism is universal, Descola's relativism comes into play with human/non-human relations. Some societies classify their relations with non human-beings in terms of shared physicalities but different interiorities. The various combinations of physicality and interiority result in four possible schemas or ontologies which he calls animism, analogism, naturalism and totemism and can be illustrated on the following grid:

• Similar Interiorities (continuity of souls) • Dissimilar physicalities (discontinuity of forms)	Animism	Totemism	• Similar Interiorities (soul essences are identical) • Similar Physicalities (substance and behaviour are identical)
• Dissimilar Interiorities (discontinuity of minds) • Similar Physicalities (continuity of matter)	Naturalism	Analogism	• Dissimilar Interiorities (gradual discontinuity of existing beings) • Dissimilar Physicalities (gradual discontinuity of existing beings)

⁵⁹ Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877) is perhaps the most famous example of such an evolutionary model. For one of the better modern examples see Bellah (2011).

⁶⁰ This is a major assumption and for many a point of contention. Indeed, adherents of the embodiment approach such as Damasio (1994) have repeatedly criticised this body/soul dualism. It may also seem strange that having spent so long criticising the Cartesian like split between Nature and Culture, Descola simply adopts another dualism here. Descola (2013a) argues 'a proof of this would be that there is no known case of a conception of the ordinary living human person that would be based on interiority alone – let us call it a mind without a body – or on physicality alone – a body without a mind – or not at least, in the latter case, until the advent of materialist theories of consciousness of the late twentieth century. Rather than reducing the distinction between interiority and physicality to an ethnocentric prejudice, one should instead apprehend the specific forms this distinction was given in Europe by philosophical and theological theories as local variants of a more general system of elementary contrasts that can be studied comparatively' (79).

⁶¹ Bloom (2004) 155-89.

⁶² Descola (2013a) 116.

Naturalism posits a continuity of physicalities, bodies, which is common to human and animals alike. Division, on the other hand, occurs in terms of interiorities or souls. This is the ontology of the West, and can be illustrated in Protagoras' description of a universal nature including human and animal bodies, but a separation in terms of interiorities such as human minds, a divine spark or culture. Animism is the inverse of naturalism and assumes a continuity of interiorities but posits discontinuities in terms of physicalities. In many Amazonian societies, such as the Achuar, animals, spirits and humans all have the same souls and cultural practices but are differentiated in terms of their physical forms. Totemism, like animism, is a rehabilitation of an older anthropological concept. Descola argues that totemism is an ontology where 'specific plant and animal species are believed to share with particular sets of humans an identical complex of essential qualities, but one that is absolutely different from other similar groupings.'⁶³ In other words, similarity occurs at the level of body and soul but separation occurs between different groups. An Aranda member of the Kangaroo totem, for example, can say this 'kangaroo is the same as me', but someone of the cockatoo totem would possess no connection to him in either his physicality or interiority. Analogism is an ontology found in Polynesia, West Africa, Mesoamerica, and the Andes. It was also prevalent in medieval Europe and is posited by Descola as the ontology of the Greeks. Analogism is the opposite of totemism and involves a separation in terms of both the interiority and physicality axes. Descola defines analogism as:

A mode of identification that divides up the whole collection of existing beings into a multiplicity of essences, forms, and substances separated by small distinctions and sometimes arranged on a gradient scale so that it becomes possible to recompose the system of initial contrasts into a dense network of analogies that link together the intrinsic properties of the entities that are distinguished in it.⁶⁴

I will return to analogism in more detail later but a basic understanding of it can be gleaned from a reflection on astrology and the idea that the movements of planets, stars and moon exert an influence on human fate. Astrologists do not imagine that the planets are identical to humans, but rather that their movements are analogously connected. In other words, there exists, in Frazerian terms, a kind of 'sympathetic connection' where a movement in one area has repercussions in another.

Although the schematic nature of Descola's model might be considered overly rigid and to impede creativity, by focusing on basic cognitive assumptions it provides a means of understanding similar patterns found in many societies without imposing an overly systematic model on any. In this respect, it avoids the criticism, often levelled against structuralists, that

⁶³ Descola (2013a) 38.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 201.

the neat and tidy image of social organization they describe belies a more messy reality which includes local and historical disagreements.⁶⁵ Parker, for example, argues that ‘structuralism postulates a large database of theological knowledge in the mind of every Greek, and a willingness to be bound by its implicit rules.’⁶⁶ Even if we accept these criticisms are true of the kind of structuralism often applied to the study of ancient Greece,⁶⁷ they do not apply to Descola’s ontologies. Descola’s ontologies are comparable to Bourdieu’s *habitus*.⁶⁸ Bourdieu was critical of mapping entire societies in terms of up/down, male/female, sun/moon etc. His point was not that such associations are uncommon, but rather that these oppositions are not fixed totalities existing outside of historical circumstances. Instead, he advocated describing a more basic *habitus* or ‘principles which generate and organize practices’⁶⁹ and shifted the emphasis from the finished project towards the structuring principles from which social relations emerge. Descola’s ontological project is, in his own words, a little ‘farther upstream’ from *habitus* and ‘enable[s] us,’ as Scott explains, ‘to structure our perceptions, organize our actions, thoughts, and feelings according to relatively stereotyped scenarios, and interpret patterns of behaviour and events in terms of a shared framework.’⁷⁰ In other words, Descola’s ontologies provide the basic cognitive orientations from which similar ideas and societies emerge, rather than describing their precise forms.

Descola’s model since its original publication in 2005 has been the subject of repeated debate.⁷¹ From a cognitive basis there is no doubt that it, as well as all current theories of cognition, remains hypothetical. Its key strength is not in its cognitive model but in its synthesis of a huge number of ethnographic texts from all corners of the earth which repeatedly describe social relations in terms of bodies and souls and in providing a useful framework to help facilitate the study of alternate cosmological configurations. Descola’s model is very much a work in progress and will undoubtedly be revised in the near future. Nevertheless, I consider its mix of cognitive science and anthropological diversity the right kind of approach. One of the more problematic criticisms, and one which I will return to at

⁶⁵ Burkert (1985) 217 .

⁶⁶ Parker (2011) 94.

⁶⁷ The debates are somewhat different in anthropology and Sahlins, as early as (1981), successfully navigated a path through structure and history.

⁶⁸ According to Descola (2013b) ‘An ontology is...an unfolding of the phenomenological consequences of different kinds of inferences about the identities of things around us, inferences which operate by lumping together, or dissociating, elements of the lived world that appear to have similar or dissimilar qualities’ (37).

⁶⁹ Bourdieu (1990) 53.

⁷⁰ Scott (2014) 3.

⁷¹ For some constructive criticisms of Descola see the various contributions in Hau’s (2014) *Colloquia: The ontological French turn*. See in addition Ingold (2016a) who argues against the problematic naturalist assumptions behind Descola’s ontologies. See also Descola’s (2016) rejoinder and in turn Ingold’s (2016b) further comments. Arhem and Sprenger (2015) are more sympathetic to Descola’s model but have documented its limitations in large parts of South East Asia. However, see Scott (2014) and Matthews (2017) for a possible reformulation and remedy to this problem.

length in the course of this thesis, is that Descola's model has difficulty accommodating a number of societies which appear to mix analogistic and animistic tendencies. Many societies from South-East Asia and Mongolia, for example, have been referred to as transcendental animism and hierarchal animism and discussed as hybrid ontologies.⁷² A similar mix of animism and analogism is also repeatedly noted in major analogical centres such as China.⁷³ Although Descola has repeatedly referred to his ontologies as 'ideal types' rather than social realities,⁷⁴ the ubiquity of these hybrids seems to undermine even the heuristic value of his model. However, Scott and Matthews argue that rather than hybrid ontologies, at least some of these exceptions may be better viewed as alternative ontologies in their own right. Scott argues that analogistic systems in some cases 'as a result of their own efforts to embed entities in relations, have transformed themselves so completely that they now constitute a mode of identification not recognized in Descola's set of four permutations.'⁷⁵ Matthews, developing upon this idea, calls this ontology 'homologism' and discusses it in relation to Chinese divinisation practices.⁷⁶ He further argues that homologism should displace Descola's totemism, which should be reclassified in terms of its internal divisions as a subdivision of analogism 'albeit a highly derived one.'⁷⁷ The specifics of this debate and the ontological status of totemism are not important for my argument. At this stage I simply wish to stress that following the work of Scott and Matthew and my own study of the Greek material, I will also argue for the presence of an alternate ontology based on a double continuity of interiorities and physicalities. In my discussion of the Orphic theogonies, I call this pantheism.

⁷² Holbraad and Willerslev (2007).

⁷³ China is mentioned by Descola (2013a) 206 based on the work of Granet (1934) as the key example of analogism. He does not, however, develop this idea in much detail. While analogies proliferate in China many scholars such as Jullien (2015) and Lloyd and Sivin (2002) describe the importance of processes in China. Puett (2002) posits a dynamic debate present in Chinese philosophy between continuity and discontinuity. China might still resemble an analogistic system in many respects, yet if its fundamental (or at least a major) stress is on continuity it hardly makes sense to classify it as an ontology defined in terms of discontinuity. Arguably similar 'hybrid systems' occupy a significant presence globally and appear without always dominating in hierarchal societies or emerging hierarchies in India, Greece and among the Aztecs. Descola describes the Aztecs as analogistic. Maffie (2014), however, with no reference to Descola's work discusses their cosmology as a form of pantheism.

⁷⁴ Descola (2013a) 365.

⁷⁵ Scott (2014) continues 'it is striking, in fact, that Descola's four modes of identification, graphed at intervals throughout the book with increasing elaboration as a grid in four quadrants, does not appear to cognize the possibility of continuity of interiority and continuity of physicality at the scale of an all-inclusive, or indeed, infinite cosmos. In the only mode of identification with double continuity – totemism – this double continuity applies only within each totemic class and not across the totemic system as a whole. Where then might we locate a truly cosmic double continuity on Descola's grid?' (15).

⁷⁶ Matthews (2017); Scott (2014); Puett (2002).

⁷⁷ Matthew (2017) 280. This is certainly a possibility and apart from the somewhat arbitrary subdivisions within Descola's otherwise more logical schema, it is worth remembering that analogism and totemism were once merged as a single grouping in Descola's earlier triadic model.

The Ontology of the Greeks

Descola argues his four ontologies ‘suffice to explain the principles underlying most known ontologies and cosmologies.’⁷⁸ The Greeks are better studied than any society discussed by anthropologists, yet there is little agreement on their basic views. In some respects this boils down to the long history and plurality of views expressed in ancient Greece.⁷⁹ This plurality is not exceptional and although Descola’s stresses the dominance of one ontology at any time; he too adds room for a plurality of sorts noting:

animism, totemism, analogism, and naturalism can each tolerate a discreet presence of other emerging modes, for each of them is a possible realization of a combination of elements that are universally present.⁸⁰

While Descola offers an excellent account of an ontological transition, he does not explain in sufficient detail how his ontologies can interact and indeed the seeming rigidity and incompatibility between say animism and naturalism make this a rather thorny issue.⁸¹ I will return to this concern again in my final conclusion; at present I wish to focus on some of the most important ontologies and their interspecies taxonomies which, rightly or wrongly, have been found amongst the Greeks at any given period.

A good point of departure is totemism. Very few scholars speak of Greek totemism today, yet drawing inspiration from Frazer and Durkheim, the Cambridge Ritualists, including Harrison and Murray, discovered totemism at the dawn of Greek religion.⁸² This totemism is a strange amalgamation of the 19th and early 20th century and has little in common with either Descola’s model or indeed any form of actually practised totemism.⁸³ Naturalism, as should be clear by now, was a good deal more pervasive. The first kind of naturalism is the model proposed by native Greeks like Protagoras, Democritus and the Epicureans. There is also, however, the naturalism used as an interpretive tool by some modern scholars. This appears in several forms and in Appendix Two I discuss some unsuccessful attempts to understand Homer in terms of a nature/culture opposition. Naturalism is not always so obvious and often comes to the fore when authors claim to eschew theoretical perspectives in place of a more

⁷⁸ Descola(2013a) 114.

⁷⁹As Lloyd (1975) has stressed for the Presocratics, ‘there is no such thing as *the* cosmological model, *the* cosmological theory, of the Greeks’ (205).

⁸⁰ Descola (2013a) 167.

⁸¹ On the debated position of ontological plurality in Greece see the discussion between Lloyd and Taylor in Lloyd (2012), followed by Taylor’s review (2013) and Lloyd’s response (2013).

⁸² Harrison (1962) 128. Murray (1925).

⁸³A point of interest is that Descola’s account of totemism is heavily reliant on the work of von Brandenstein (1977) and that the same author (1978) has written a paper titled *Identical Principles behind Australian Totemism and Empedoclean Philosophy*. The identical principles unfortunately turn out to be the use of similar oppositions and analogies rather than a detailed one to one overlap in ontologies.

complex reality.⁸⁴ This may seem like a sensible estimation of the evidence, however, if order is not found in the symbols and rituals of the Greeks, a universal mind is often introduced to make sense of the chaos.⁸⁵ Burkert, to whom every scholar owes such an enormous debt, presents a good example of this tendency and frequently argues against the systematic impositions of structuralism. He also, however, goes one step further and locates this messy reality within a universalising evolutionary framework.⁸⁶ In other words, the order behind the chaos of Greek ritual is found in our shared caveman origins. It might be argued that Burkert's evolutionism has not received widespread acceptance in Greek scholarship, yet it is of note that major cognitive theorists such as Boyer and Atran have made Burkert required reading.⁸⁷ In this respect, Classicists who are now adopting approaches from the cognitive study of religion are to a certain extent repackaging Burkert. While I also adopt a cognitive model, it should be stressed that the cognitive assumptions of Boyer and Atran remain more hypothetical than Descola's interiority/physicality dualism and have a good deal less ethnographical evidence to back them up. Atran is entirely open about this:

Perhaps, in the end, evolutionary psychology's interpretations of complex mental designs as telltale signs of ancient environments will prove no truer than phrenology's readings of bumps and other conformations of the skull as indications of mental faculties and character.⁸⁸

Atran wrote this in 2004 and over ten years later the cognitive theory of religion has yet to prove the majority of its foundational ideas.⁸⁹

Alongside naturalist interpretations, it is common to hear the Greeks described as animists. The animism in question, much like Greek totemism, is often not identical to Descola's ontology but a vaguer Tylorian notion of a world animated by gods, including the personifications of the earth and divine rivers. If this is not identical with Descola's ontology, it is not entirely distinct either and Viveiros de Castro, for example, frequently draws on Greek examples including the Orphics to illustrate his perspectivist studies.⁹⁰ Like Protagorean naturalism, animism has some explanatory value when discussing certain aspects of the Greek world. Indeed, Descola's stress on the connection of interiorities or souls is

⁸⁴ Burkert (1985) notes 'the danger in this approach is of course that the historically given reality will perforce be curtailed for the sake of the system and its logical structure. Such relationships are good for thinking, but reality does not always follow suit; a certain stubbornness of facts remains' (217). See Versnel (2013) 26-36 for more detail on the differences between Vernant and Burkert's approaches.

⁸⁵ It is worth citing Bowden's blurb in Larson's (2016) recent cognitive study of the Greeks which states that Greek religion is more 'than poetic myths and strange rituals. Jennifer Larson starts from the crucial idea that the ancient Greeks were like us, in that they shared the same mental processes and lived in the same world.'

⁸⁶ For a critique of Burkert's theory of sacrificial violence see Mc Clymond (2008) and Valeri (1985) 67-70.

⁸⁷ Boyer (2001) and Atran both refer to Burkert's (1996) work the *Creation of the sacred: Tracks of biology in early religions*.

⁸⁸ Atran (2004) viii.

⁸⁹ Visala (2011) 82.

⁹⁰ See Viveiros de Castro (1992) 305. The idea even has the backing of Sahlins (2014) who argues that Descola's four ontologies are reducible to two. See also Descola's (2014) response.

closely echoed by Presocratics such as Anaximenes (DK 13 B2) who discuss the soul as air and something which surrounds the cosmos as a whole. This view will be discussed at length in Chapters Three and Four where I call it, as noted above, pantheism rather than animism. If pantheism has a good claim to be an ontology among the Greeks, others describe it as the ontology of the Greeks and apply pantheistic readings not only to the Presocratics but even Hesiod and Homer.⁹¹ In Chapter One I will discuss at length how Hesiod has been repeatedly drawn into animist/pantheist readings and given the controversial honour as the first Presocratic. Presently, I am content to note that the application of animism to Homer and Hesiod is not so much wrong as partial. If all ontologies can tolerate the discrete presence of another, animism certainly has a good claim as a peripheral ontology in Greece. It was not, however, the dominant ontology. Thales (DK 11 A22) may have said that everything is full of gods, but as Descola puts it, for analogists like the Greeks:

deities are generally firmly attached to places, where they are the object of genuine cults. They dwell in caves, in lakes, in springs, in mountains, in rocks, as well as in the various sorts of shrines that humans build for their accommodation.⁹²

In other words, the gods are not everywhere but some places and while it is true that many rivers are gods, in analogist societies there are many stones that are simply stones.

Having discussed totemism, naturalism and animism, we are left with Descola's preferred classification of the Greeks, analogism. Analogism unlike the other ontologies is not a classic concept but named after its key feature, the use of analogies. While no one has referred to the Greeks as analogists prior to Descola, this view also has a history. Lloyd, for example, refers to analogy and polarity as two forms of thinking common to the Greeks.⁹³ Combine these and you have something very similar to analogism, an ontology based on discontinuities or polarities and the widespread use of analogies to connect these discontinuities. It might also be noted that despite their different background assumptions, particularly concerning nature and culture, in practice analogism is very similar to structuralist readings. Vernant, for example, argues that the Greek pantheon forms:

a complicated system of relationships in which each god is part of a variegated network of associations with other gods.⁹⁴

Compare this with Descola's description of a typical analogistic pantheon:

these are specialized agencies specifically assigned to social units, to subdivisions of space (quarters, cardinal points, seas or mountains...) and of time (day and night, seasons, life

⁹¹ Clarke (1995), for example, argues in relation to the Greek word *ἱερός* that 'the range of meaning of this word will suggest, as it were in miniature, that in the early Greek world-view there is an implicit connexion of ideas about divinity that makes it not only reasonable but deeply traditional that Thales should have argued as he did' (299).

⁹² Descola (2013a) 41.

⁹³ Lloyd (1966).

⁹⁴ Vernant (1991) 277.

cycles...), to regimes of practice (crafts, statuses, caste specialties...) and to kinds of techniques, temperament, and life habits.⁹⁵

In this respect analogism is a very well studied subject in ancient Greece and the idea that polarities and analogies are widespread in Greek thought is hardly controversial.⁹⁶ A more contentious issue, however, concerns the universality of the interiority/physicality opposition. Descola, as noted, argues that this dualism is universal and ethnographically unchallenged ‘until the advent of materialist theories of consciousness of the late twentieth century.’⁹⁷ It would hardly be surprising if some Greek philosopher got there first. What is more surprising is that Long credits ‘psychosomatic identity’ to Homer.⁹⁸ Snell also argued that Homer has no single concept of the body or the soul⁹⁹ and Holmes speaks of the emergence of the body as a ‘conceptual object’ in the fifth century BC.¹⁰⁰ In one of the most impressive recent studies on the Homeric self, Clarke argues the spectre of Descartes is an ‘insidious danger’ and that Homeric man is instead ‘a continuum in whom the sources and processes of his mental life are inseparably united with the substance of what we would nowadays call the body.’¹⁰¹ These different claims may seem damning for Descola’s interiority and physicality and certainly we must agree with Clarke that Homer has very little in common with Descartes. Instead of a single word for soul or interiority we see a plurality of mostly untranslatable terms including θυμός (‘spirit’), φρήν (‘mind’), ἤτορ (‘heart’), πραπίδες (‘understanding’), νόος (‘mind’), μένος (‘force’), ψυχή (‘soul’).¹⁰² The same is largely true of Homeric physicalities and in place of a single term for the body,¹⁰³ we are often presented with very specific words such as χρώς (‘skin’) or μέλη (‘limbs’). In this respect, Clarke is certainly correct in stressing that Cartesian dualism has difficulty accounting for this bewildering list of interiorities and physicalities. However, we should be equally cautious in ignoring alternative kinds of body/soul dualism present in Homer and however we choose to translate terms such as πραπίδες and θυμός, they repeatedly appear as part of a more general interiority/physicality

⁹⁵ Descola (2013) 40.

⁹⁶ I repeat that analogism is a basic assumption not a fully formed system and in this respect Hesiod and Hippocrates can both advocate broadly analogistic positions and disagree on the details of their respective systems. In this respects we may rightly speak of multiple analogist positions in Greek thought.

⁹⁷ Descola (2013) 79.

⁹⁸ Long (2015) 15-51.

⁹⁹ Snell (1953).

¹⁰⁰ Although Holmes (2017) discusses the emergent history of the body, she does not necessarily reject Descola’s views. Rather she differentiates a more specific idea of the Western body from the vaguer and possibly universal physicality of Descola arguing that ‘when we speak of the body, however, we mean something more specific and narrow than Descola’s ‘physicality.’ In one important sense, we mean an object of specialized scientific knowledge-biological, medical, neurological, and so on-that is not immediately available to the understanding and unmediated control of the person to whom this body belongs’ (18).

¹⁰¹ Clarke (1999) 126.

¹⁰² I offer these as only rough approximations. For more detail on the terms see studies by Bremmer (1983); Clarke (1999); Long (2015).

¹⁰³ σῶμα is a possible term for body but the word usually refers to corpses in Homer and appears only once as a living body in Hesiod (*Op.* 540.) See Renehan (1980).

opposition. This is even apparent from the most emblematic lines of Greek epic, the opening of the *Iliad* (1.1-5):

μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρὶ Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,
πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν
οἰωνοῖσι τε πᾶσι.

Sing goddess, of the anger of Peleus' son Achilles
and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the
Achaians,
hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls
of heroes, but gave their bodies to be the delicate feasting
of dogs, of all birds.¹⁰⁴

Apart from the separate existence of the ψυχή at death, there are cases where the θυμός is knocked out of the body (10.239-40) and where a human 'mind' (νόος) is housed in the physicality of a pig:

οἱ δὲ συῶν μὲν ἔχον κεφαλὰς φωνὴν τε τρίχας τε
καὶ δέμας, αὐτὰρ νοῦς ἦν ἔμπεδος, ὥς τὸ πάρος περ.

And they had the heads, and voice, and bristles, and shape of swine, but their minds remained unchanged even as before.¹⁰⁵

Apart from being separable, interiorities and physicalities are frequently contrasted. Indeed Odysseus (8.165-79) is the archetype for someone whose form does not match his interior:

τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς:
ἔειν', οὐ καλὸν ἔειπες: ἀτασθάλῳ ἀνδρὶ ἔοικας.
οὕτως οὐ πάντεσσι θεοὶ χαρίεντα διδοῦσιν
ἀνδράσιν, οὔτε φῆν οὔτ' ἄρ φρένας οὔτ' ἀγορητύν.
ἄλλος μὲν γάρ τ' εἶδος ἀκιδνότερος πέλει ἀνὴρ,
ἀλλὰ θεὸς μορφὴν ἔπεσι στέφει, οἱ δέ τ' ἐς αὐτὸν
τερπόμενοι λεύσσουσιν: ὁ δ' ἀσφαλέως ἀγορεύει
αἰδοῖ μειλιχίῃ, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγρομένοισιν,
ἐρχόμενον δ' ἀνὰ ἄστρῳ θεὸν ὧς εἰσορόωσιν.
ἄλλος δ' αὖ εἶδος μὲν ἀλίγκιος ἀθανάτοισιν,
ἀλλ' οὐ οἱ χάρις ἀμφιπεριστεύεται ἐπέεσσιν,
ὥς καὶ σοὶ εἶδος μὲν ἀριπρεπέες, οὐδέ κεν ἄλλως
οὐδὲ θεὸς τεύξειε, νόον δ' ἀποφώλιός ἐσσι.
ᾧρινάς μοι θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν
εἰπὼν οὐ κατὰ κόσμον.

With a dark glance
Wily Odysseus shot back, "Indecent talk, my friend.
You, you're a reckless fool —I see that. So,
the gods don't hand out all their gifts at once,
not build (φνὴ) and brains (φρήν) and flowing speech to all.
One man may fail to impress us with his looks (εἶδος)
but a god can crown his words with beauty (μορφή), charm,
and men look on with delight when he speaks out.
Never faltering, filled with winning self-control,
he shines forth at assembly grounds and people gaze
at him like a god when he walks through the streets.

¹⁰⁴ Trans. Lattimore (1951).

¹⁰⁵ Trans. Murray (1919).

Another man may look (εἶδος) like a deathless one on high
 but there's not a bit of grace to crown his words.
 Just like you, my fine, handsome friend. Not even
 a god could improve those lovely looks (εἶδος) of yours
 but the mind (νόος) inside is worthless.
 Your slander fans the anger (θυμός) in my heart (στήθος)!¹⁰⁶

Homer is not Descartes, yet equally we should not overlook the clear presence of repeated oppositions which play a central role in the ancient view of self. Indeed, the complexity of interiorities and physicalities Homer shows is commonplace and Descola argues that similar views of the fractured self occur frequently in analogist societies. The Dogon, of West Africa, for example, possess in addition to a body, eight souls, eight seeds, parcels of vital force, an animal double, and many more subdivisions.¹⁰⁷ In this respect, far from an exception, the Homeric self illustrated by many differentiated parts into a hierarchal whole is precisely what defines the essential character of analogism.

So much for interiority and physicality. What about human/non human relations? Animists as noted express a fundamental kinship through interiorities with animals and gods. Naturalism posits a continuity of bodies and division of minds. Analogists, on the other hand, separate humans from both animals and gods within a hierarchal scheme. This view, it should be noted, is nearly identical to Vernant's influential three tier system where men are located between beasts and gods.¹⁰⁸ In early epic, humans and gods are frequently discussed in terms of strong oppositions. Homer's Apollo (*Il.* 5. 441-2) states this in categorical terms:

οὐ ποτε φῶλον ὁμοῖον
 ἀθανάτων τε θεῶν χαμαὶ ἐρχομένων τ' ἀνθρώπων.

Never the same is the tribe of gods
 who are immortal and men who walk ground.¹⁰⁹

Apollo's claim, at least to someone from a Christian background, may seem puzzling. The Greek gods are very close to mortals. Their appearance is human, their forms of feasting and recreation are pretty much identical to their human counterparts. In terms of interiorities, Zeus is described by Hesiod in similar terms to humans and possesses a θυμός (*Theog.* 551) and a νόος (*Theog.* 613).¹¹⁰ Despite these similarities the poets repeatedly stress that difference remains. When Aphrodite is injured by Diomedes, Homer (*Il.* 5. 339-342) describes how:

¹⁰⁶ Trans. Fagles (1996).

¹⁰⁷ Descola (2013a) 223-5.

¹⁰⁸ See Vernant (1980). See also Lloyd (2012) 8-31.

¹⁰⁹ Trans. Lattimore (1951) modified. For further commentary on this passage see Chapter Two and the discussion of ὁμοιος

¹¹⁰ It is more difficult to speak of the presence of a ψυχή in the gods. In early poetry, ψυχή usually appears only at death as the soul departs to Hades (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 13) and thus even if present in the immortals, it is not something very likely to be described.

ῥέε δ' ἄμβροτον αἶμα θεοῖο
 ἰχώρ, οἷός περ τε ῥέει μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν·
 οὐ γὰρ σῖτον ἔδουσ', οὐ πίνουσ' αἶθοπα οἶνον,
 τοῦνεκ' ἀναίμονές εἰσι καὶ ἀθάνατοι καλέονται.

and blood immortal flowed from the goddess,
 ichor, that which runs in the veins of the blessed divinities;
 since these eat no food, nor do they drink of the shining
 wine, and therefore they have no blood and are called immortal.¹¹¹

Trying to capture the essence of this similarity and difference, Vernant has described divine corporality as a body that is not a body, with blood that is not blood.¹¹² These claims will be elaborated in Chapter Two. Presently, I note that early poetry very frequently views divine bodies as different but analogous to their mortal counterparts. This kind of vague analogy is also a very common way of describing the difference between beings. Indeed, Hesiod's (*Op.* 129) language is strikingly close to Descola's when he differentiates the Silver Race from the Golden saying:

χρυσέῳ οὔτε φῆνιν ἐναλίγκιον οὔτε νόημα.

It was like the golden race neither in body (φῆνιν) nor in mind (νόημα).¹¹³

A similar opposition appears in Pindar's famous *Nemean Six* (4-5) where the poet stresses that although men and gods are separated by all power, it is an opposition which admits degrees of likeness:

ἢ μέγαν νόον ἤτοι φύσιν ἀθανάτοις.

either in greatness of mind (μέγαν νόον) or in form (φύσιν).¹¹⁴

These words are difficult to translate but in their Pindaric sense possess a loose overlap with Descola's physicality and interiority.¹¹⁵ Another case of making differentiations in terms of physicality and interiority occurs in Xenophanes' (DK 21B 23) description of a super deity who in respect to mortals is:

οὔτι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὅμοιος οὐδέ νόημα.

neither alike in body nor mind.

With Xenophanes we stray into a rather different theology from that of Hesiod, nevertheless it is notable that a similar contrast in terms of physicality and interiority is used.¹¹⁶ I will elaborate upon analogism and mortal immortal relations at more length in Chapters One and Two. At present it is enough to note that analogism as a system of hierarchical difference very neatly captures a dominant strand in Greek thought. It does not, however, exhaust the Greek imagination.

¹¹¹ Trans. Lattimore (1951).

¹¹² Vernant (1989) 39.

¹¹³ Trans. Evelyn-White (1914). On closely related meanings of ἐναλίγκιος and ὅμοιος see Nagy (2010).

¹¹⁴ Trans. Svarlien (1990).

¹¹⁵ For more on this passage see discussion in the Conclusion.

¹¹⁶ On Xenophanes' theology see discussion in Chapter Three.

Chapter Outline

If I have started my discussion with Protagoras' naturalism, this is not because it is the dominant ontology of the Greeks, but because it is a kind of master narrative - a narrative which in the history of Western thought encompasses all others and reduces them to mere representations. Throughout this thesis I will present many other possibilities of organizing the ontological furniture of the world. I will discuss strange ideas including animals with souls, an inherently chaotic world, and mortals who can become immortal. My point of departure is the eighth century BC and in Chapter One I outline the ontological foundations of Greece's most famous cosmological text, Hesiod's *Theogony*. In Hesiod (116) ontological ambiguities are present from the very outset when we are told that of all the gods Chaos was born absolutely first. What Hesiod means by Chaos remains unclear, yet many have warned against the English homonym and proposed translating the term as a 'chasm' or a 'yawning gap.' This chapter argues that etymologies have consequences and by interpreting Chaos as a gap or chasm, the term is not only distanced from disorder, but frequently transformed into its very opposite, κόσμος 'world order', and identified as the first stage in an ordered cosmological sequence beginning with the separation of Heaven and Earth. This chapter argues that Hesiod's decision to begin his genealogy with Chaos was a deliberately provocative and ambiguous starting point that places plurality and difference at the very outset of what I call an analogistic cosmology. In this narrative Zeus may appear as a skilful negotiator and able leader, but his kingship among the gods should not be interpreted as the final defeat of Chaos, but an attempt to restrain it.

Chapter Two focuses on Hesiod's description of the Promethean division. The chapter, taking the form of an extended dialogue with Vernant, interrogates what kind of relations sacrifice creates between men and gods and, to a lesser extent, animals. Does sacrifice form a commensal relationship based on the shared meal as Robertson Smith argued? Does it emphasise the fundamental difference between ontologically separate beings proposed by Vernant? Focusing on sacrifice through the mediating substance meat, I navigate a path between the separation of Vernant and sharing of Robertson Smith and argue that the sacrificial ritual was a flexible and creative act where mortals and immortals approached each other neither as kin, nor as strangers, but through the ambiguous and dangerous relationship known as affinity.

While Hesiod's *Theogony* remained the dominant ontology of the ancient Greek world, the sixth century bore witness to some radically new views on the relations between gods, animals and nature. It also marked a shift in the understanding of the word κόσμος from its older meaning as decoration to its new meaning as world order. Although this period is sometimes described as the Greek miracle and birth of science, I discuss it as a shift in ontological assumptions from separation to continuity and the introduction of a new kind of myth. Nowhere is this more obvious than the Orphic theogonies. Focusing on the earliest surviving Orphic poem, the *Derveni Theogony* (c. sixth century BC), I argue that through a process of omissions and additions, the Derveni poet transforms Hesiod's narrative along Presocratic lines. One of the most obvious examples of such a transformation occurs when the entire cosmos grows into Zeus, and after a period of temporary isolation, he creates the world anew (col. 6.3-6). Discussing a number of similar examples, I argue that in place of Hesiod's analogism, the Orphic poem presents a Heraclitean-like theology where the many named gods are really refractions of a single deity and divinely ordered cosmos.

Chapter Four explores the Orphic rejection of animal sacrifice alongside their version of the Promethean division where the Titans gather together and sacrifice the god, Dionysus. Despite some notable differences in the plot, the Orphic myth, like Hesiod's and Protagoras' variations, describes the origin of human beings and their relations with animals and gods. After discussing the controversial evidence for the myth itself, I turn to its ontological assumptions. I argue that whereas Hesiod's Mekone assumes a basic difference between men and gods and sees sacrifice as means of making ambiguous connections between mortals and immortals, the Orphic myth emphasises a foundational continuity between all beings. Following Descola's observations on the absence of sacrifice in animistic societies, I argue that in a world based on a pre-existing connection, animal sacrifice becomes redundant and is consequently replaced with rituals based on sharing pure offerings amongst kin.

My conclusion returns to Protagoras' myth and the vibrant fifth century where all three ontologies, naturalism, analogism and pantheism coexisted and coalesced. Focusing on some key instances of ontological hesitation, I discuss some possible means of rethinking Descola's model without sacrificing the genuine ontological plurality the Greek world presents.

CHAPTER ONE

Cosmos and Chaos in Hesiod's Theogony

The little we know about the poet Hesiod comes from his own words and even this information is open to doubt.¹ Hesiod wrote at sometime between the eighth and seventh centuries BC. He describes himself as a shepherd from Boeotia (*Theog.* 1) and has a brother called Perses (*Op.* 27-41). At some stage he won a prize for his poetry in Chalkis (*Op.* 651-9). This prize may well have been awarded for his *Theogony*, an account notable for its rich mythology and long list of some three hundred gods culminating in an account of Zeus' ascent to the throne.² The poem, however, is far from a catalogue of names, nor a straightforward genealogical account. The structure is often surprising and sequence of events far from linear.³ Indeed Hesiod's *Theogony* does not even begin at the point of creation. Instead the poet takes a rather long and circuitous path, beginning with the interrogation of his sources, the Muses. The Muses, Hesiod tells us, are goddesses who can speak truly of past, present and future events (38). Yet, as they frankly admit, they can also deceive (26-8):

ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, κάκ' ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶον,
ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
ἴδμεν δ', εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.

Shepherds of the wilderness, wretched things of shame, mere bellies,
we know how to speak many false things as though they were true;
but we know, when we will, to utter true things.⁴

What Hesiod means in this passage is intensely debated.⁵ One reading sees it as Hesiod's way of reinforcing the veracity of his account. Previous poets have been deceived by the words of the Muses. Hesiod, however, offers a reliable alternative. This may be the case, yet the introduction of deceptive witnesses is an admittedly puzzling way of bolstering your claim to veracity. Others argue that Hesiod intends this passage to be ambiguous and wishes to stress the difficulties which are always inherent in discussions of the gods.⁶ Indeed, elsewhere Hesiod does not seem particularly concerned with the absolute truth of a single poetic account and casually offers an alternative narrative, bidding us to take our pick (*Op.* 106-7).⁷ This, I

¹ Whether Hesiod's autobiography reflects real events or is simply a poetic device is debated. See Clay (2003) 3; Stoddard (2004) 1-33; Tor (2017) 64.

² West (1988) x.

³ A key instance is Hesiod's use of ring composition. See Nelson (1998) 43.

⁴ Trans. Evelyn White (1914).

⁵ Koning (2010) in his discussion of the debate notes that 'the Greeks, however, seem to have read it as a fairly straightforward statement: Hesiod narrates how the Muses made him their mouthpiece and so guarantee the truth of what the poet tells us' (201).

⁶ Tor (2017) esp. 61-94 defends the position that Hesiod supports what he calls the 'ambiguous interpretation' of this passage.

⁷ εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις, ἕτερόν τοι ἐγὼ λόγον ἐκκορυφώσω εὖ καὶ ἐπισταμένως. (Or if you will, I will sum you up another tale well and skilfully). Trans Evelyn-White (1914). Tor (2017) notes 'the words 'another account' (or: ' a

think, is an important reminder that myth is not history, and uncertainty, especially when it comes to events long before our times, nothing new. A famous, but useful example, of this comes from an Indian creation hymn in the *Rig Veda* 10.129 which asks:

Who really knows? Who will proclaim it? Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation?
The gods came afterwards, with the creation of the universe. Who then knows whence it has
arisen? Whence this creation has arisen-perhaps it formed itself, or perhaps it did not-the one
who looks down on it, in the highest heaven, only he knows – or perhaps he does not know.⁸

Hesiod's doubt may not be expressed in such emphatic terms yet nothing in his poetry suggests that we read his account as a history or a dogmatic revelation. Rather, aware that mortals will never know the mind of the Zeus (*Op.* 483-4), he leaves room for doubt and uncertainty. All of this ambiguity comes to the fore when after repeatedly asking 'who came first?' Hesiod finally reveals it was Chaos (116-20):⁹

ἦ τοι μὲν πρότιστα Χάος γένετ', αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα
Γαῖ' εὐρύστερνος, πάντων ἕδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ
ἀθανάτων, οἳ ἔχουσι κάρη νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου,
Τάρταράτ' ἡερόεντα μυχῶ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης,
ἦδ' Ἔρος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι.

In truth at first Chaos came to be, but next
wide-bosomed Earth, the ever-sure foundation of all
the deathless ones who hold the peaks of snowy Olympus,
and dim Tartarus in the depth of the wide-pathed Earth,
and Eros, fairest among the deathless gods.

This is certainly a puzzling start for a cosmology. In Classical Greek κόσμος is synonymous with order and a cosmology is an account of such order. As Socrates explains in Plato's *Gorgias* (507e-8d), wise men say that:

οὐρανὸν καὶ γῆν καὶ θεοὺς καὶ ἀνθρώπους τὴν κοινωνίαν συνέχειν καὶ φιλίαν καὶ
κοσμιότητα καὶ σωφροσύνην καὶ δικαιοσύνην, καὶ τὸ ὅλον τοῦτο διὰ ταῦτα κόσμον
καλοῦσιν, ὃ ἑταῖρε, οὐκ ἀκοσμίαν οὐδὲ ἀκολασίαν.

heaven and earth and gods and men are held together by communion and friendship, by
orderliness, temperance, and justice; and that is the reason, my friend, why they call the whole
of this world by the name of order (κόσμος), not of disorder or dissoluteness.¹⁰

As Socrates stresses a good cosmology consists of communion, friendship, and above all else order. Hesiod, however, by giving pre-eminence to Chaos, seems to entirely miss the point. This is not really surprising. When Hesiod wrote the *Theogony* the idea of a cosmology had yet to be invented. He was familiar with the word κόσμος but rather than understand it as world order, he uses it in the sense of decoration to describe, for example, the garlands and

different account') highlight the juxtaposition of the two episodes and, thereby, the absence of any attempt to effect a logical reconciliation between them' (57).

⁸ Trans. Doniger (1981).

⁹ On Hesiod's repeated false starts see López-Ruiz (2012) 40-2.

¹⁰ Trans. Lamb (1967) modified.

crown given to Pandora by the goddess Athena (*Theog.* 587).¹¹ If Hesiod had little notion that the world was a κόσμος, scholars are as quick to tell us that Chaos has no relation with the English homonym. Based on the root χα ‘gap’ and χάσκειν or χαίνειν ‘to gap,’ it refers to yawning or gapping and in no way contains ‘the idea of confusion or disorder.’¹² Thus wishing to avoid this issue altogether, many favour replacing the Greek god Chaos with a more ‘neutral’ term such as chasm. Suspending judgment on whether the understanding of Chaos as a gap or chasm is a useful addition to Hesiod’s text, it is important to stress just how central the reading has been in understanding how Hesiod’s *cosmology* works. Cornford was by no means the first or the last to speculate on the nature of Chaos. He was, however, one of the most influential scholars in the English speaking world.¹³ Cornford mused:

First of all,’ says Hesiod, ‘Chaos came into being’ – what does that mean? ‘Chaos’ was not at first, as we conceive it, formless disorder. The word means simply the ‘yawning gap’ – the gap we now see, with its lower part filled with air and mist and cloud, see, between earth and the dome of heaven.’¹⁴

It is important to stress that Chaos in this brief passage is not simply distanced from the idea of disorder, Cornford’s gap rewrites the genealogical sequence in Hesiod’s text and transforms Chaos into its very opposite, the first stage in an ordered cosmological sequence beginning with the separation of Heaven and Earth.

While Cornford’s reconstruction may at first appear to be an unforgivable act of symbolic violence, there was a rather noble idea behind this correction. As is suggested by the title of his work, *From Religion to Philosophy*, Cornford wished to move beyond the problematic primitivist views of early poetry and establish the necessary ties between the chaotic world of Homer and the rational κόσμος of the Milesian philosophers. In this transition for Cornford, and a great many others, Hesiod was the pivotal bridge. This is far from saying that Hesiod was a philosopher; no one really doubted that in many respects the Boeotian poet remained trapped in the irrational world of fighting gods and men. The point was that his cosmogonical beginnings showed some hope. A consequence of this view was that Hesiod was rescued, or more accurately partly rescued, from the Protagorean naturalism often imposed on Homer and

¹¹ Lloyd (2000) notes ‘before the first philosophical cosmologies in the 6th century B.C.E., it is doubtful whether we would be correct in speaking of any *unified* concept of the world as such at all. The idea that cosmos, or world order, is such a unity only becomes explicit for the first time with the philosophers’ (21). Burkert (1999) further argues that ‘kosmos’ is an artificial concept we see evolving at the beginning of Greek philosophy’ (88). According to Aetius Pythagoras “was the first to call the sum of the whole by the name of the cosmos, because of the order which it displayed” (Aetius 2.1.1 cited in Collins (2007) 59). On the history of the Greek term κόσμος see Finkelberg (1998).

¹² West (1999) 64 n. 116.

¹³ Cornford (2009 [1912]) 66-67.

¹⁴ Ibid.

the Greek world at large¹⁵ and while the conflicts among the gods which constitute the bulk of his narrative continued to be considered alongside Homer, the cosmogonical section of his poem was placed shoulder to shoulder with Presocratic cosmologies. To do this, however, some small, but perfectly logical corrections were necessary. Cornford argued that despite Hesiod's insistence on the absolute priority of Chaos, a gap presupposes something has been divided. Accordingly he corrected Hesiod's text, positing an original union, a kind of primal matter made of Ouranos and Gaia or Sky and Earth.¹⁶ To prove this Cornford further marshalled a vast array of comparative myths (and their interpretations) from Egypt, Mesopotamia and China. He also located Hesiod alongside Greek examples such as Euripides' *Melanippie the Wise* (fr. 484) and Orpheus' song in Apollonius' *Argonautica* (1 496).¹⁷ This rather idiosyncratic group, used rather selectively, he combined to form the speculative basis for rewriting Hesiod's poem.¹⁸

Cornford was not entirely wrong. Many cosmological myths invoke precisely this kind of primal mass, followed by the separation of Sky and Earth and Hesiod's ambiguous starting point could easily be read in such terms. A creation myth from China, the *Pangu Kaitian* (220-280 AD),¹⁹ for example, begins with a confused state called *Hundun*. This is compared by Wang to 'an egg in a condition of chaos and indistinctness.' The philosopher Huanzi interpreted *Hundun* as the primal matter of creation and described it as an 'uncarved block,

¹⁵ Hesiod's fights and battles are often interpreted in terms of Protagorean naturalism. Scully (2015) is a good example of a naturalist reading noting 'to employ the later fifth-century terms of φύσις and νόμος (nature and law/culture), the Theogony celebrates νόμος for harnessing φύσις to the social good'(94). See also Caldwell (1989).

¹⁶ Etymology of course was not the only consideration in this emendation and having established that Chaos was a gap, Cornford and others scoured Hesiod's text to find it. Often attention is drawn to lines 700-5 which is seen by KRS (1957) 38 as confirmation of Cornford's thesis indicating that Chaos exists as a gap between Sky and Earth. The allusion, however, is far from clear and stands in contradiction to later lines where Chaos is located in the underworld (811-14). Based on these lines Miller (2001) 3-10 argues that Chaos is the gap between the Earth and Tartarus in the underworld. He also draws attention to a reference to a great chasm χάσμα μέγ' in 740-743 to propose Hesiod saw it as a gap. Again whether this chasm is identical with Chaos or simply in a nearby location, or a general description of the underworld itself as a chasm, is unclear. While I agree that these lines indeed indicate that Chaos is somewhere in the underworld, they hardly justify understanding Chaos specifically as a gap, any more than a space, formlessness or water. Another more important, but often overlooked question, is not simply to where this description refers but to *when*. As Mondy (1989) points out 'the fact that the cosmological Chaos, now bounded by the elements of the evolved cosmos, can be viewed as, or as being in, a chasm, would not necessarily imply that the cosmogonic Chaos, existing alone before the genesis of any other entity, should or could be so viewed' (10). Indeed it is surely of some small significance that the geography described in these lines, including Poseidon's hefty Bronze Gates which keep Chaos, Night and Day and everything else in their proper place (732-35), refer to a period of substantial cosmic renovation that has very little to do with the beginning of the cosmos.

¹⁷ Cornford [1912] (2009) 67. The Greek examples are particularly interesting and similar to the cosmologies I will discuss in Chapter Three and Four. They are, however, far from typical examples of Archaic Greek ontologies.

¹⁸ Cornford (2009) 67. A near identical comparison is offered later by KRS (1957) 42-4, adding Diodorus (1.7.1) and the Maori for good measure.

¹⁹ The myth appears in the Sanwu Liji (three and five calendar) by Xu Zheng. The title refers to the deity Pangu standing up and separating Heaven and Earth.

not yet fashioned into things' and followed by a process of 'differentiation'. Afterwards Pangu, the primal deity, emerges from *Hundun* and begins a process of cosmic separation. When Pangu dies and his body is transformed into the myriad things, his breath becomes the wind, his voice thunder, his eyes the sun and the moon, etc. Ultimately the continuing unity of matter from *Hundun* onwards entails as Wang outlines that the 'analogy between parts of nature and the parts of the human body suggests that the world is conceived as a living organic whole on the model of a human body.'²⁰ In other words, the original unity of *Hundun*, according to Wang, ensures a total cosmic order and even pantheistic universe which proceeds from the first act of separation to the current day.

If the *Pangu Kaitian* is an excellent example of Cornford's thesis, the model has little to do with Hesiod's text. Hesiod for a start never says that Chaos was the gap between Sky and Earth. Secondly, not only is he emphatic that Chaos preceded anything akin to primal matter, but also he elaborates that only afterwards was Earth born. Finally, he contradicts Cornford for a second time explaining that Sky was born from Earth (126). Given these obvious shortcomings it is surprising that Cornford's position has any adherents at all. However, either directly, or in a modified stance, it is repeated in influential works from Kirk, Raven and Schofield's *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* right up to Gregory's *Ancient Greek Cosmogony*.²¹ While this view is clearly still common, the position has also attracted a fair number of critics who view Chaos in more ambiguous terms.²² I will develop upon these positions shortly, yet if I have chosen to begin with Cornford and Kirk, it is not simply because they propose an untenable view, but to question what makes such an untenable view persuasive in the first place. Indeed Kirk and Cornford were both aware and readily willing to acknowledge the weakness of the separation thesis. Kirk et. al. admit that explaining why Hesiod expressed his theory in this way:

would be, undoubtedly, a cryptic and laconic procedure; and it seems probable that something more complicated was meant by *Xáος γένετ'* than simply, 'sky and earth separated' – though I am inclined to accept that this was originally implicit in the phrase.²³

²⁰ Wang (2012) 42-44.

²¹ KRS (1957) 33. Gregory (2007) 23. Miller (2001) is critical of Cornford and KRS. However, he still reiterates the essential gapping nature of Chaos, replacing Sky and Earth with Tartarus and Earth.

²² Fränkel (1973) 101 saw Chaos as a 'yawning emptiness.' This position was elaborated by Mondy (1989) who notes 'the primary lesson to be drawn from two and a half millennia of exegesis is that it is all too easy to see in Hesiod's *Xáος* practically anything that one is predisposed to see' (3). He too goes on to propose an alternative root in *χαῦνος*, insubstantial or formlessness. Sedley (2009) 250, on the other hand, maintains the idea of gap but stresses a punning connection with *χεῖσθαι* to flow. Lincoln (2002) presents a more theoretical view arguing 'Chaos may then be understood as existence in its zero grade, coupled with potentiality at the maximum: the point of departure for all subsequent creation and creativity' (112). Bussanich (1983) similarly stresses 'Chaos symbolizes the initial stage of pre-cosmic reality, a space necessary for creation to exist' (214).

²³ KRS (1957) 39.

This admission, if initially mystifying, is at least partially explained when we consider Hesiod's pivotal role as a proto-philosopher and cosmologist.²⁴ Gigon's estimation of Hesiod is clear from the title of his work *Der Ursprung der griechischen Philosophie von Hesiod bis Parmenides*.²⁵ Cornford generally agrees with Gigon outlining three stages of thought: first, mythical; secondly poets such as Hesiod where mythic figures are 'on the way to becoming metaphor and allegory;' and finally the rational thought of the Presocratics in the sixth century BC.²⁶ Even among those who wish to exclude Hesiod from the elite philosophers' club, most agree he is a step in the right direction.²⁷ This is not surprising considering how little Homer has been valued in this debate. In a slightly old fashioned, but not uncommon view, Stewart argues:

I shall here maintain that the appearance of Greek philosophy in history was a major miracle considering what obstacles Homer presented to the development of any speculative thought at all, let alone truly philosophical modes of inquiry.²⁸

Against this background Hesiod's 'attempt to systematize ancient myths'²⁹ is indeed impressive and in strong or weak claims represents the crucial starting point for the fully rational accounts given by Thales or Anaximander. For philosophers such as Kirk and Barnes these are scientific pioneers, rejecting the gods, and proposing monistic accounts of the cosmos.³⁰ For example, Anaximander (DK 12 A 9) saw the *ἄπειρον* or the unlimited as the ambiguous starting point of everything. While it is certainly possible to find parallels in Hesiod with a concept as challenging, and somewhat ambiguous, as Anaximander's *ἄπειρον*, it is also clear that Hesiod was not very consistent and after a promising start his philosophical aims are lost amidst entertaining myths about anthropomorphic gods.³¹ The unfortunate end result of Hesiod's rehabilitation is not simply that he was a proto-Milesian, but a bad one at that.

In giving Cornford such a prominent place in this discussion, it might seem as though I am flogging a dead horse. While the view outlined above may be increasingly on the wane, as pointed out earlier, Cornford's gap is a symptom of something more pervasive, the

²⁴ Indeed there is no real alternative as according to KRS (1957) 'it is out of the question that Hesiod or his source was thinking of the originative substance as coming into being out of nothing'(29).

²⁵ See Burkert (2004) 52.

²⁶ Cornford (1967) 42; See KRS (1957) 238.

²⁷ See Frankel (1975); Gigon (1945); Diller (1946); Rowe (1983) who are in favour while KRS see him more reservedly as a step in the right direction.

²⁸ Stewart (1966) 214. As discussed in the Introduction, Homer is currently being rehabilitated into monistic accounts, see Clarke (1999); Stocking (2007); Long (2015) 15-51. An alternative model based on *eris* is proposed by Vacca (1991). The major differences between Homer and Hesiod are in my estimation misplaced and largely reflect the respective genres of their work rather than their mentalities.

²⁹ KRS (1957) 34.

³⁰ KRS (1957); Barnes (1979).

³¹ Rowe (1983) 134-5; Miller (1983) 141.

assumption that Hesiod was writing about a cosmos rather than a chaos.³² Indeed, as Koning points out, Hesiod is variously described as ‘defining, organizing, classifying, conceptualizing; systematic, rational, abstract, intellectual, analytical, even scientific’ and adds that ‘this particular view of the poet is in fact one of the very few constants in modern Hesiodic scholarship.’³³ A good example of this appears in Clay’s penetrating and far ranging study of Hesiodic poetry. Clay does not see Chaos as a gap but nevertheless distances it from chaos noting ‘this is apparently not, as we might think, a jumble of undifferentiated matter, but rather its negation, a featureless void.’³⁴ From this starting point, her reading, following a generally Milesian pattern, searches for the underlying order of Hesiod’s text.³⁵ In some respects she goes further than Cornford and Kirk, seeing even in the many battles and rebellions a ‘radically teleological’³⁶ scheme where ‘from the beginning Hesiod alludes to the final disposition of the cosmos...a disposition that is somehow immanent from the outset.’³⁷ Thus Hesiod not only anticipates the likes of Anaximander and even Plato in the opening cosmogony, but even in his most chaotic discussions of gods vying with gods, Clay detects a divine steersman at the helm.

The search for order in cosmological myth is something by no means limited to Hesiodic studies. Indeed Cornford, and later Kirk and Clay repeatedly note that this kind of myth, or more accurately this kind of interpretation, is very common the world over and collectively point to examples by the Maori, Egyptians, Mesopotamians and the Chinese. In doing this, they do not seem to realise what a paradoxical position this presents for Hesiod. At one extreme he is the first philosopher, at the other, a common adherent of a near universal monistic orientation.³⁸ Indeed Eliade’s description of a universal ‘archaic ontology’ could well have come straight from the pages of Cornford:

³² Miller (2001) argues ‘semantically, to begin from Chaos is to affirm the priority of difference to the Undifferentiated’ (1). Hyland (2006) also elaborates upon this point, stressing that Chaos indicates that ‘difference somehow precedes sameness or identity’ adding ‘right from the beginning, it seems, ontological difference comes first’ (14). While many of these readings appear as quite a radical break from Cornford, there is, as noted earlier, a more pervasive tendency to align them with proto-Milesian philosophy and especially with Anaximander’s ἀπειρον.

³³ Koning (2010) 190-9.

³⁴ Clay (2003) 15 refers to Mondy (1989) and Bussanich (1983).

³⁵ Clay (2003) notes ‘Hesiod’s cosmic vision offers the first systematic presentation of the nature of the divine and human cosmos, of Being and Becoming. Thus, Janus-like, he synthesizes earlier traditions and at the same time prepares the way for the Pre-Socratics, especially Parmenides, Empedocles, and Heraclitus’ (2-3).

³⁶ Ibid. 152.

³⁷ Ibid. 15.

³⁸ The problem was only further pronounced with translations of Hittite texts such as the Kumarbi and the increasingly clear Eastern context of Hesiod’s *Theogony*. Burkert, for example, points out that Gigon’s work on Hesiod’s pivotal role in the shift from myth to reason was published in the same period which saw the discovery of Hesiodic antecedents such as the Hittite Kumarbi. In Burkert’s estimation (2004) ‘Gigon did not like this, but it could not be undone’ (52).

A great number of creation myths present the original state - 'Chaos'- as a compact and homogenous mass in which no form could be distinguished ; or as an egg-like sphere in which Sky and Earth were united, or as a giant man, etc. In all these myths Creation takes place by division of the egg into two parts, representing Sky and Earth-or by the breaking up of the Giant, or by the fragmentation of the unitary mass.³⁹

While Chaos here, like the Chinese *Hundun*, stands for the original matter itself and not the division which immediately follows, the pattern of a homogenous mass, giving way to Sky and Earth and followed by a neat series of divisions, is a familiar one. Eliade clearly describes a form of monism, an approach which demands that the world 'has a structure; it is not a chaos but a cosmos, hence it presents itself as creation, as work of the gods.'⁴⁰ Eliade's elegant and widespread comparisons, though undoubtedly of great value, are often the subject of criticism today. Yet, while modern anthropologists are all too willing to criticise this kind of universalism, as Puett has persuasively argued, the focus upon religion as an ordered system still defines the majority of theoretical positions; from Weber to Geertz we see an almost canonical status given to the idea that 'religion is the force that brings order and cohesiveness to a human world that is otherwise contingent, fragmented, and bereft of higher meaning.'⁴¹ This deeply held assumption that analysis and the discovery of an underlying order amount the same thing is reminiscent of Pope's cosmic optimism:

All discord, harmony, not understood;
All partial evil, universal good:
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.

With such powerful assumptions of order in the background, Hesiod's Chaos never really had a chance.

The Greek View of Chaos

Plutarch notes that Hesiod's Chaos was an amazingly popular topic of discussion (Plu. *Mor.* 678 F).⁴² Not only was it something talked about, for many later poets Chaos was an essential ingredient in a good theogony.⁴³ The popularity of Chaos is all the more surprising, seeing as many Greeks disagree about what it is. The cosmological poet, Pherecydes of Syros, both temporally and stylistically closer to Hesiod than any of the examples Kirk or Cornford cite, seems to have equated Chaos with primal water perhaps based on the verb χεῖσθαι to flow

³⁹ Eliade (1965) 114-5 cf. Schremp (1992) 61.

⁴⁰ Whether directly influenced by Eliade or not, this kind of cosmological focus has dominated interpretations of mythical cosmologies in both anthropology and comparative religion. Johnston (2012) has interestingly suggested that Eliade was extremely influenced by the works of Plato.

⁴¹ Puett (2011) 110. For a Geertzian reading of Greek religion which finds order in disorder see Gould (1985) and Kindt (2012) 70-4 for a critical discussion of Gould's essay.

⁴² See. Koning (2010) 195.

⁴³ It appears for example in *Ar. Av.* 693 and *Nub.* 424. As will be discussed in Chapter Three it also plays an ambiguous role in many Orphic theogonies.

(DK 7 B 1). While this is often dismissed as a later Stoic addition, who similarly understood the word through the related verb χεῖομαι (SVF 1.103), I see no reason why the view cannot have been held by both Pherecydes and the Stoics. Wordplay is very common in early Greek poetry and the imagery of a watery beginning is well established in Mediterranean cosmologies.⁴⁴ Even Homer calls Okeanos and Tethys the father and mother of all the gods (*Il.* 14.200-4). This was, however, just one reading and Chaos was as at home in the underworld as he was in the sea. Aristophanes in the *Birds* (698) describes Chaos as the winged partner of Eros. While Chaos' wings may simply complement the play's feathered protagonists, when Chaos is said to mingle with Eros in a recess of Tartarus, it is unlikely that the audience envisioned a gap. Nor is the god happy to remain in a single location; elsewhere he appears in the sky (192). Aristotle differs again, interpreting Chaos in relation to making space, this time perhaps relating it to the verb χωρέω (*Phys.* D1. 2-8b29).⁴⁵ It is not entirely clear what Epicurus thought of Chaos, yet he certainly did not envision it as a gap when he reportedly began his philosophical career in search of what preceded it (Diog. Laert. 10.2). For others Chaos appears to be exactly what so many scholars distance it from, disorder. Pseudo Lucian (*Amores* 32) describes:

σὺ γὰρ ἐξ ἀφανοῦς καὶ κεχυμένης ἀμορφίας τὸ πᾶν ἐμόρφωσας. ὥσπερ οὖν ὅλου κόσμου τάφον
τινὰ κοινὸν ἀφελὼν τὸ περικεῖ μενον χάος ἐκεῖνο μὲν ἐς ἐσχάτους Ταρτάρου μυχοῦς
ἐφυγάδευσας...

For you [Eros] gave shape to everything out of dark confused shapelessness. As though you had removed a tomb burying the whole universe alike, you banished that Chaos which enveloped it to the recesses of farthest Tartarus...⁴⁶

This too was the Chaos opted for in Latin by Ovid in his *Metamorphosis*, (1.11-2) where he describes it as:

rudis indigestaque moles
nec quicquam nisi pondus iners congestaque eodem
non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum.

A shapeless, unwrought mass of inert bulk and nothing more, with the discordant seeds of disconnected elements all heaped together in anarchic disarray.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Hesiod the philologist is nicely illustrated in his discussion of Aphrodite (*Theg.* 195-200):

τὴν δ' Ἀφροδίτην ἀφρογενέα τε θεὰν καὶ ἐυστέφανον Κυθήρειαν / κικλήσκουσι θεοὶ τε καὶ ἄνδρες, οὐνεκ' ἐν
ἀφρῷ / θρέφθη: ἀτὰρ Κυθήρειαν, ὅτι προσέκυρσε Κυθήροις: / Κυπρογενέα δ', ὅτι γέντο πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ
Κύπρῳ / ἥδ' ἐ φιλομμηδέα, ὅτι μηδέων ἐξεφαάνθη.

'Gods and men call her Aphrodite, because she was formed in foam, and Cytherea, because she approached Cythera, and Cyprus-born, because she was born in wave-crested Cyprus, and 'genial' because she was appeared out of genitals.' Trans. West (1988). In this case Hesiod points out two etymologies which link Aphrodite's birth from the foamy castrated genitals of Kronos with her personal name and epitaph. The first is based on ἀφρός 'foam' and second West approximates in his translation 'genial' from φιλομμηδής, literally 'smile loving,' which Hesiod links with μῆδος 'genitals.'

⁴⁵ See KRS (1957) 36. Elsewhere Arist. *Xen.* 976b14-19 discusses this as the common view. See Koning (2010) 197.

⁴⁶ Trans. MacLeod (1967).

⁴⁷ Tarrant. (2002).

A similar understanding appears in some Egyptian translations. When the Gnostics searched for an equivalent for the Egyptian cosmological term Nun (the primal waters of disorder) they settled on Χάος.⁴⁸ While Kirk may rightly claim that these authors, most of them native Greeks, simply misunderstood the word, it is unclear why Hesiod is not equally susceptible to such a misunderstanding. My point is not that Hesiod definitively did not imagine Chaos as a gap. This may well be part of the answer. However, given the vastly diverging uses of the term by the Greeks themselves, the etymology is a problematic basis for reconstructing the text and only context can affirm or deny how Hesiod understood the term. In other words, we must go back to the very beginning of world once again (*Theog.* 116-20):

ἦ τοι μὲν πρότιστα Χάος γένετ', αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα
 Γαῖ' εὐρύστερνος, πάντων ἕδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ
 ἀθανάτων, οἳ ἔχουσι κάρη νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου,
 Τάρταράτ' ἠερόεντα μυχῶ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης,
 ἦ δ' Ἔρος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι.

First came the Chasm, and then
 broad-breasted Gaia (Earth), secure seat for ever of all
 the immortals who occupy the peak of snowy Olympus,
 the misty Tartara in a remote recess of the broad pathed earth;
 and Eros, the most handsome among the immortal gods.⁴⁹

In one respect at least Hesiod's language is clear; Chaos comes first. The use of ἦ τοι μὲν not only conveys a contrast with the preceding figures but imbues the words which follow with absolute certainty.⁵⁰ πρότιστα signifies not simply first but absolutely first or very first.⁵¹ γένετ' may be translated as came into being or was born.⁵² Just to make sure we understand the order of the sequence, the firstness of Chaos is complemented by αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα⁵³ a traditional couplet used to mark temporal sequences. The usual translation of αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα is something like 'only then,' 'thereafter.' In short Chaos is not preceded by primal matter as Cornford said, nor is he symbolically first, but really second as Miller argues.⁵⁴ Chaos is simply first and Hesiod provides a number of complementary terms within a temporal sequence to reinforce this point. To revise West's translation with added emphasis, we may

⁴⁸ Hornung (2001) 43.

⁴⁹ Trans. West (1988).

⁵⁰ Compare the line with Odysseus' contrast between his account and the deceitful tales of others in his predictions to Eumaeus (*Od.* 14.160): ἦ μὲν τοι τάδε πάντα τελείεται ὡς ἀγορεύω.

⁵¹ The combination of πρότιστα and αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα is also common in Homer. For example (*Il.* 9.168-9): Φοῖνιξ μὲν πρότιστα Διὶ φίλος ἠγησάσθω, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' Αἴας τε μέγας καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς. See also *Il.* 2.5-6; *Od.* 4.456-7.

⁵² If KRS ignores this, Miller (2001) describes that πρότιστα is simply an honorary position. Earth and Tartarus are originally fused in one mass and hence primary 'Chaos, the 'gap' or 'yawning space' that, as the differentiation of each from the other, first lets earth and Tartara be, precedes them' (21).

⁵³ On αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα as indicative of a temporal succession see Hyland (2006) 13.

⁵⁴ Miller (2001) 21.

read these lines as: ‘In truth, Chaos was born absolutely first, and then afterwards came wide Gaia etc.’

It is important to stress that what is at stake in Hesiod’s overture is not a case of ambiguous language. The grammar is clear. What is more opaque is our ability to understand its meaning. Indeed to understand how a gap, space, formlessness, or even chaos in the sense of disorder was born first appears as paradoxical as the Nuer’s insistence that ‘Twins are Birds.’⁵⁵ Anthropology has a long history of struggling with such paradoxes, variously interpreted as examples of confusion or primitive mentality. For cognitive anthropologist, Dan Sperber, these are examples of a general human tendency to hold representations they do not fully understand.⁵⁶ More influential in the anthropological world is the kind of symbolic reading proposed by Evans-Pritchard who interpreted Nuer twins through a kind of analogical logic rather than as a literal statement.⁵⁷ While the solutions offered by Evans-Pritchard and Sperber differ profoundly they both struggle with the same question: ‘why do other people believe something that seems so ridiculous to us?’ Taking this starting point they attempt to clarify the paradoxical statements of others in terms of their own understanding. Martin Holbraad has recently reversed this emphasis stressing: ‘the fact that the people we study may say or do things that to us appear as wrong just indicates that we have reached the limits of our own conceptual repertoire.’⁵⁸ Thus when presented with this kind of puzzling situation, the question is not how such a view could be believable to us (from our perspective they simply are not believable), but rather to see such paradoxes as a point of departure towards understanding ontological assumptions quite different from our own.⁵⁹ I propose that the priority and nature of Hesiod’s Chaos is just this, a difficult and provocative statement, a riddle, and one which is only heightened as the narrative progresses.

If we wish to understand what Chaos is we must consider his position within the poem as a whole.⁶⁰ If Chaos is born first, he is shortly followed by Gaia, Tartarus and Eros. Here we

⁵⁵ Evans-Pritchard (1956) 317-8.

⁵⁶ See Holbraad (2012) 175.

⁵⁷ Evans-Pritchard (1956) 317-8.

⁵⁸ Holbraad (2010) 184.

⁵⁹ See Viveiros de Castro (2002) and the discussion in Holbraad (2012) 49-54.

⁶⁰ If Chaos as a proto-Milesian concept was problematic, the additions of these deities creates almost unsurpassable difficulties to the model. Bussanich (1983) argues that ‘attempts to discern similarities between Hesiod’s Chaos and the ἀρχαί of the Milesians ignore salient facts. First, Hesiod’s cosmogony begins with the triad of Chaos, Gaia, and Eros. Neither the unity nor the universality of the ἀρχαί have been achieved. Second, in their exploration of nature the Milesians identified individual cosmic elements (Thales-water, Anaximenes-air) or something beyond the cosmos (Anaximander’s ἄπειρον) as the originative substance. It is an error to suppose that Chaos, or even Gaia, is a substance in this sense. Third, ἄπειρον in particular is more than the source of things, it also “surrounds and steers all things” (DK A 15). This positive characteristic is totally inappropriate to Chaos and the primordial triad as a whole’ (218). Apart from this, ancient commentators since Heraclitus (DK22 B57) have criticised Hesiod’s dualistic worldview.

again encounter further problems and there is no consensus on how to interpret Hesiod's primordial deities, or even which gods count as primordial. Theories range from excluding Tartarus, to seeing him as an important cosmological principle. Miller, for example, places Tartarus and Gaia as the central protagonists in his interpretation. However, I am inclined to read the unusual form Τάρταρα (119) not as a nominative but as an accusative and a location within Gaia.⁶¹ This still leaves us with a triad comprised of Chaos, Eros and Gaia. Although secondary, Hesiod does not describe these gods as the children of Chaos. They simply appear as inexplicably as Chaos did before them. In other words they have separate origins.⁶² Given the predominantly monistic interpretations imposed on Hesiod, the idea that the world starts with three separate divine beings may seem rather strange. Greek cosmological speculation, however, at some point or other attempted almost every possible combination of first principles and there is no reason not to follow Hesiod's text to the letter at this point. In Pherecydes (DK 7 B1), for example, we see a primal triad of Chthonie (chthonic Earth) and two forces, Zas (similar to Zeus) and Chronos (time).⁶³ Parmenides (DK 28 B 9) discusses the cosmos in terms of the interplay of two elements, light and night, and Empedocles (DK 31 B 17) in terms of the four roots and Love and Strife. While Hesiod's primal triad of gods are not elements or forces, it would be equally problematic to assume they are anthropomorphic gods like Zeus or Apollo. Gaia, for example, is simultaneously the ground on which mortals walk, the mother of pretty much everything and an agent who can offer counsel and advice to Zeus. How we are to understand Eros is less clear. Hesiod says almost nothing about him, yet given his prominent place in the *Theogony* it is likely that he is introduced as an initiator of sexual relations.⁶⁴ According to Calame 'Eros was thus at once a primordial deity and a metaphysical principal, a generating power constructed and animated the relations between things, between

⁶¹ The debate is longstanding. The triadic view is currently the most common and adopted by Clay (2003) 16; Sedley (2007) 3 n 3. Miller (2001) however, argues for an Earth/Tartarus dichotomy at the heart of the *Theogony*. Chaos is relocated as the gap between Earth and Tartarus, which he sees as an original mass separated by Chaos. Eros is positioned as a force of attraction. The understanding of Chaos as a gap, introduces similar weakness to Cornford and KRS' positions. Secondly, the pivotal role Miller gives to Tartarus is questionable. The arguments for seeing Tartarus as space within Earth rather than a primal deity hinge on whether we read Tartarus as a specifically named primal god or a recess within Earth. In later passages Tartarus is grouped alongside Earth, Sky and Pontus (*Theog.* 807) and even in the opening passages Tartarus does not appear as a separate being like Eros and Chaos but is described as a nook within the Earth. Beall (2009) argues that Tartarus is not in the nominative but in the accusative and the object of ἔχουσι. This shifts the meaning from a primal god to a space within Earth. i.e. the gods who hold Olympus and Tartarus.

⁶² Clay (2003)15.

⁶³ Since Aristotle, there has been a tendency to see Pherecydes as more philosophical than Hesiod, yet the two show more overlap than is usually acknowledged. Pherecydes' Chthonie, the chthonic aspect of Earth, is similar to Hesiod's Earth. Both represent the mother of the gods, men and most other beings. Chronos, punning on Hesiod's Kronos, is an abstract force, time. It is certainly possible that Hesiod was aware of this wordplay, though the later appearance of the god and his characterisation suggests he was not utilised in the same way. While Pherecydes does not include Eros in his triad, Proclus (DK 7 B 3) notes that Zas when the situation calls for it can transform into Eros. In general see Schibili (1990). It is however important to note that Pherecydes places his version of Zeus at the very outset of his cosmology rather than as a latecomer.

⁶⁴ See for example Aristotle's views on Eros in *Met.* 1.984b. See also Sedley (2007) 3.

men, and between gods.⁶⁵ This view is certainly how later interpreters appropriated Hesiod's Eros and makes sense of the sexual relations which follow the god's appearance.⁶⁶ After the triad, Chaos, Gaia and Eros, Hesiod's account shifts from abstract and ambiguous gods to a more familiar mythic narrative and struggle amidst anthropomorphic gods. It is also at this point that many philosophical interpreters lose interest and consider that Hesiod abandons his philosophic narrative for the sake of a more conventional (and non philosophic) narrative.⁶⁷ This is unfortunate as it is only at this point that Hesiod begins to describe the roles of these forces in the cosmos. Eros, perhaps taking charge of sexual relations, is not spoken of anymore and the narrative turns to Gaia and her children. Gaia bears Ouranos (Sky) and in turn a long genealogy of gods culminating with Zeus. Gaia, however, is not the only figure with an impressive lineage and Hesiod also narrates how Chaos gives birth through scissiparity to Erebus and Night. The pair in turn, in the only sexual relation among the children of Chaos, bear their opposites, Aither and Day. Afterwards Night, by herself, produces an impressive list of predominantly negative forces including to name but a few Strife, Toil, Famine and tearful Sorrows, Fighting, Battles, Murders, Manslaughters, Quarrels, Lying (210-40).⁶⁸ It is important to stress that not only do both Gaia and Chaos have independent origins and produce many divine children, but also their respective genealogies never intersect.⁶⁹ I will shortly discuss at length the memorable children of Gaia. Presently I wish to turn to Chaos' ambiguous lineage and discuss what Hesiod may intend by introducing abstract deities such as Manslaughters and Battles at this stage of his poem. Although these figures are often downplayed, abstract gods play a very important role in Hesiod's poem and throughout the *Theogony* he utilises abstract gods towards very specific ends and introduces them at pivotal points in the narrative as means of expressing underlying problems or solutions.⁷⁰ While I will discuss several examples of Hesiod's strategic use of abstractions in time, the first and longest example of this strategic use of abstract gods appears in Chaos'

⁶⁵ Calame (1999) 181.

⁶⁶ This sometimes involves displacing Chaos in favour of Eros as occurs in Pl. *Symp.* (178b) and (195c) and Arist. *Metaph.* (984b23-31). See Koning (2015) 198.

⁶⁷ Rowe (1983) 134-5; Miller (1983) 141. See Bussanich (1983). Clay (2003) deals with this at length but incorporates this violence and excess as part of an overarching teleology.

⁶⁸ Clay (2003) 15.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 16.

⁷⁰ How to define an abstract god is not easy. Sometimes Hesiod's abstract gods appear as aspects of another divinity; at other times as vague powers. They also frequently appear as individual anthropomorphic gods in their own right. For a general approach to personifications in Greek religion see Stafford (2000). Whether abstract gods are truly differentiated from anthropomorphic ones is not really important. Indeed in the history of Greek religion no clear answer emerges. Farella discusses a similar phenomenon among the Navaho Indians in relation to the term 'nayéé.' Nayéé is usually translated as monster. However, while monstrous beings are included in this category, so too are abstractions such as old age, poverty and disease etc. Farella (1984) argues: 'Navaho's use nayéé to refer to and describe anything that gets in the way of a person living his life. It refers more to the subjective than to the objective, more to the internal than to the external' (51).

descendents which emerge as a problematic group continuously threatening to destroy the cosmos. Chaos, in this respect, represents not only an ambiguous starting point but a continuing disorderly force throughout the narrative. This makes Chaos and his children a kind of counterpart to the unions created by Eros. As Miller puts it ‘whereas Χάος signifies breach and separation, Ἔρος signifies attraction and coming-together.’⁷¹ In other words, Chaos and Eros are opposing forces, one which tears apart the cosmos, the other which draws it together. The idea of Chaos as breach or separation is also something which is closely associated with its common means of generation, scissiparity.⁷² Scissiparity is not simply an alternative means of reproducing that Hesiod introduces for the sake of variation. Rather it expresses a very different kind of relation. Indeed Hesiod stresses that Chaos’ descendants born through scissiparity are like each other συνήθεας ἀλλήλησιν (*Theog.* 230). From this identification between Chaos and its abstract offspring, we may even suggest that Chaos is scissiparity itself. In this respect, Chaos and its divisive children may be seen as individual deities or as countless refractions of a single nature, difference. The primary significance of Chaos and its children is not then a counter lineage to Gaia, but a force which creates divisions everywhere including among Gaia’s lineage and just as we may interpret Eros’ influence at the basis of every sexual union, in each instance of strife, war and enmity, we see the continued effects of a significant and continuing force, Chaos.⁷³ While I do not wish to over systematise Hesiod’s text, I propose that this loose duality between Eros forming unions and Chaos and his descendants forming divisions characterises Hesiod’s pre-Zeusian cosmos. This is neither an entirely ordered, nor fully disordered, world. Rather the cosmos presents

⁷¹ Miller (2001) 16. I depart from Miller, however, when he incorporates this duality into a neatly unfolding cosmology. In doing so he effectively neutralises Hesiod’s starting point, merging initial difference into a greater unity. I should also point out that Clay (2003) who characteristically devotes ample attention to Hesiodic concerns points out a similar Eris/Eros conflict ‘we can now detect more clearly the operation of two cosmic forces, Eros, which brings things together, and Eris, who forces them apart. It bears emphasizing, however, that they do not simply correspond to the male and female principles, yet both are necessary for the coming-to-be of the cosmos’ (16). This position again argues for a greater unity behind the seeming strife. Lincoln (2012a) 111 adopts a similar position but argues for a central opposition between the lineages of Gaia as ‘substantial’ and Chaos as ‘non material’ deities which never intersect. Prier (1976) 45 in a related model, argues that Gaia is the antithesis of Chaos and mediated by a third term Eros. This interpretation though compelling in so far as it accounts for the twin genealogies of Gaia and Chaos is problematic in other respects. Indeed, Gaia and Chaos are not simply opposed in terms of substantiality and non-substantiality but in terms of form and relation. For this reason I consider Miller’s reading more convincing.

⁷² This is sometimes referred to as parthenogenesis or virgin birth, but scissiparity with its connotations of differentiating (or in honour of Cornford, gapping) is a more appropriate term.

⁷³ The clearest example of Chaos’ influence on Gaia occurs with the pivotal birth of Ouranos, Mountains and Pontus. These gods are separations of Gaia through scissiparity rather than the results of a union created through Eros and create deities which are again similar to each other. In this case of Ouranos and Gaia, Hesiod uses the term ἴσος (*Th.* 126-7) and it is not hard to see how the other large geographical deities are in many respects divisions or boundaries within a more encompassing whole. On the other hand, those produced through sexual generations, as I will soon discuss, tend towards superiority. The same pattern can be seen in the only instance of sexual unions among Chaos’ descendants, i.e. Night and Erebus who produce Day and Aither. These are in no way similar to their parents but opposites. See Lincoln (2012a) 111 for a related point.

itself as a problem, a world continuously coming together and tearing itself apart. Indeed to call such a world a cosmos is misleading. Hesiod describes a chaosmos.⁷⁴

The Ontology of Chaos

Before turning to the role and resolution of disorder in the central narrative of Hesiod's text, it is worth pausing to reflect on the basic assumptions of the narrative so far. I have discussed that many interpretations of Hesiod understand his text in terms of a neat unfolding and even teleological order. I do not wish to argue that these views are wrong. On the contrary, Hesiod's text is complicated and at many times points in multiple directions. It was precisely for this reason that the *Theogony* and in particular figures like Eros and Chaos continued to be the focus of discussion and point of departure for many later Greek thinkers.⁷⁵ However, these views, ancient and modern, tend to be somewhat selective and downplay many elements that do not fit their readings. A notable exception to this appears in Aristotle. Aristotle is among the most complex commentators on Hesiod. At times he considers it possible to rank Hesiod alongside Parmenides (Arist. *Metaph.* 984b 23–31),⁷⁶ at other times side by side with Heraclitus (*Cael.* 298b25–29). A slightly more extensive reflection appears in Book 14 of the *Metaphysics* (14.1091a-b) in an *aporia* on the place of the Good and the Beautiful in cosmological speculation. Aristotle outlines two broad kinds of cosmologies. In one group, including the Persian Magi, the philosophical poet Pherecydes, and the Presocratics, Anaxagoras and Empedocles, the supreme good is placed at the beginning of their cosmological accounts. Aristotle also includes his own prime mover within this category.⁷⁷ The other group do not start with the Good, but place it at a later point in the narrative.⁷⁸ In this group he probably has Speusippus and some Pythagoreans in mind⁷⁹ but also crucially Hesiod and the earlier poets (14.1091b):

οἱ δὲ ποιηταὶ οἱ ἀρχαῖοι ταύτῃ ὁμοίως, ἢ βασιλεύειν καὶ ἄρχειν φασὶν οὐ τοὺς πρῶτους,
οἷον νύκτα καὶ οὐρανὸν ἢ χάος ἢ ὠκεανόν, ἀλλὰ τὸν Δία.

⁷⁴ Viveiros de Castro (2007) describes the Amerindian chaosmos as a time 'where the bodily and spiritual dimensions of beings did not as yet reciprocally eclipse each other' (157-8). In the *Theogony* on the other hand we are presented with a very different image inhabited by monsters and brutal kings, yet I think the term remains useful.

⁷⁵ See Koning (2015) 191.

⁷⁶ The passage is somewhat problematic in that Aristotle discusses Hesiod among those who place Eros first.

⁷⁷ Calvo Martinez (2011) 42. See *Metaph.* 1072b 29.

⁷⁸ This view may seem similar to naturalism, yet it should be stressed that in naturalism nature may be cruel, but it is far from a chaotic force. Indeed many, sophists such as Antiphon (DK 87 B44b) wished to live according to nature.

⁷⁹ See discussion by Calvo Martinez (2011) 42 who further points to *Metaph.* 12.7, 1072b 30–34. I will also return to this passage again in my discussion of the Orphic theogonies in Chapter Three.

the early poets agree with this view in so far as they assert that it was not the original forces—such as Night, Heaven, Chaos or Ocean—but Zeus who was king and ruler.⁸⁰

One striking feature of Aristotle's analysis is that rather than focusing primarily on the early stages of Hesiod's poem and neglecting the mythical sections, Aristotle examines the poem as a whole. Secondly, in many respects he reverses the common assumption and flatly rejects that Hesiod offers an ordered account which starts with the Good and Beautiful, arguing instead that it is something secondary and imposed by Zeus. This view of Hesiod has not received much attention, yet is in some respects similar to a kind of cosmology described by Valeri as a polyontology. Valeri outlines that a polyontology is a cosmology that puts 'the parts ontologically before the whole' and moves from an initial diversity to a temporary unity. Consequently, order and unity within polyontologies is seen as a secondary and 'reversible result.'⁸¹ A good example of such a polyontology is Bateson's summary of the New Guinea, Iatmul creation myth:

They say that in the beginning the crocodile Kavwokmali paddled with his front legs and with his hind legs; and his paddling kept the mud suspended in the water. The great culture hero, Kevembuangga, came with his spear and killed Kavwokmali. After that the mud settled and dry land was formed. Kevembuangga then stamped with his foot on the dry land, i.e., he proudly demonstrated "that it was good."⁸²

In contrast to the neatly unfolding cosmologies described by Kirk and Cornford, Bateson argues that in the Iatmul account order only appears if disorder is opposed.⁸³ Valeri, and later Scott, associate this view in particular with totemistic cosmologies,⁸⁴ such as the Australian Dreaming which describe 'a world already divided into substantive essences that were actualized as classes of particular entities thanks to the intervention of the Dream-beings.'⁸⁵ In other words, the starting point of totemistic cosmologies reflect the basic ontological condition as a whole. Difference is even more central to analogistic cosmologies⁸⁶ where the

⁸⁰ Trans. Tredennick (1933).

⁸¹ Valeri (2001) 293.

⁸² Bateson (1972) 10.

⁸³ Bateson (1972) describes how 'the Iatmul have arrived at a theory of order which is almost a precise converse of that of the book of *Genesis*. In Iatmul thought, sorting will occur if randomization is prevented. In *Genesis*, an agent is invoked to do the sorting and dividing. But both cultures alike assume a fundamental division between the problems of material creation and the problems of order and differentiation' (10).

⁸⁴ Scott (2007) on the Arosi and Valeri (2001) on the Huaulu.

⁸⁵ Descola (2013a) 163.

⁸⁶ Descola (2013a) describes how totemism, though based on a continuity among individuals from the same totem in terms of physicalities and interiorities, in terms of other totems they are 'absolutely different from other similar groupings' (38). Matthews argues that 'totemism is more properly considered a highly specific subset of Analogism. As Scott (2014) points out, the twin continuities of totemism exist only within classes; these classes, however, are necessarily characterized in relation to one another via twin discontinuities, the hallmark of Analogism. Moreover, while each Totemic class has the appearance of a self-contained whole, it makes sense as a class only in relation to other classes with which it is discontinuous; social institutions require the establishment of relations between these classes (see, for example, Descola 2013a: 148–57, 265–67), as members of a particular Totemic group are compelled to associate with members of other such groups precisely because those groups are entirely different in terms of both physicality and interiority. Totemism must logically

world is entirely based on a discontinuity of a ‘multiplicity of essences, forms, and substances separated by small distinctions.’⁸⁷ We might then expect that these differences play a correspondingly important part in analogistic cosmological myths. Surprisingly when it comes to analogical cosmologies, Descola has almost nothing to say.⁸⁸ Scott suggests that this curious omission may be because:

the cosmogonic myths of analogists are not always reliable indices of how analogism works; such myths often seem to present scenarios of original continuity in need of differentiation in ways that obscure rather than reveal the premises of double discontinuity Descola discerns in analogism.⁸⁹

For Scott the issue is sidelined because analogistic cosmologies deceptively resemble monistic cosmologies. I agree with this point to a certain extent. The creation myths of pantheistic and analogistic societies do resemble each other in many respects, hence Cornford could so easily compare Hesiod to Chinese cosmologies such as the *Pangu Kaitian*. However, it would be remarkable if all analogistic creation myths bore no resemblance to their later ontological conditions. An alternative possibility is that, as I have argued in regard with Hesiod, the similarities between analogist and pantheistic creation accounts may have been exaggerated by a tendency to neglect chaotic elements and simply assume the presence of order.⁹⁰ Indeed, Puett argues that even in the harmonious creation myths of China, we can often detect ontological ambivalence, at times pointing towards the cosmic continuity characteristic of pantheism, at other times pointing towards the discontinuity and separation characteristic of analogism.⁹¹ I suggest that a similar tension between pantheistic and analogistic tendencies may also be relevant not only for our understanding of Hesiod, but a great number of Indo-European, Near Eastern and Mediterranean cosmologies. A good starting point in the search for a distinctly analogistic cosmology is the biblical creation myth in *Genesis*. The opening of the King James translation is well known: ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’ There could hardly be a clearer expression of an ordered

be classified as a genus of Analogism, albeit a highly derived one’ (280). Whether we accept this argument or not, difference as Descola argues occupies a pivotal position in both totemism and analogism.

⁸⁷ Descola (2013a) 201.

⁸⁸ Scott (2014) 15.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 15.

⁹⁰ Puett (2011) has recently argued that alongside monistic myths ‘alternative religious views and practices, as well as modes of dealing with the divine, are at least as common’ (123).

⁹¹ Puett (2002) 157. Indeed Matthews (2017) makes just this translation by describing China in terms of a double continuity. Schrempp (1992) 68 too describes how Maori creation myths illustrate both tendencies of pantheistic and analogistic orientations. I have translated Schrempp and Puett’s terminology into Descola’s language. This involves imposing some assumptions but is by and large consistent with their views. Schrempp goes further than this and, examining Maori cosmologies in terms of Kantian antinomies, argues that ontological uncertainties are part of human thought, at various times coming to the fore. Schrempp (1992) lists the antinomies as ‘1. Thesis: the world has, as to time and space, no beginning (limit). Antithesis: the world is, as to time and space, finite. 2. Everything in the world is constituted out of the simple. Antithesis: thesis is nothing simple, but everything is composite. 3. Thesis: there are in the world causes through freedom. Antithesis: there is no freedom, but all is nature. 4. thesis in the series of world-causes there is some necessary being. Antithesis: There is nothing necessary in the world, but in this series all is contingent’ (139-40).

beginning and the term ‘created’ strongly suggests the idea of an ordered creation *ex nihilo*. The Hebrew text, however, is more ambiguous and also describes an initial formless waste (*tohu wabohu*) within chaotic waters (*tehom*). Furthermore, rather than an act of creation, the term *bara*’ is closer to an act of separation or division of this pre-existing material.⁹² Although the Biblical narrative can hardly be described as a chaotic account, it is not entirely orderly either.⁹³ A similar position appears in Egypt, which again is often held as an exemplar of an ordered cosmos. However, disorder too plays an important role in the form of Nun. In the Heliopolis creation myth the initial condition, Nun, is envisioned as a chaotic watery condition which eventually gives birth to Atum and an orderly cosmos. Like Hesiod’s Chaos, Nun is a difficult word to define, moving between a watery abyss and the chaotic forces which threaten the state. Some scholars do not strongly differentiate between Nun’s two aspects.⁹⁴ Assmann, however, argues that the primordial Nun and the later post creation negative or what he calls ‘cratogonic chaos’ are two separate phenomena which should not be confused.⁹⁵ This could be the case, yet it is possible that in Nun we see an ambiguous force which could be potentially drawn either towards order or chaos.⁹⁶ So far the emphasis remains by and large on the side of order over chaos.⁹⁷ Other Mediterranean examples, however, decidedly shift the balance towards disorder. The first example I want to look at is the post-Hesiodic cosmology in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* (1. 5-9):

Ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum
unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe,
quem dixere chaos: rudis indigestaque moles
nec quicquam nisi pondus iners congestaque eodem
non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum.

Before the seas and lands had been created, before the sky that covers everything,
Nature displayed a single aspect only throughout the cosmos;
Chaos was its name: a shapeless, unwrought mass
of inert bulk and nothing more, with the discordant seeds of disconnected elements
all heaped together in anarchic disarray.⁹⁸

⁹² Di Mattei (2016) 7. López Ruiz (2012) also notes that the account ‘presumes the existence of “something” at the moment of creation. First, tohu-wa-wohu (“welter and waste”) is not “nothing,” and is immediately characterized as some mass of waters, very much in the Mesopotamian tradition. Then, the very first words can be read in a way that underscores even more the fact that the narrative is about the starting point of God’s creation, not of the universe itself’ (35).

⁹³ This striking opening was also the product of a richer history of debated beginnings. In *Psalm 74*, for example, we see disordered forces play a more prominent part and Yahweh must defeat a dragon-like Leviathan. See López Ruiz (2012) 37.

⁹⁴ Traunecker (2001) notes ‘because all life emerged from him, Nun was a place of regeneration but also an emanation of the uncreated and thus, a dangerous intrusion of the unorganized into the ordered world’ (73-74).

⁹⁵ Assmann (2003) 189.

⁹⁶ Assmann (2014) elsewhere argues for a great deal of diversity in Egyptian cosmological speculation.

⁹⁷ Plato too fits within this schema and contrasts an initial period of disorder (ἄμετρος) followed by a demiurge to help things get started (διακοσμέω) (*Tim.* 53a). Yet Plato’s flirtation with disorder seems like a light prelude compared with Hesiod’s gigantic overture and it is questionable how comparable these systems really are. For a detailed comparison of the two see Boys-Stones (2009).

⁹⁸ Trans. Tarrant (2002).

Ovid's Chaos entirely collapses Assmann's distinction between primordial and cratogenic chaos. Chaos is here unquestionably aligned with disorder, so much so that only through the help of god or nature is the condition resolved. Yet Chaos, as in Middle Kingdom Egypt, never quite disappears. According to Tarrant:

Chaos in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is not limited to the poem's opening episode but has a pervasive presence in the poem, both in the physical world and, more significantly, in the moral lives of human beings.⁹⁹

If Ovid was clearly influenced by Hesiod, we can also see the importance of Chaos in Hesiod's Near Eastern predecessors and in particular in the Mesopotamian *Enûma Eliš*.¹⁰⁰ This cosmology is relevant not only because of its well documented connections with Hesiod but because the chaotic element has long since been recognized as a pivotal focus in Mesopotamian religion.¹⁰¹ The starting point of the Babylonian myth like the Egyptian is again a watery chaos, the mixing of Tiamat and Apsu, which refuses to be separated:

When the skies above were not yet named
Nor Earth below pronounced by name
Apsu, the first one, their begetter
And maker Tiamat, who bore them all,
Had mixed their waters together,
But had not formed pastures, nor discovered reed beds;
When yet no gods were manifest,
Nor names pronounced, nor destinies decreed,
Then gods were born within them.¹⁰²

Tiamat, the primal deity is not simply limited to the beginning of the account but a continuing force of destruction throughout the narrative until finally suppressed by the Babylonian Zeus, Marduk, who creates heaven and earth from the body of Tiamat.¹⁰³ In this respect, Frankfort notes, with echoes of Aristotle's remarks on Hesiod, 'the actual creation forms, not the beginning, but the end of the narrative.'¹⁰⁴

While these cosmologies are far from identical, developing within a richly interconnected ancient world, it is not surprising that they share a family resemblance.¹⁰⁵ This is particularly the case with their ambiguous depiction of chaos as a force which is both essential to the

⁹⁹ Tarrant (2002) 349.

¹⁰⁰ These have been usefully compiled and compared alongside the Greek material by López Ruiz (2010).

¹⁰¹ Frankfort (1948) 215-221.

¹⁰² Trans. Dalley (2008).

¹⁰³ Sonik (2013) has adopted Assmann's distinction between different kinds of chaos in a Babylonian context though I am not convinced. The narrative of the *Enûma Eliš* is one of repeated fighting, changes of rule, where only at its very end Sky is separated from Earth.

¹⁰⁴ Frankfort (1978) 232. Rochberg (2005) also notes 'as forces and agents within natural objects, the gods brought order to the cosmos through authority and law. The cosmos was not seen as a self-governing body, but as ruled by divine law' (319).

¹⁰⁵ For a general list of similarities see López-Ruiz (2012) 31. In the case of Ovid the direction of influence is clear. Similarly the strong links between Hesiodic and Babylonian myths is now well established (e.g. Burkert 2004). Greek/Egyptian comparisons are also becoming increasingly important. See, for example, the discussion of Egyptian influence on Hesiod by Faraone and Teeter (2004).

creation of the cosmos and a continuing potential threat to its existence. Descola would probably classify all these societies as analogistic. However, cosmologically speaking these societies point in two directions. Sometimes Chaos has been drawn towards the side of order and minimised or even eliminated. In this case we may see a tendency towards the development of pantheistic systems as arguably occurs in certain strands of Egyptian thought.¹⁰⁶ In other texts, such as the *Enûma Eliš* and Hesiod's *Theogony*, Chaos is stretched out so that it forms the bulk of the narrative. Here Chaos takes centre stage and the cosmos, or more correctly the 'chaosmos', is seen as a problem in need of solution. I call this kind of narrative a typical analogistic cosmology.

Ouranos and Kronos or how *not* to rule the Chaosmos

Despite efforts to cleanse Hesiod of Chaos, as the narrative moves towards what West calls 'the backbone of the *Theogony*,' this possibility collapses altogether.¹⁰⁷ Indeed at this point even sympathetic readers of Hesiod are inclined to agree that the poet abandons his truly philosophic interests in favour of mythical stories.¹⁰⁸ Other than a deeply held and somewhat arbitrary association between gods and irrationality, there is no real reason why the mythic narrative should be considered less philosophically interesting than the opening cosmogony.¹⁰⁹ Aristotle not only made no such division, but saw in the conclusion of the mythical fights the expression of Hesiod's concept of the Good.¹¹⁰ Following in his footsteps, I will argue that the myth of succession is Hesiod's clearest expression of the cosmos as a problem. The action begins immediately following the primal triad, when Gaia bears Ouranos, one equal to herself (ἴσον ἑαυτῇ) (126-7). This pair provides an excellent example of the dual influence of Eros and Chaos. Initially split by chaotic division, Eros attempts to collapse this division as Ouranos literally wraps himself around Gaia, plunging the world into darkness and reversing the very differentiation which first bore him. However, this erotic union which initially hinders the development of the cosmos has the side effect of producing diversity and Gaia bears children who are often superior to their parents. Ouranos, despising his children, forces them under the earth. Gaia then attempts to punish this behaviour by urging her children to castrate their father. Kronos, the youngest, agrees and having defeated Ouranos,

¹⁰⁶ An inscription from a 12th century BC Egyptian tomb, for example, describes the creator god Amun in very pantheistic terms: Your eyes are the sun and the moon/ Your head the sky/Your feet the underworld. *Imiseba* (TT 65) in Assmann (2014) 18.

¹⁰⁷ West (1966) 31.

¹⁰⁸ Rowe (1983) 134-5; Miller (1983) 141. See Bussanich (1983).

¹⁰⁹ See discussion by Tor (2017) 17.

¹¹⁰ Clay (2003) 152 also treats the narrative as a whole but, as argued above, considers it part of a complex teleological development.

casts his testicles into the sea and prevents Ouranos from suffocating Gaia. Kronos' ascension thus reinstates the initial division between Ouranos and Gaia. However the new king is no wiser than his parent and his first act as ruler mirrors that of his father. Copulating with another feminine power closely associated with the earth, Rhea, Kronos is warned that his children will one day overthrow his rule. To avoid this disaster Kronos, rather than force his children under the earth, eats each child as they emerge from Rhea's womb.

While this narrative has proven so abhorrent to philosophers, this series of kings and conquerors is the closest thing we have to a repeated and ordered pattern in the *Theogony*. Moreover this pattern is by no means unique to Hesiod and appears in a number of related myths such as the Babylonian *Enûma Eliš*, the Hurro-Hittite, *Song of Kumarbi* and the Phoenician theogony recounted by Philon of Byblos.¹¹¹ Littleton has proposed that all these variations follow a single pattern:

(1) *generations are born*, (2) *parents aggress against their offspring*, (3) *offspring aggress against their parents*, and (4) *offspring replace their parents*. The first category introduces the idea of succession; the second category states a thesis; the third category serves as its antithesis; and the final category can be viewed as a synthesis.¹¹²

In Littleton's somewhat Hegelian pattern, a structurally inclined analyst might note a neat set of oppositions such as sky/earth, male/female, parents/children governed by Chaos and Eros. Yet this static framework does not take account of the dialectic which Littleton stresses. While oppositions such as male and female are indeed present, they switch so rapidly that it is often impossible to say where the poles are. In other words, a fixed structural order does not apply at this point. Kronos, for example, starts in the female pole, yet after defeating Ouranos, he occupies the male opposition, only to alternate again when defeated by Zeus. Rather than a developing order I argue that these conflicts are illustration of a cosmos unable to get started. This is not to deny that the world increasingly develops and diversifies and as each generation advances, the cosmos proliferates with beings and erotic partnerships. My point is simply that development is not synonymous with teleology and from the first batch of children on, the world gets increasingly strange as hybrid beings with hundreds of hands and almost as many heads emerge and populate the earth. Clay describes these figures as essentially disruptive, creatures who 'violate the classificatory system of the *Theogony* and subvert the process of individuation and articulation that underlies the Hesiodic scheme of evolution.'¹¹³ This view, however, is not really supported by the texts. The Hundred Handers are fearsome gods, yet far from disrupting the order of the cosmos they are the allies of Zeus. The Titans, on the other

¹¹¹ The most extensive comparative treatment is López Ruiz (2010). She also includes the *Derveni Theogony* which I will discuss at length in Chapters Three and Four. For a brief but useful summary see Littleton (1969).

¹¹² Littleton (1969) 82.

¹¹³ Clay (2001)151. For a more extensive catalogue of hybrids see especially Clay (2001) 150-75.

hand are anthropomorphic beings, yet appear as disruptive forces. If hybrids seem to straddle the sides of order and disorder simultaneously it is somewhat arbitrary to see them as subverting ‘the process of individuation and articulation.’ Instead I propose that hybrids exemplify the current cosmic situation, not as one whose teleological scheme is hindered, but as one which refuses categorisation altogether.¹¹⁴ Rather than an ordered system what Hesiod presents is a world defined by contradictions. There is no better example of Hesiod’s problematic cosmos than the paradoxical god and ruler Kronos. For Hesiod and the Greeks at large, Kronos is a rather strange god at times characterised as the eater of children (*Theog.* 473), at others as the benevolent leader of a utopian afterlife (*Op.* 110-20). This image was long lasting and appears again in the Athenian *Kronia*, a festival much like the Saturnalia, where masters and servants ate side by side. On the other hand, in Rhodes, Kronos historically appears in association with rituals of human sacrifice (Porph. *De Abst.* 2. 54). Versnel, neatly capturing these contradictory images, describes the *Kronia* as a ‘marked ambivalence in the Greek concept of harmony: the ideal of freedom and abundance is unstable, it cannot last, because it carries the real seed of social anomie and anarchy.’¹¹⁵ I argue a similar ambivalence characterises this stage of Hesiod’s cosmos. This is a period where rulers repeatedly change hands and oppositions refuse to remain in place. Take, for example, the differentiation of Gaia and Ouranos. In some respects we may see this occurring when Gaia gives birth to Ouranos (126). Yet immediately after, Kronos must differentiate them again by castrating his father (164-82). Even at this stage the division is somewhat unclear and full differentiation awaits Zeus’ appointment of trusty Atlas who places Ouranos on his shoulders and now stands at a pivotal intersection, alongside the newly built gates of Night and Day. The question of how Sky, Earth, Night, Day existed before these clear divisions were put in place is not answered. Like Kronos’ combination of peace and love, the scene is unimaginable and nicely encapsulates Hesiod’s chaosmos as a world of ambiguity, ever on the verge of collapsing, yet never doing so. This unimaginable world comes to its climax with Typhoeus, the seven headed dragon Clay dubs ‘*acosmia* incarnate.’¹¹⁶ At this monumental battle nothing is clear. Zeus or Typhoeus may win and rule over very different worlds. Even when Zeus defeats his enemy and secures his reign, the image is bleak. The world is all but destroyed in an apocalyptic conflagration (860-8). This too has a positive side and Zeus’ rule effectively begins with a blank canvas.

¹¹⁴ It may be helpful to draw a parallel here between the hybrids of the *Theogony* and those in Empedocles’ (DK 31 B 61) zoogony characterised by man-faced oxen and wandering limbs. See Sedley (2007) 33-52.

¹¹⁵ See Versnel (1994) 90-136 for a comprehensive discussion of Kronos and the *Kronia*.

¹¹⁶ Clay (2001) 26.

Zeus, Oedipus and the King of Fiji

I have argued so far that the early chaosmos appears not as an unfolding order but as a problem. Ouranos and Kronos recognize this situation and in their different attempts at subduing their children they fail. The idea of the world as a problem needing to be solved could be seen in terms of a philosophical *aporia*, yet I would instead like to examine it in terms of another, perhaps equally arbitrary category, the riddle.¹¹⁷ While there is no shortage of riddles in Greek mythology, easily the most famous was that set by the Sphinx. According to Ps. Apollodorus (3.5.8), prior to eating her interlocutor she would ask:

τί ἐστὶν ὃ μίαν ἔχον φωνὴν τετράπουν καὶ δίπουν καὶ τρίπουν γίνεται;

What is that which has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed?¹¹⁸

While the question seemingly presents a series of bizarre hybrid beings which confound all reason, an appropriate description of the Sphinx herself, the initial plurality is reducible to a unity. The answer, as is well known, is man in his three stages of life, infancy, maturity and old age. Oedipus not only unravels this mystery but in doing so takes the crown. Zeus finds himself in a similar situation. His story begins as an underdog. Kronos is now in charge and fearing that he will be replaced by one of his children, he eats them as soon as they are born. When Zeus is born, his mother Rhea hides him under the earth and offers a stone to Kronos in place of the child. Zeus, once fully grown, enlists the help of the previously persecuted Hundred Handers, overthrows Kronos and takes his place. At this point there is no indication that Zeus' tale will be any different from his predecessors. Like Ouranos and Kronos, he too is warned of an impending threat to his Kingdom. Yet Zeus avoids this by correctly solving the riddle. Rather than wait to eat his superior child, Zeus eats the mother, Metis.

At first glance, Zeus' violent act of cannibalism may seem to have little in common with Oedipus' wit, yet as astutely described by Vernant and Detienne, the narrative is a kind of play on words.¹¹⁹ I noted earlier that Hesiod introduces abstractions to make definite points and argued that the children of Chaos are not definite personalities in the narrative but utilised to express the problematic state of the world. This is also the case for the goddess, Metis, who is introduced for the first time at this point. Her name means cunning intelligence and it was precisely through such an act of μῆτις that Rhea tricked Kronos into eating a stone instead of

¹¹⁷ I draw inspiration for this approach, as elsewhere, from Schrempp (1992) 36 who points out the close intersection between philosophy, myth and riddles in the problems of Zeno and elsewhere.

¹¹⁸ Trans. Frazer (1921).

¹¹⁹ Vernant and Detienne (1991) 55-131.

Zeus (471). Vernant and Detienne develop this into a larger opposition between male force βία versus female intelligence expressed by the terms μῆτις and δόλος. However, as Clay points out, although there is a general male/female opposition in the scheme of the *Theogony*, a similar kind of cunning intelligence too appears in relation with males such as Kronos (495) and Prometheus (547; 559). In this respect, instead of a strictly gendered binary opposition μῆτις is perhaps better viewed as a perennial problem in the cosmos which appears in challenges to the king's rule. Despite this Vernant and Detienne's larger point holds; Zeus's act is not simply a case of eating a goddess, but eating a word, an abstract force which caused the downfall of the previous kings. In doing so he combines within himself power and intelligence which will ensure the continuity of his rule.¹²⁰

The idea of a god or king consolidating power through the encompassment of another divinity or part of a divinity is not only a common Near Eastern trope, it is found in analogistic societies the world over.¹²¹ Sahlins refers to it as the myth of the stranger king, a narrative where a foreign power exerts his authority upon initially egalitarian oppositions. In doing so the king combines the previous oppositions of the conquered people and himself into a single person. In Sahlins' words, the king becomes a 'conjunction of chief and people, sea and land, [and] generates a synthetic term, the sovereign power: itself male and female, a combination of celeritas and gravitas.'¹²² The reference to 'celeritas and gravitas' emphasises Sahlins' debt to comparativist and classicist Dumézil, yet there is also clear resonance here with Dumont's idea of hierarchy as 'the encompassment of the contrary.'¹²³ The classic example Dumont uses is that of Adam and Eve:

¹²⁰ See Clay (2003) 28; Vernant and Detienne (1991) 55-131; Nelson (1998) 101.

¹²¹ Hesiod's account may show a good deal of originality in his specific wordplays, yet the idea of a storm god eating something and consolidating power occupies an important place in Near Eastern and Greek myths and in particular the Hurro-Hittite, Kumarbi myth (c. 1200 BC). López-Ruiz (2010) 91 also includes the Orphic *Derveni Theogony*. As I will discuss at length in Chapter Three, the similarities depend very much on the reconstruction and interpretation of the papyrus. Despite their differences and often debated reconstructions, in all of these poems the act of eating appears as a means of expressing a particular configuration of difference. In the Kumarbi myth Anu, the equivalent of Ouranos, is castrated by Kumarbi (Kronos) who swallows the phallus of his father. After the act Kumarbi, a male god, becomes pregnant and gives birth to Teshub. The ending is fragmented but seems to involve the eating of a stone and the coronation of Teshub as the new ruler and arranger of the cosmos. When we examine the variations in tandem we can see how both the *Theogony* and Kumarbi cosmologies show a similar structure and focus on, as López-Ruiz (2010) notes, 'the swallowing of a divinity or part of a divinity by another in order to consolidate power' (142). For a more comprehensive summary of the Kumarbi myth, see López-Ruiz (2010) 91-4. While neither the *Enûma Eliš*, nor the *Kumarbi* have the same specific kinship relations as Hesiod, the narrative structure of the successions and many of the attributes of the respective gods permit rough identifications. I do not however imply that all are the same. Indeed the model is even more general and Faraone and Teeter (2004) add Egypt to this, proposing that imagery of the pharaoh swallowing Maat (order), may have influenced Hesiod. I do not think that there is any need, however, to propose such a direct route, given the widespread prevalence of the idea.

¹²² Sahlins (1985b) 99.

¹²³ Dumont (1980) 239.

God creates Adam first, the undifferentiated man, the prototype of “mankind”. In a second stage, he extracts a different being from this first Adam. In this strange operation, on the one hand, Adam has changed identity; from being undifferentiated, he has become male. On the other hand, a being has appeared who is both a member of the human species and different from the main representative of the species. In his entirety, Adam— or “man” in our language—is two things in one: the representative of the species mankind and the prototype of the male individuals of this species. . . . This hierarchical relation is, very generally, that between a whole (or a set) and an element of this whole (or set).¹²⁴

In other words, the encompassing relation, the male, contains both oppositions in one, and thus moves from the equal and problematic male/female opposition to the male or female part against a male-female whole. If in the above example, Dumont presents the relation as something innate from the very creation of woman, what is interesting in Sahlins’ description, is the presence of two contrastive stages, disorder and order,¹²⁵ or an initial riddle concerning ambiguous relations and a solution which unifies the many into an ordered hierarchal whole.¹²⁶ In Hesiodic terms this appears as a shift from the chaosmos and problematic relations of Force (βία) force and Intelligence (Μῆτις) as separate and problematic relations which prevent cosmic growth, to a new hierarchal order which encompasses force and intelligence into a new totality, Zeus.¹²⁷ It is only with the introduction of hierarchal relations that we can speak of anything approaching cosmic order.

Making a Cosmos out of Chaos

While the symbolic significance of Zeus’ ingestion of Metis is a familiar point, only rarely is the essential divergence between the early and later stages of Hesiod’s cosmos stressed. For example, Clay discusses the key differences between Zeus and the previous rulers, yet nonetheless sees this as the expression of the cosmos’ *telos*.¹²⁸ This is a somewhat strange conclusion and arguably the radical innovations of Zeus’ rule stress precisely the opposite, discontinuity with all that went before. The point I wish to stress in this chapter is that there is no cosmos prior to the Good and the Beautiful rule of Zeus and even afterwards Zeus’ power has limitations. Indeed, rather than a creator god, he is an organizer, obsessed with dividing

¹²⁴ Ibid. 239–240.

¹²⁵ According to Sahlins (1985b) ‘Such mythical exploits and social disruptions are common to the beginnings of dynasties and to successive investitures of divine kings. We can summarily interpret the significance something like this: to be able to put the society in order, the king must first reproduce an original disorder. Having committed his monstrous acts against society, proving he is stronger than it, the ruler proceeds to bring system out of chaos. Recapitulating the initial constitution of social life, the accession of the king is thus a recreation of the universe’ (80).

¹²⁶ While it may become reductionist to take the parallels too far, I am not proposing a historical connection extending between Greece and Fiji, but rather that both societies address in their myths the common analogical problem of difference.

¹²⁷ Descola (2013) 228 discusses Dumont’s hierarchies in terms of analogism.

¹²⁸ Clay (2003) ‘the *Theogony* constitutes an attempt to understand the cosmos as the product of a genealogical evolution and a process of individuation that finally leads to the formation of a stable cosmos and ultimately achieves its *telos* under the tutelage of Zeus’ (13).

portions in a contested and fragile world. Rather than the tyrannical rule of his ancestors, his early reign is associated with negotiating and bestowing honours διέταξεν ὁμῶς καὶ ἐπέφραδε τιμᾶς (75; 855) apportioning shares μείρομαι (411-15; 424-28) and repeatedly in terms of allotting honours γέρᾱ (393; 396; 427).¹²⁹ This language, as I will explore in more detail in the next chapter, is not so much that of creation, as of a king's skilful distribution at a feast. If there is no real creation, neither is there any destruction and even rival gods such as Typhoeus and the Titans are imprisoned and encircled by a substantial bronze fence in the Underworld rather than eliminated (746-51). In his famous underworld description, Hesiod is at pains to describe how everything, even Chaos, receives a proper place in Zeus' cosmos.¹³⁰ Lincoln stresses how:

The primal near-emptiness has been annexed, repositioned and put to new use. Now situated between the above and the below, the emptiness of Chaos constitutes and uncrossable barrier that will keep the vanquished in their prison and Zeus on his throne.¹³¹

This relocation is something which should be stressed. In Hesiod's world Chaos is not something which can ever be surmounted. It can, however, be utilised. This reflects a general theme on good and evil in Hesiodic poetry. Strife is admittedly bad. At the same time there exists another Strife which if properly used is actually beneficial. Hesiod's description of two Strifes in the *Works and Days* (*Op.* 11-24) indicates the potential of utilising even negative qualities towards positive ends. If Zeus safely relocates and utilises Chaos, he proves himself equally adept at strategic marriages. His mastery of Eros gives birth to the most famous Olympian gods including Apollo, Artemis, Ares, Dionysus. In his description of this harmonising, Hesiod (*Theog.* 901-2) once again turns to his favourite device, abstract gods, narrating how Zeus in his marriage to Right (θέμις) fathers the Seasons (ᾠραι), Good Order (Εὐνομίην) Justice (Δίκην) Peace (Εἰρήνην). As Clay stresses these abstract deities form clear contrasts to the earlier, Strife, Disorder and Battles etc. associated with the offspring of Chaos.¹³² These are the gifts that Zeus bestows upon mortals, which while never quite removing their suffering, will potentially allow a brief respite from a mostly hostile world. Emblematic of the fundamentally new order introduced by Zeus is the second birth of the Moirai. This second birth has been seen as an oversight of Hesiod, a slip in his vast series of genealogies.¹³³ However, given the context of Zeus reordering the universe and use of abstract

¹²⁹ Clay (2003) 26; Nelson (1998) 101-4.

¹³⁰ This is stressed in terms such as ἐξῆς (738) one after another, in order, in a row. The term is common in Homer, ordered space, setting in order, arranging, e.g. (*Od.* 1.145): ἐς δ' ἦλθον μνηστῆρες ἀγήνορες. οἱ μὲν ἔπειτα ἐξείης ἔζοντο κατὰ κλισμούς τε θρόνους.

¹³¹ Lincoln (2012a) 116.

¹³² Clay (2003) 29.

¹³³ See Solmsen's (1949) 36-38 defence of Hesiod's deliberate introduction of the two generations of the Moirai.

deities throughout at critical periods, there could be no more appropriate illustration than the describing the second birth of goddesses signifying order, apportionment and destiny.¹³⁴

Conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed Hesiod's *Theogony* as an analogistic cosmology which places disorder at the heart of the chaosmos. In this respect I have departed from the dominant monistic or pantheistic interpretations. However, it might be noted that if the chaotic journey I have described differs from teleological interpretations, the endpoint remains the same. Indeed we might be tempted to see the riddle solver Zeus as a kind of *deus ex machina*, resolving all the contradictions which preceded him and finally creating a permanently ordered cosmos.¹³⁵ While this is certainly hammered home in the text where 'it is not possible to deceive or go beyond the will of Zeus' (*Theog.* 613), there is a good deal that suggests that Chaos is a riddle never fully resolved. First, Zeus does not destroy his enemies, he simply relocates them. Secondly, Zeus envisions that his order may be breached and takes the precaution of making the gods swear an oath on the Styx, and severe punishments if any should resist his rule (793-806). This may not occur in Hesiod's *Theogony*, which is hardly the place to question Zeus's authority, yet there are many references in Homer and later poetry to such a possibility. In the *Iliad*, for example, we are told that Hera, Poseidon and Athena once attempted to overthrow Zeus (1.396-406). This is a theme which is given full force in Aeschylus' *Prometheia*, where the danger of succession appears again and we are told that Zeus, like Kronos, 'shall bear a son mightier than his father' (755-75). Even granting that threats to his rule are rare, disagreement and a certain amount of leniency towards offenders is common fare. Finally and most importantly, the cosmos as Hesiod, Homer and nearly all Greeks know is a very chaotic place, populated by malevolent gods, illnesses and war.¹³⁶ If Greek scholarship has attempted to downplay the extent of everyday chaos, in Babylon we find a rather different view. While Marduk's pre-eminence remains the ideal, events frequently intervene which challenge his rule such as his imprisonment during the New Year festival. These myths indicate that Kingship in Babylon was not a given reflection of a permanent cosmic order but an agreement renewed and re-enacted each year, in Marduk's case at the Atiku festival. It has been argued that this festival was no less than a recreation of

¹³⁴ Clay (2003) 29.

¹³⁵ Clay (2003) 26; Nelson (1998) 103. See Yasumura (2013) for an extensive treatment of the early challenges to Zeus.

¹³⁶ As Hesiod (*Op.* 176-9) describes it: νῦν γὰρ δὴ γένος ἐστὶ σιδήρεον: οὐδέ ποτ' ἥμαρ παύονται καμάτων καὶ οἰζύος, οὐδέ τι νύκτωρ φθειρόμενοι. χαλεπὰς δὲ θεοὶ δώσουσι μερίμνας: ἀλλ' ἔμπηξ καὶ τοῖσι μεμείξεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν. 'For now truly is a race of iron, and men never rest from labour and sorrow by day, and from perishing by night; and the gods shall lay sore trouble upon them. But, notwithstanding, even these shall have some good mingled with their evils.' Trans. Evelyn-White (1914).

the cosmos and a re-enactment of Marduk's triumph over disorder and according to Somer 'the Babylonian Akitu brought back chaos in order that chaos could be expelled.'¹³⁷

This combination of order and disorder is something inherently puzzling, an issue often viewed as incompatible with cosmological conceptions and consequently charitably interpreted away by philosophers. Yet charity can harm as much as it helps, especially when we end up rewriting Hesiod's words. I have argued throughout this chapter that Hesiod places difference not sameness at the core of his cosmos and that disorder is never eradicated, but rests on a precarious negotiation and contract between the gods. Of course the very emphasis on these precautions, indicates that Chaos as with Ovid, Egypt and Babylon can always potentially return. This is at the very core of what it means to live in an analogistic society. Difference is the reality of the cosmic world and analogies and other rituals are efforts to maintain this balance. Indeed when we turn to Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Zeus' order appears far more precarious and even previously good kings have turned crooked.¹³⁸ This return of Chaos is indicative of the fragile balance between order and disorder that exists within analogistic societies and is nicely illustrated by the return of another stranger king, Odysseus. In *Odyssey* 19.109-14, a pivotal point prior to Odysseus' victory against the chaotic suitors and ascension to the throne, the weary traveller describes the potential results of the good rulership of a king:

ὅς τε θεοῦδης
ἀνδράσιν ἐν πολλοῖσι καὶ ἰφθίμοισιν ἀνάσσω
εὐδικίας ἀνέχῃσι, φέρῃσι δὲ γαῖα μέλαινα
πυροῦς καὶ κριθάς, βρίθῃσι δὲ δένδρεα καρπῶ,
τίκτεθ' ἔμπεδα μῆλα, θάλασσα δὲ παρέχῃ ἰχθῦς
ἐξ εὐηγείης, ἀρετῶσι δὲ λαοὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.

who with the fear of the gods in his heart,
is lord over many mighty men,
upholds justice; and the black earth bears
wheat and barley, and the trees are laden with fruit,
the flocks bring forth young unceasingly, and the sea yields fish,
all from his good leading; and the people prosper under him.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Somer (2000) 95. Smith (1976) has criticised this dominant interpretation seeing the Akitu as a reactionary development established by the Hellenistic Kings. His argument is far from conclusive. See Somer (2000) for a discussion and argument in favour of the traditional interpretation.

¹³⁸ This point is taken from Puett (2011) who argues that in China elaborate rituals were not aimed at reflecting an overarching cosmic order but were efforts 'to take a highly dangerous corpus of spirits and transform it into a hierarchical pantheon that would help human endeavours.' Puett continues 'like the domestication of the natural world and the domestication of human emotions – is never complete. The deities are more powerful than the human domesticating rituals, so they often do not act according to those categories. The gods and ancestors always tend to revert to being demons and ghosts haunting humanity, just as dangerous human emotions continue to emerge against other humans and just as droughts and floods (the parts of nature humans cannot domesticate) continue to cause hunger and starvation' (124-5).

¹³⁹ Trans. Murray (1919).

The image is rich, and mirrors Zeus' rule where good order extends from the king right down to the fertility of the fields. It is all the more crucial given its prominent position, after so much strife, discord and cosmic disturbance, in both the mortal and divine worlds, there is a hope that the balance will be tilted once again. Despite some differences in the cosmological views of Homer and Hesiod, (though not nearly as many as often argued) Hesiod uses precisely the same image in the *Works and Days*. He adds, however, that good rule not only encourages growth among the people and the city, fertile crops and good children but that good order too prevents famine and disaster and Zeus declaring 'cruel war against them' (*Op.* 25-240). He also specifies that this system works in reverse. If the good king can encourage fertility in the fields, equally 'a whole city suffers for a bad man who sins and devises presumptuous deeds' (*Op.* 239-40).¹⁴⁰ Thus relations, good or bad, move not only from the top down, but bottom up, indicating an extensive chain between the acts of a single man and the potential disorder of the entire cosmos. This I argue is how we should envision the analogistic system Hesiod presents, not as balanced and ordered state but as a fragile harmony which gods and men attempt to maintain through kingship, negotiations and ritual. Hesiod in the *Works and Days* elaborates the idea of cultivating this cosmos through the practice of farming.¹⁴¹ Kings, both mortal and immortal, do it through fairly negotiating power and pleasing their subjects. There was also another far more common means of controlling potential chaos in an analogical world, sacrifice.

¹⁴⁰ Evelyn-White (1914).

¹⁴¹ In other words, Hesiod's farming manual is not a guide to following a pre-given divine order, but a guide towards cultivating order and preventing potential chaos. This is a world where gods, men, Kings and farmers interact to stabilise through moderation. Hesiod (*Op.* 40-1) even provides the correct ratio for doing so: νήπιοι, οὐδὲ ἴσασι νόσῳ πλέον ἢ μισυ παντὸς/οὐδ' ὅσον ἐν μαλάχῃ τε καὶ ἀσφοδέλῳ μέγ' ὄνειαρ. 'Fools! They know not how much more the half is than the whole, nor what great advantage there is in mallow and asphodel.' Trans. Evelyn White (1914). The idea is borrowed from Miller (2001) 23.

CHAPTER TWO

Men like Gods: Sacrifice, Sharing and Affinity in Hesiod's Mekone

Having discussed Hesiod's *Theogony* as an analogistic cosmology, In this chapter I turn to how mortals and immortals fit within Zeus' hierarchal configuration. Specifically I look at Mekone and the time when mortals and immortals negotiated their respective destinies over the body and divisions of a sacrificial ox. The chapter, taking the form of an extended dialogue with Vernant, interrogates what kind of relation sacrifice creates between gods and men. Does it form the basis of a commensal tie based on the shared meal as Robertson Smith argued? Does it emphasise the fundamental difference between ontologically separate beings *à la* Vernant? Focusing on meat as an ambiguous intermediary substance, I attempt to navigate a path between separation and sharing, and argue that sacrifice was a flexible and creative act where mortals and immortals approached each other neither as kin, nor as strangers, but through the volatile relationship known as affinity.

Gods and Men as Antitypes

The previous chapter argued at length that difference is the key assumption of Hesiod's *Theogony*. Difference, however, appeared in two main forms, first, the *chaosmos*, where it existed in an ambiguous and an often volatile state, and secondly, under Zeus' rule, where it formed part of an organized hierarchy. Hesiod's emphasis on the importance of differentiation was hardly unique. Indeed polarities abounded in the Greek world and repeatedly appeared in oppositions such as 'Greek-barbarian, men-women, citizen-alien, free-slave.'¹ Nowhere, however, is the importance of difference more clearly emphasised than in the relationship between gods and men. In the words of Homer's Apollo (*Il.* 5. 440):

οὐ ποτε φύλον ὁμοῖον
ἀθανάτων τε θεῶν χαμαι ἐρχομένων τ' ἀνθρώπων.

Never the same is the tribe of gods
who are immortal, and men who walk ground.²

Difference is something often insisted upon by gods and men alike but not always as easy to define. This is particularly the case in respect to anthropomorphic gods like Apollo and god-like men such as Diomedes.³ Yet if these tribes outwardly resemble each other, the similarity

¹ Cartledge (1993) 16.

² Trans. Lattimore (1951) modified.

³ The precise nature of dissimilarity is more difficult to specify. After all, Apollo is talking to a god-like man who has just wounded a goddess in battle (5.334-40). This ambiguity is also reflected in the term ὁμοῖος which Heiden (2007) argues should be translated as equivalent. Nagy (2010) argues for a more general likeness and

is entirely superficial. This is clear in the very word for the gods ἀθάνατοι, a term which literally means ‘not mortal.’ Like their very name, the bodies and souls of the immortals, though analogously similar, are somehow not mortal. One key and repeated example of this ontological difference appears in respect to the very different diets of men and gods.⁴ Men, as Homer and Hesiod never tire of reminding us, are bread-eaters.⁵ Barley or bread is not only a characteristic of their diets, ἄλφιτον is literally the marrow of men (μυελὸν ἀνδρῶν) (*Od.* 2.290; 20.108). Like blood, marrow, for the archaic poets, is one of the central human components in Homeric anthropology and equated with the very life (αἰών) of man.⁶ In Homer, αἰών appears to have a very concrete meaning, appearing as a fluid which emerges from tears (*Od.* 5.151-3). Elsewhere (*Il.* 19.27) it is said that when the αἰών is slain out [of the man], and accordingly the flesh will rot (ἐκ δ’ αἰὼν πέφεται, κατὰ δὲ χροῖα πάντα σαπῆναι). Following the Homeric scholia on this line, Onians has identified αἰών as bone marrow and hence directly connected this ‘stuff of life’ with the bread mortals eat.⁷ If men are made of bread, the diet of the gods is comprised of antithetical foods.⁸ In Book 5 of the *Odyssey*, Homer describes how Odysseus and Calypso sit at the same table but eat very different things (5.196-99):

Νύμφη δ’ ἐτίθει πάρα πᾶσαν ἔδωδὴν,
 ἔσθειν καὶ πίνειν, οἷα βροτοὶ ἄνδρες ἔδουσιν·
 αὐτὴ δ’ ἀντίον ἔζεν Ὀδυσσεύος θεῖοιο,
 τῇ δὲ παρ’ ἄμβροσίνην δμῳαὶ καὶ νέκταρ ἔθηκαν.

While the nymph set out before him every kind
 of food and drink that mortal men will take.
 Calypso sat down face-to-face with the king

unspecified similarity. See Tor (2017) 69-71 for a mid position, arguing at times the term is closer to equivalence, at times a more general likeness, and at others still it blurs these meanings.

⁴ See Stocking (2017) 27 and Lloyd (2010) 832. For a more lengthy discussion on the use of food to create divisions between ancient Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities see Freidenreich (2011).

⁵ For example *Op.* 82: ἀνδράσιν ἀλφιστῆσιν; (*Od.* 8.222): βροτοὶ εἰσιν ἐπὶ χθονὶ σῖτον ἔδοντες. Apollo too describes how diet and mortal bodies are analogously entwined (*Il.* 21. 462-467): ἐννοσῖγαι’ οὐκ ἄν με σαόφρονα μὴθῆσαι/ἔμμεναι, εἰ δὴ σοὶ γε βροτῶν ἔνεκα πολεμίζω/δειλῶν, οἱ φύλλοισιν ἐοικότες ἄλλοτε μὲν τε/ζαφλεγέες τελέθουσιν ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδοντες, ἄλλοτε δὲ φθινύθουσιν ἀκήριοι.

‘Shaker of the earth, you would have me be as one without prudence/If I am to fight even you for the sake of insignificant/mortals, who are as leaves are, and now flourish and grow warm/with life, and feed on what the ground gives, but then again/fade away and are dead.’ Trans. Lattimore (1951). See also Clay (1981) 113 and Garcia (2013) notes ‘Mortals flourish in one season only to wither and perish in another like the leaves of trees and the fruit of the field upon which they feed—the consumption of food which itself grows and rots guarantees man’s participation in the same temporal economy’ (167).

⁶ Hesiod had this meaning in mind in his reference to gods and men not possessing ἰσαίωνες ‘equal aeons’ (*Cat.* 7). The line is reconstructed. See Irwin (2005) 39.

⁷ See Onians (1951) 200-6; Clarke (1999) agrees that αἰών is an ‘essence that is tantamount to vitality’ (113). Clay (1982) takes the position further and argues, based on the nearly identical term βροτός ‘mortal’ and Homer’s rare term for ‘blood’ or ‘gore’ (βρότος), that mortal blood was created through the bread they ate. Thus mortals are ‘those who have blood in their veins,’ and ‘this blood is conceived of as produced by their eating of grain’ and because of this ‘blood, the consumption of grain, and mortality are thus linked to form a definition of human life’ (114).

⁸ When Hesiod wants to differentiate the Bronze Race from the Silver, it is enough to say they do not eat bread (*Op.* 146).

and the women served her nectar and ambrosia.⁹

These are key examples of analogically similar but ontologically opposed foods.¹⁰ Ambrosia is self-referential and literally means ‘not mortal.’¹¹ The closely related foodstuff, nectar, is more opaque but has been etymologically linked with ‘getting across death.’¹² In both cases the transformative power of these foods is abundantly testified. In the *Iliad*, Hera applies ambrosia to her skin and becomes more beautiful (14.170). Elsewhere wounds are healed with this miraculous substance (*Il.* 14.170-2). In the *Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo* (124-130), the infant Apollo is fed ambrosia and instantly outgrows his clothing, walks and talks. One of the most eloquent expressions of the effects of ambrosia appears when Aphrodite is wounded by the mortal hero Diomedes. Homer informs us in one of his ethnographic asides that rather than blood, ἰχώρ flows through the veins of the goddess. He even offers an explanation why (*Il.* 5. 339-342):

ῥέε δ' ἄμβροτον αἶμα θεοῖο
ἰχώρ, οἷός περ τε ῥέει μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν·
οὐ γὰρ σῖτον ἔδουσ', οὐ πίνουσ' αἶθοπα οἶνον,
τοῦνεκ' ἄν αἰμονές εἰσι καὶ ἄθνατοι καλέονται

and blood immortal flowed from the goddess,
ichor, that which runs in the veins of the blessed divinities;
for they eat no bread, nor do they drink of the shining
wine, and therefore they have no blood and are called immortal.¹³

While it is possible to read this passage as one which simply distinguishes gods from men, Homer is also offering an explanation. This is stressed through the use of the explanatory γὰρ, ‘for they do not eat or drink mortal food’ and reinforced by τοῦνεκα, ‘therefore they are immortal.’ In this case ἰχώρ is not simply an attribute of the gods but one which is related to the food they eat. Although it is not literally said that ambrosia creates immortal blood, it is difficult to read ἄμβροτον αἶμα without immediately thinking of the nearly identical term, ambrosia.¹⁴ Onians, in this respect, may not be far off the mark when he likens this immortal food to the αἰὼν of the gods.¹⁵

⁹ Trans. Fagles (1996).

¹⁰ Stocking (2017) notes ‘each type of being gets the food that is proper to each one’s ontological status’(124).

¹¹ See Detienne and Sissa (2000) 29-30.

¹² See West (2007) 158.

¹³ Trans. Lattimore (1951) modified.

¹⁴ The idea is common and appears for example in the Norse Apples of Idun. For more examples from the Indo-European tradition see West (2007) 157-60.

¹⁵ For example, when the αἰὼν is slain from Patroklos and his body risks decay, Thetis preserves the flesh with ambrosia and nectar (*Il.* 19.38). See Onians (1951) 204. Clay (1981), on the other hand, argues that for ‘Homer, nectar and ambrosia do not by themselves make the gods immortal, but they prevent them from aging and exempt them from the natural cycle of growth and decay’ (115). Clay tackles the problematic differences between agelessness and immortality and argues that ambrosia only prevents decay in archaic literature.

The Creation of Difference?

The decisive opposition which defines mortal and immortal relations under the current kingship of Zeus, was not always so clear. Indeed, like everything else in the Pre-Zeusian *chaosmos*, early humans once occupied a more liminal and confusing space, living side by side with the gods under the strange rule of Kronos. While I have described the *chaosmos* as defined by hostilities, humans appear to have experienced this period rather differently, dining with the gods and even living like gods themselves (*Op.* 110-120).¹⁶ All good things must come to an end and after this idyllic period Zeus allotted man a more definite place within the hierarchal whole. His allotment, however, is of a rather idiosyncratic kind (*Theog.* 535-544):

καὶ γὰρ ὅτ' ἐκρίνοντο θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ' ἄνθρωποι
Μηκόνῃ, τότε ἔπειτα μέγαν βοῦν πρόφρονι θυμῷ
δασσάμενος προέθηκε, Διὸς νόον ἐξαπαφίσκων.
τῷ μὲν γὰρ σάρκας τε καὶ ἔγκατα πίονα δημῷ
ἐν ῥινῷ κατέθηκε καλύψας γαστρὶ βοεῖη,
τῷ δ' αὖτ' ὅστέα λευκὰ βοὸς δολίῃ ἐπὶ τέχνῃ
εὐθετίσας κατέθηκε καλύψας ἀργέτι δημῷ.
δὴ τότε μιν προσέειπε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε:

Ἰαπετιονίδη, πάντων ἀριδείκετ' ἀνάκτων,
ὦ πέπον, ὥς ἑτεροζήλως διεδάσσαο μοίρας.

When the gods and mortal men were separating (κρίνω) at Mekone,
even then he [Prometheus] with cunning intentions divided (δατέομαι) a great ox
and set portions before them, trying to deceive the mind of Zeus.
One share he made of flesh and inner parts thick with fat upon the hide,
covering them with an ox paunch;
the other he made of white bones dressed up with cunning art
and covered with shining fat.

Then the father of men and of gods said to him:
Son of Iapetus, most glorious of all lords, good sir, how unfairly you have divided
(διαδατέομαι) the portions (μοίρας).'¹⁷

Given the overt focus on the butchering of an animal, Mekone may appear to have little in common with Zeus' other cosmological divisions and has for this reason often been interpreted as an aside from the narrative and an aetiological myth on the origin of sacrifice (*Th.* 556-7).¹⁸ There is no doubt that Mekone is an aetiological myth, yet cosmology and

However, this sense is not always clear and at least at times ambrosia appears to make men immortal. See for example Theocritus (*Id.* XV. 106-108).

¹⁶ This description is taken from the different but related descriptions of the Golden race in the *Works and Days*.

¹⁷ Trans. Evelyn White (1914) modified. As Wirshbo (1982) points out editors such as West (1961) have often favoured replacing τῷ in line 538 or 540 with τοῖς and in this way clarifying one mortal and one divine share. Wirshbo (1982) argues for the original text and points out similar examples of ambiguous referents in Homer (*Il.* 5.144) as part of an overall argument that in 'the Mekone scene of the *Theogony* the emphasis is entirely on the unequal portions rather than on who specifically gets which portion' (106).

¹⁸ Mondì (1986) 26 ; Vernant (1989) 30.

sacrifice, are far from mutually exclusive. In the Vedic *Purusa-Sutka* (10.90), for example, the first god is simultaneously the first sacrifice and his self destruction leads to the formation of the world. This is similar to the Nordic description of the giant Ymir in the *Vafþrúðnismál* poetic Edda, from whom the gods fashion the earth. McClymond stresses more generally that sacrifice is often a cosmological act where ‘Chaos (the natural animal body) is transformed into ordered substance (the ritually arranged body).’¹⁹ This use of Indian parallels might raise accusations of Vedinizing Greek sacrifice and Parker, for example, stresses that unlike its Indian counterpart, ‘Greek sacrifice was entirely unaccompanied by exegesis; there is no reason to think that it was perceived as repeating a world-ordering act.’ Despite the prominent and clearly important juxtaposition of sacrifice and cosmology in Hesiod’s text, and many other Indo-European myths, it must be conceded that indeed the majority of Greek sacrificial descriptions do not mention the recitation of theogonical poetry.²⁰ There is, however, one point where cosmology and sacrifice are always inseparable, the language of apportionment.

In the previous chapter I briefly noted that Zeus’ cosmological ordering is similar to that of a king’s divisions at a feast and highlighted in particular the terms μείρομαι ‘to receive portions’ (*Theog.* 411-15; 424-28); γέρας ‘honoured share’ (*Theog.* 393; 396; 427) and τιμάς (e.g. *Theog.* 75; 855).²¹ In the Promethean division, Hesiod’s text ingeniously plays upon this cosmological language tightly integrating the divisions of meat with the allotment of destinies. Easily the most discussed example appears in the term κρίνω, which as Parker puts it is ‘maddeningly unclear’ and can be translated as ‘deciding,’ ‘settling,’ ‘judging’ or more concretely, ‘the act of dividing itself.’²² Often this ambiguity is lost in translation and West, for example, translates the line as the time ‘when the gods and mortal men were coming to a settlement at Mekone.’²³ However, Hesiod likely intended the term κρίνω to carry the double

¹⁹ See Mc Clymond (2010) 141.

²⁰ Parker (2011) 140. This is not to say that Parker does not recognize the world ordering element in Hesiod, but rather stresses that this myth did not accompany sacrifice in general. I would not, however, underrate the importance of Hesiod’s central placement of the scene in a narrative of divine genealogies and the ordering of the cosmos. Plato (*Pl. Resp.* 378a) too suggests that these myths have some connection with sacrificial acts τὰ δὲ δὴ τοῦ Κρόνου ἔργα καὶ πάθη ὑπὸ τοῦ υἱοῦ, οὐδ’ ἂν εἰ ἦν ἀληθὴ ὥμην δεῖν ῥαδίως οὕτως λέγεσθαι πρὸς ἄφρονάς τε καὶ νέους, ἀλλὰ μάλιστα μὲν σιγᾶσθαι, εἰ δὲ ἀνάγκη τις ἦν λέγειν, δι’ ἀπορρήτων ἀκοῦειν ὡς ὀλιγίστους, θυσαμένους οὐ χοῖρον ἀλλὰ τι μέγα καὶ ἀπορον θῦμα, ὅπως ὅτι ἐλαχίστοις συνέβη ἀκοῦσαι. ‘And then there are the doings and sufferings of Cronos at the hands of his son. Even if they were true I should not think that they ought to be thus lightly told to thoughtless young persons. But the best way would be to bury them in silence, and if there were some necessity for relating them, that only a very small audience should be admitted under pledge of secrecy and after sacrificing, not a pig, but some huge and unprocurable victim, to the end that as few as possible should have heard these tales.’ Trans. Shorey (1969). Plato does not specifically say that these tales accompanied every pig sacrifice, yet he at least considers if they must be told, sacrifice is an appropriate setting for them.

²¹ See also Seaford’s (2004) 39-47 discussion of the shared language and practices surrounding the division of war spoils and sacrificial shares.

²² Parker (2011) 140. See Wisrhbo (1982) 103 n. 8 for a list of different interpretations.

²³ West (1988).

weight of deciding and cutting or even deciding through cutting.²⁴ This kind of ambiguous language recurs repeatedly in Hesiod's use of *δατέομαι* and the related *διαδατέομαι*. *Δατέομαι* could simply signify the process of dividing meat in a feast, a *δαίς*. Yet, as noted above, it is also a term associated with Zeus' distribution of cosmic honours (*Theog.* 885). Hesiod's use of *μοῖρα* is equally ambiguous. The term is often translated as 'shares' or 'portions' of meat, yet the word is identical with that used for allotted destinies. While later descriptions of sacrifice may not, as Parker argues, recite a cosmological text, they do use this shared vocabulary where not only *κρίνω* but the dividing and distribution of meat and the allotment of destinies are inseparably linked.²⁵

If sacrificial language is also the language of cosmic allotment, it is far less clear what Hesiod intends to express in the two unequal shares or destinies laid out by the Titan, Prometheus. Indeed, the scene seems deliberately confusing. The first share is made of tasty meat concealed in unappealing innards, the other by the inedible bones wrapped in attractive fat. Prometheus clearly wishes to deceive Zeus with these offerings and we might anticipate two possible outcomes.²⁶ Zeus may see through Prometheus' plan and choose the superior meaty share, despite its unattractive covering. Alternately, Zeus will be fooled by the cunning Titan and choose the inferior but aesthetically more pleasing share. What happens is surprising. Zeus, according to Hesiod, perceiving Prometheus' trick, deliberately chooses the attractive, but inferior share made of bones, and enraged, punishes both the Titan and mankind (*Theog.* 549-52). This strange outcome has led Burkert to claim that the myth 'seemed puzzling' to the Greeks themselves.²⁷ Vernant, however, has presented a masterful defence of the coherence of Hesiod's narrative. Men only appear to get the better share, he argues, because:

²⁴ The association between deciding and cutting may seem idiosyncratic yet it appears in many languages the world over. See Deutscher (2005) 126. Even the English word 'decision' is derived from the Latin *decido* to cut off. This etymology is not transparent in English, but Hesiod appears to be fully aware of the semantic range, describing a literal act of dividing an animal and deciding mankind's destiny.

²⁵ For example Hesiod speaks here of Prometheus *διεδάσσαο μοῖρας* 'dividing pieces of meat,' but just twenty or so lines earlier (*Theog.* 520) of Zeus *μοῖραν ἐδάσσατο*. This overlap in language is typical elsewhere. In Homer's description of the quarrel over sovereignty between Zeus, Poseidon and Hades, the brothers agree to draw lots and to decide who will reign respectively over Heaven, Hades and the Sea. The allotment is described through the term *δατέομαι* 'distribute' and *μεῖρομαι* 'apportion the destinies' (*Il.* 15.189). Gods and men are also frequently said to possess different destinies (*μοῖρα*) or the near equivalent, *μόρσιμος*. Apollo, for example, warns an overzealous Achilles (*Il.* 22.7-15) that he is not '*μόρσιμος* to die.' Aeschylus' Prometheus (933) scorns death for the same reason (933). In both cases the gods express their immortality in terms of being *μόρσιμος*.

²⁶ Trickery is a common motif in sacrificial stories. Willerslev (2013) has recently examined the theme in relation to Isaac and Abraham and a Chuckchi sacrificial myth.

²⁷ Burkert (1966) 104. For the Christian apologist, Clement of Alexandria, the Greek sacrificial shares were nothing less than a thinly disguised act of gluttony and an affront to their non-existent gods (*Strom.* 7.6.30). See Detienne and Sissa (2000) 71. Others have asked if Prometheus' trick was really unsuccessful, why does Zeus get so angry about it? West (1961) 138 even posits that Hesiod departs from an earlier version of the myth where Zeus was deceived. Detienne and Sissa (2000) 75 too ask why would the trick offend Zeus if he was never truly deceived? This kind of view has a long history and in an account perhaps by Asclepiades of Cyrrus, cited by Porphyry (*Abst.* 4.15.2), it is described how animals were originally not sacrificed. After a crisis they

what truly belongs to the gods is set aside for them: the very life of the animal, released from the bones, in short, those parts of the animal that, like the aromatics with which they are burned, escape the putrefaction of death.²⁸

In other words, in this confusing game of reversals, Prometheus fails and Zeus is successful. The gods do not get an inferior share but the immortal share ‘the life of the animal’ which escapes putrefaction and death. Mankind, on the other hand, with every mouthful of tasty meat ‘recognize the inferiority of their mortal condition and confirm their complete submission to the Olympians.’²⁹ In this way, Vernant argues that Mekone is a myth on the ‘origin of separation’ between gods and men and a commemorative rite where:

communication is founded upon a religious ritual which, by memorializing Prometheus’s error, reaffirms on every occasion of its performance the existence of that uncrossable gulf. And it is the purpose of the myth, as told by Hesiod, precisely to lay bare the origins of the separation and to make plain its dire consequences.³⁰

Vernant’s position has been deservedly influential and I will develop many of his insights in this chapter. It must, however, be pointed out that his position is based on number of core and debatable assumptions. The first is that there is an absolute division between mythical time and the present day and that prior to Mekone, men and gods were not defined by difference. The second is that the sacrificial shares created at Mekone are entirely opposed and as antithetical as ambrosia is to bread.³¹ The third is that all subsequent sacrifices are commemorations and reaffirmations of this primordial act. I will argue in the course of this chapter that despite the brilliance of Vernant’s analysis, all of these central claims are wrong and have created a fundamental barrier to the understanding of sacrifice both in Mekone and thereafter.

Living like Gods

Hesiod does not say very much about early humans.³² Yet if Mekone is a narrative on deciding man’s destiny, we may perhaps infer his early nature in terms of negation. Thus men

were then offered whole to the gods and only later, after mortals accidentally tasted their flesh, did the ratio of distribution change. However, I am unwilling to ignore Hesiod’s clear insistence on Zeus’ foresight and therefore ask could the anger of Zeus be explained not in terms of the success of the ruse, but at Prometheus’ very attempt to deceive the king of the gods? Stocking (2017) 58 also makes this point and further points out a parallel example in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 375-7. Thus instead of a successful ruse, we might see it as a parallel to man’s loss of Eden in *Genesis* where Adam and Eve under the guidance of a false friend, attempt to get more than their due and become ‘as gods’ (3.5). God is angered, but not deceived, and judgment follows. Prometheus may not be Satan, yet it is equally unclear whether his interests really favour man.

²⁸ Vernant (1989) 25. See also Clay (2003) 56.

²⁹ Ibid. 25

³⁰ Vernant (1981) 61.

³¹ Vernat 1989a 36; Stocking (2017) 28.

³² In the *Theogony* we are left to guess at mankind’s origins, which is hinted to have some connection with the Meilian nymphs (*Theog.* 563). See Van Noorden (2015) 69.

at this time (women have yet to be created)³³ are *not yet* living under the authority of Zeus. Their lives are *not yet* characterised by evil (κακός) and poverty (πενία). Men do *not yet* ‘live with ceaseless pain in their hearts and spirits, marred by an incurable evil’ (ζώει ἐνὶ στήθεσσι ἐχὼν ἀλῖαστον ἀνὴν / θυμῷ καὶ κραδίῃ, καὶ ἀνῆκεστον κακὸν ἐστὶν) (*Theog.* 611-2).³⁴ Most importantly they *are not yet* defined by unequal destinies. When all these not yet are tabulated men would seem to live quite like the gods. This admittedly vague negative anthropology is to some degree substantiated in Hesiod’s parallel mythical account in the *Works and Days* (109-18):

χρύσειον μὲν πρῶτιστα γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
 ἀθάνατοι ποίησαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ’ ἔχοντες.
 οἳ μὲν ἐπὶ Κρόνου ἦσαν, ὅτ’ οὐρανῷ ἐμβασίλευεν:
 ὥστε θεοὶ δ’ ἔζων ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες
 νόσφιν ἄτερ τε πόνων καὶ οἰζύος: οὐδέ τι δειλὸν
 γῆρας ἐπῆν, αἰεὶ δὲ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὁμοῖοι
 τέρποντ’ ἐν θαλίῃσι κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἀπάντων:
 θνήσκον δ’ ὥσθ’ ὕπνῳ δεδμημένοι: ἐσθλὰ δὲ πάντα
 τοῖσιν ἦν: καρπὸν δ’ ἔφερε ζεῖδωρος ἄρουρα
 αὐτομάτη πολλόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον: οἳ δ’ ἐθέλημοι
 ἦσυχοι ἔργ’ ἐνέμοντο σὺν ἐσθλοῖσιν πολέεσσιν.
 ἀφνειοὶ μῆλοισι, φίλοι μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν.

First of all the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus
 made a golden race of mortal men who lived
 in the time of Cronos when he was reigning in heaven.
 And they lived like gods without sorrow of heart,
 remote and free from toil and grief:
 miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing
 they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils.
 When they died, it was as though they were overcome with sleep, and they had all good things;
 for the fruitful earth unforced bare them fruit abundantly and without stint.
 They dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things,
 rich in flocks and loved by the blessed gods.³⁵

While both myths deal with a time before Zeus, they reflect very different perspectives on the early *chaosmos* and in particular the ambiguity of Kronos’ reign. The father of Zeus, as noted, was a rather unattractive figure in the *Theogony*. In the *Works and Days* on the other hand he is presented as a benevolent and utopian king. This, as argued, is not so much a contradiction, as an alternative take on the ambiguous relations of the *chaosmos* and a common trait of the ambiguity the Greeks attributed to Kronos.³⁶ Hesiod, at any rate, insists that his two narratives are alternative accounts (ἕτεροι λόγοι) on the same process of differentiation (*Op.* 106-109) and in this spirit I wish to look beyond the narrative differences to their common core.³⁷

³³ Women are created shortly after this scene as a punishment for Prometheus’ theft of fire (*Theog.* 570-613).

³⁴ Trans. Evelyn-White (1914).

³⁵ Trans. Evelyn-White (1914).

³⁶ See discussion of Kronos’ rule in Chapter One.

³⁷ The word ὁμόθεν ‘from the same place’ seems to carry a double burden and Hesiod by calling it ‘another story’ (ἑτερόν λόγον) intends that both the Promethean myth from the *Theogony* and the new myth of the Golden Age can be understood by this term.

Indeed, the wonderfully paradoxical language in Hesiod's description of the Golden Race is among the best examples of the ambiguity inherent in the pre-Zeusian *chaosmos* and Hesiod even tells us that men live like gods (ὥστε θεοὶ). Likeness, as usual, is a difficult concept and how we are to understand ὥστε θεοὶ is open to interpretation here and elsewhere. Many mortal heroes such as Achilles and Odysseus are described as god-like without implying any real confusion between mortals and immortals. In these instances god-likeness is something temporary and expressed in fleeting moments of glory.³⁸ With the Golden Race god-likeness is taken to a new level, it is a description of their lifestyle, their βίος.³⁹ They are described as possessing 'unpained hearts' (ἀκηδέα θυμὸν), 'enjoying in the feasts' (τέρποντ' ἐν θαλίῃσι) and most impressive of all, they escape the worst of all mortal vices, age.⁴⁰ This perpetual youth and joyful life is something closely linked with the common divine epitaph and immortal prerogative, agelessness (ἀγήραος). All of these divine resemblances may seem to confirm Vernant's assumption that prior to Mekone men and gods were undifferentiated. Garcia, for example, has taken this position further and argued that mortal 'nearness to the gods implies a similarity both in terms of spatial position and ontological status.'⁴¹ Hesiod may come close to describing mortal/immortal relations in these terms but he never crosses this line. Men are certainly like gods, yet at the same time, it is difficult to overlook that the Golden Race possess one fundamental difference from the immortals, they die (*Op.* 116):

θνῆσκον δ' ὥσθ' ὕπνῳ δεδμημένοι.

When they died, it was as though they were overcome with sleep.

This was admittedly a peaceful death, but death nonetheless and Hesiod, even during this ambiguous period, is careful to avoid a full identification between gods and men. The idea seems to be important and is repeated in Hesiod's fragmented *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 1.1-7 M.W.):

Νῦν δὲ γυναικῶν φῶλον αἰείσατε, ἡδυέπειαι
 Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
 αἵ ποτ' ἄριστα ἔσαν [
 μήτρας τ' ἀλλύσαντο [
 μισγόμεναι θεοῖσιν
 ξυναὶ γὰρ τότε δαΐτεες ἔσαν, ξυνοὶ δὲ θόωκοι
 ἀθανάτοισ τε θεοῖσι κατα θνητοῖς τ' ἀνθρώποις.
 οὐδ' ἄρα ἰσαῖωνες οἱμ[.

Now the tribe of women sing, sweet-talking,
 Olympian muses, daughters of Zeus who holds the Aegis,
 [tell me] of the noble women,
 loosening their belts as

³⁸ See Garcia (2013) 165.

³⁹ Hesiod uses the verb ζῶω in this passage. However, in his very similar description of the age of heroes he refers to their lifestyle (βίος).

⁴⁰ On ἀκηδέα θυμὸν, see *Theog.* 61 where the phrase is applied to the muses and *Theog.* 489 where it is used of Zeus.

⁴¹ See Garcia (2013) 170.

they mixed with the gods. Because then,
men and gods had common feasts, common seats.
They were not of equal life spans (ἰσaiωνες).⁴²

The context has shifted from the transition between the rules of Kronos and Zeus, to the age of heroes. Nevertheless the idea is the same – before the current day, men and gods once shared meals, seats and even women. Yet, as with the Golden Race, not everything is as equal as it first seems. According to Irwin’s reconstruction, Hesiod again refers to a fundamental difference in their ‘equal aeons’ (ἰσaiωνες) or in their ‘lifetimes.’⁴³ Hesiod thus seems quite insistent on this point. Men and gods can have similar lifestyles, similar un-ageing bodies, similar meals, similar sexual partners, but nevertheless remain different in respect to their mortality. A similar idea can also be gleaned from an almost antithetical scene when Hesiod describes in detail how the gods weaken without their immortal food (*Theog.* 793-803):

ὅς κεν τὴν ἐπίορκον ἀπολλείψας ἐπομόσση
ἀθανάτων, οἱ ἔχουσι κάρη νιφέντος Ὀλύμπου,
κεῖται νήνυτος τετελεσμένον εἰς ἐνιαυτόν:
οὐδέ ποτ’ ἀμβροσίης καὶ νέκταρος ἔρχεται ἄσسون
βρώσιος, ἀλλὰ τε κεῖται ἀνάπνευστος καὶ ἄναυδος
στρωτοῖς ἐν λεχέεσσι, κακὸν δέ ἐ κῶμα καλύπτει.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ νοῦσον τέλεσση μέγαν εἰς ἐνιαυτόν,
ἄλλος γ’ ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται χαλεπώτερος ἄεθλος.
εἰνάετες δὲ θεῶν ἀπαμείρεται αἰὲν ἐόντων,
οὐδέ ποτ’ ἐς βουλὴν ἐπιμίσγεται οὐδ’ ἐπὶ δαίτας
ἐννέα πάντα ἔτεα.

For whoever of the deathless gods
that hold the peaks of snowy Olympus
pours a libation of her water and is forsworn,
must lie breathless until a full year is completed,
and never come near to taste ambrosia and nectar,
but lie spiritless and voiceless on a strewn bed:
and a heavy trance overshadows him.
But when he has spent a long year in his sickness,
another penance more hard follows after the first.
For nine years he is cut off from the eternal gods
and never joins their councils or their feasts,
nine full years.⁴⁴

It is worth noting that weakened gods come eerily close not simply to descriptions of mortals, but, as Heath points out, to dying mortals. The nearly dead Odysseus, for example, is described as ‘breathless and voiceless’ (ἄπνευστος καὶ ἄναυδος, *Od.* 5.456).⁴⁵ These scenes show the extreme ends of immortality and mortality, their limitations and potentials. In some respects, they indicate just how flexible the concepts of man and god can be. In others, they enforce the key assumption of Hesiod’s analogistic cosmos, difference.

⁴² Revised following Irwin (2005) 37.

⁴³ Irwin (2005) 39.

⁴⁴ Trans. Evelyn-White (1914). Homer only once mentions the possibility of a dying god (*Il.* 5.385–391). Hesiod has ample opportunities to discuss such an idea but never does. See Garcia (2013) 210-29.

⁴⁵ Heath (2005) 61.

Hesiod and ὁμόθεν

If Hesiod stresses difference from the very beginning, our understanding of Mekone changes dramatically. Mekone, rather than marking the creation of the current gulf between men and gods, presents a particular, if unusual, configuration of an always existing difference between mortals and immortals. Hesiod does not flesh out this relation in any detail, yet I believe it can be summed up in a single term: gods and men in Mekone are ὁμόθεν. This term appears in *The Works and Days*, where after briefly recapitulating the Promethean narrative, the poet interjects and promises to reveal ‘another tale’ (ἕτερόν λόγον) about how men and gods originate from a single source (ὁμόθεν γεγάασι. *Op.* 106-9):

εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις, ἕτερόν τοι ἐγὼ λόγον ἐκκορυφώσω
εὖ καὶ ἐπισταμένως· σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσιν.
ὥς ὁμόθεν γεγάασι θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ' ἄνθρωποι.

Or if you will, I will sum you up another tale
well and skilfully—and do you lay it up in your heart,—
how the gods and mortal men sprang from one source.⁴⁶

Like many pivotal passages in Hesiod, the text has produced almost antithetical readings.⁴⁷ ὁμόθεν is a combination of ὁμός ‘the same’ and the locative θεν simply means ‘from.’ Thus ‘from the same source’ or ‘place’ is a fairly safe translation. This is how it appears in the *Odyssey*, where Homer (*Od.* 5.451) describes two different trees which grow from a single place. However, when ὁμόθεν is coupled with γίγνομαι as it is used, for example, in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* the meaning has been suggested to connote ‘born from the same source.’⁴⁸ Garcia thus argues that Hesiod’s phrase suggests a ‘blood relationship.’⁴⁹ Graf and Johnston too suggest the phrase could indicate a literal genealogical relation through Gaia and cite Pindar’s *Nemean Six* as a possible parallel (6.1).⁵⁰ A shared genealogical line is perhaps obliquely referenced in the *Theogony* where men are said to be part of the Melian Race (*Theog.* 563), yet is clearly untenable in reference to the Golden Race who are specifically

⁴⁶ Trans. Evelyn-White (1914).

⁴⁷ Van Noorden (2014), following Peabody (1975) 248–50, argues that ‘the phrase emphasizes not so much the single origin of gods and men but their respective differentiation into dissimilarity and conflict.’ (71).

⁴⁸ σοῖς τε κασιγνήτοις, οἳ τοι ὁμόθεν γεγάασιν (135). This is similar to Euripides’ (*IA* 502-3) usage τὸν ὁμόθεν πεφυκότα/στέργων μετέπεσον.

⁴⁹ Garcia (2013) 168. ὁμόθεν however refers not so much to blood as to the place of origin. These can and often do coincide, but in Sophocles, for example, the two appear as complementary but differentiated forms of relating (*El.* 157).

⁵⁰ Graf and Johnston (2007) 114. Van Noorden’s (2014) 69 discussion is a useful summary.

said to have been made by the gods.⁵¹ West on the other hand, suggests that ὁμόθεν simply refers to the proximity of men and gods and the fact that ‘they started on the same terms,’ and shared places ‘together at shared feasts.’⁵² I would like to take this position one step further. Men and gods do not share tables and feasts because they are ὁμόθεν, they are ὁμόθεν precisely because they share tables and feasts. In other words, mortals and immortals are similar because they eat together and share the same food. This point should not be too suprising and the importance of food as something which differentiates mortals and immortals has already been discussed in terms of bread and ambrosia. That food is somehow implicated in the god-likeness of Hesiod’s early men is also strengthened by the central presence of food and feasting in all three of Hesiod’s major works. In the *Theogony* and the *Catalogue* the presence of shared feasting is clear and men and gods share the same table. If we understand τέρποντ’ ἐν θαλίῃσι (*Op.*115) as enjoying in the feasts, it is also referenced in the *Works and Days*.⁵³ Apart from eating with the gods, Hesiod presents another revealing detail about what kinds of food the Golden Race enjoy, ‘automatic fruit’(*Op.*117-8):

καρπὸν δ’ ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα
αὐτομάτη πολλὸν τε καὶ ἄφθονον.

or the fruitful earth unforced bore them fruit
abundantly and without stint.⁵⁴

Self-willed (αὐτόματος) objects are often divine and those who eat them close to the gods.⁵⁵ Indeed, neither shared seats nor self-growing grain are strictly Hesiodic innovations and seem to be common tropes in early epic.⁵⁶ Homer in his discussion of god-like men such as the Phaeacians describes an almost identical βίος. Like the Golden Race, the Phaeacians openly see the gods in their unconcealed forms. The Phaeacians too live at the ends of the earth and

⁵¹ While the *Theogony* does not say where men first came from, the idea of a shared genealogy of sorts is plausible (*Theog.* 563). In the Myth of the Races men are specifically said to have been made ποιέω. Hesiod’s meaning is not entirely clear but in some cases ποιέω is closer to ‘to beget’ rather than ‘to make.’ Socrates in Plato’s *Crito*, for example, can beget children for himself (45 d). It is possible that Hesiod in a rather obscure way is referring to begetting men, but I think it is rather unlikely. Another possibility is that ποιέω is closer to crafting or moulding men, as happens with Pandora. Here, however, ποιέω is not used but φύρω ‘to mix’ (*Op.* 610) or ζυμπλάσσω ‘to mould together’ (*Theog.* 571). Apart from a different vocabulary nothing is said about clay or earth by Hesiod and it seems arbitrary to impose the reading. Whichever way we understand ποιέω, all readings are problematic as the Bronze Race is both said to have been made (ποιέω) and to spring from ash (ἐκ μελιᾶν *Op.* 145).

⁵² See West (1978) 178. Indeed this meaning arguably applies to the majority of uses of the term which stresses proximity and place; Hom. *Od.* 5.451; Ap. Rhod 1.93; Xen. *Cyrop.* 8.8.22.

⁵³ Verdenius (1985) 132 notes that ἐν θαλίῃσι in the dative suggests an equation with feasts.

⁵⁴ Trans. Evelyn-White (1914).

⁵⁵ See *Il.* 5.749 for a description of the self-opening gates in Olympus or *Il.* 18.376 for the self-moving tripods of Hephaestus. It is also worth noting a contrast with the ephemeral fruits fed to Thyphon in Apollodorus (1. 6. 3).

⁵⁶ See also Hesiod’s description of the Isles of the Blessed (*Op.* 170-5).

eat a diet of special ‘unperishing fruit’ (οὐ ποτε καρπὸς ἀπόλλυται) (*Od.* 7.117). They even enjoy the honour of eating with the gods face to face (*Od.* 7.201–205):⁵⁷

αἰεὶ γὰρ τὸ πάρος γε θεοὶ φαίνονται ἐναργεῖς
ἡμῖν, εὖθ’ ἔρδωμεν ἀγακλειτὰς ἐκατόμβας,
δαίνυνται τε παρ’ ἅμμι καθήμενοι ἔνθα περήμεῖς.
εἰ δ’ ἄρα τις καὶ μούνος ἰὼν ζύμβληται ὁδίτης,
οὔτι κατακρύπτουσιν, ἐπεὶ σφισιν ἐγγύθεν εἰμέν,
ὥς περ Κύκλωπές τε καὶ ἄγρια φύλα Γυγάντων.

Always, up to now, they came to us face-to-face
whenever we’d give them grand, glorious sacrifices —
they always sat beside us here and shared our feasts.
Even when some lonely traveller meets them on the roads,
they never disguise themselves. We’re too close for that,
close as the wild Giants are, the Cyclops too.⁵⁸

The Phaeacians in this passage have a great deal in common with Hesiod’s early men. Not only are shared seats and banquets mentioned, Homer even stresses their close relation by using ὁμόθεν’s kindred term ἐγγύθεν (from a near place). This term again suggests a close bond in terms of proximity and in Hesiod the almost identical word ἐγγύθι refers precisely to a neighbour (*Op.* 700) who shares in your feasts (*Op.* 343). The term too echoes Homer’s description of the Phaeacians as ἀγχίθεος (*Od.* 5.35) literally near to the gods. Following Hesiod’s usage I propose that ἐγγύθεν and ὁμόθεν indicate a particular kind of relation expressed in shared feasting, nearness and sometimes shared women, but as with Hesiod’s Golden Race, should not be thought of in terms of blurred identities or blood relations. It might be objected that in this case, the Phaeacians are more than near to the gods and in fact possess a genetic tie through their founder Nausithous, the son of Poseidon (*Od.* 8.56). Mortals with divine genealogies are very common in Greece and I will return to this issue in more detail shortly. At present, I wish to stress that despite their divine lineage, the Phaeacians, like Hesiod’s Golden Race, remain distinct from the tribe of the immortals. The Phaeacians are mortals who sacrifice to gods (*Od.* 7.201–205) who despite their proximity always retain a certain Otherness and capacity for deceit (*Od.* 7.200). This makes ἐγγύθεν and ὁμόθεν somewhat ambiguous relations combining proximity and distance, similarity and difference. This ambiguous tie cannot be understood as a blood relation. Another kin term, however, might solve this paradoxical tie. Gods and men are affines.

⁵⁷ Eating is only one of their common attributes. Endsjø (2009) 78 has emphasised the importance of space and place in these myths. This point is well supported, yet place and diet go together and it is somewhat arbitrary to separate these elements, special foods require special soil, special soil produces special foods.

⁵⁸ Trans. Fagles (1996) modified.

Affines as Others

Before continuing it will be useful to summarise my position so far. I have argued that gods and men, whether we are speaking about Mekone or the current day, are always defined by difference. At the same time mortals and immortals in some instances are often eerily close and even share the same table. I have also suggested that this relation which combines proximity and difference should be understood as an affinal tie. Affinity is usually understood as the affiliation of two previously unrelated groups through marriage. The term, however, also has a broader meaning and may refer to moieties, tribes or more generally to non-sanguineous kin who enter into social relationships.⁵⁹ Affines occupied a very important place in early Greece. The Phaeacian King, Alcinous, describes affines as the closest relations after blood and the patriline (*Od.* 8.581-3):

ἢ τίς τοι καὶ πηρὸς ἀπέφθιτο Ἰλίοθι πρὸ
ἔσθλ' ὅς ἐών, γαμβρὸς ἢ πενθερός, οἳ τε μάλιστα
κῆδιστοι τελέθουσι μεθ' αἶμα τε καὶ γένος αὐτῶν.

did someone of your kin perish in Troy,
a good man, a brother in law (γαμβρὸς) or father in law (πενθερός)
who are closest to us after our blood and patriline.⁶⁰

Alcinous here is speaking of affines created through marriage, yet Greece in addition to marital affines had an institution which functioned very much like affinity called ξενία. The term, which is sometimes awkwardly translated as guest-friendship, was a social bond based on feasting, hosting and the exchange of gifts.⁶¹ This was a pact which could be formed between individuals, families and even ethnic groups such as the Persians and the Arabs (*Hdt.* 3.88). While demarcated from kin in terms of γένος and αἶμα it was of high social and religious importance and for Hesiod breeches of ξενία appear alongside patricide and incest (*Op.* 327).⁶² Given this sacred character, it would not be misleading to think of ξενία as a kind of marriage between men. Vernant, for example, argues that ‘the bonds between the man and his wife are the same as those which unite two antagonistic groups who become guest-friends.’⁶³ Indeed Alcinous makes an even stronger comparison between ξενία and consanguineous kin describing how (*Od.* 8.546—47):

⁵⁹ Helms (2010) 8-9.

⁶⁰ Both αἶμα and γένος are difficult terms. Γένος generally refers to patrilineal descent, but is probably closer to a male group united through shared sacrifices rather than a strict genetic tie. See Stowers (1995).

⁶¹ Gould (2001) defines supplicants and ξένοι as ‘social institutions which permit the acceptance of the outsider within the group and which create hereditary bonds of obligation between the parties’ (55). See also Belfiore (2000) 6.

⁶² Isocrates (5.122) too lists crimes against ξενία alongside patricide, fratricide and incest. See also Eur. *Hec.* 710; Dio Sic. 20.70. 3-4. See Herman (1987) 66 and 125.

⁶³ Vernant (1969) 147. Indeed at times the two overlap and Odysseus appears as both a ξένος and a potential son-in-law to the Phaeacian king. Herman (1987) 36 notes there is even some debate regarding which was the

ἀντὶ κασιγνήτου ξείνός θ' ἰκέτης τε τέτυκται
ἀνέρι.

A ξένος and a suppliant are equal to a brother to a man.

Although marriage and ξένια are not strictly equivalent, they are sufficiently close, and I will refer to both as kinds of affinal ties.

Alcinous presents a generally favourable view of affines as close or even equal to kin. Affines, however, also have a darker side and frequently appear as Others or even enemies. Helms, in an important work dedicated to the comparative study of affines, describes how affines or potential affines are frequently depicted as ‘as foreigners, outsiders, opposites, enemies, strangers, or sojourners.’⁶⁴ In Greece the idea of the dangerous affine is recurrent amongst wives and ξένοι alike. Greek wives in literary depictions are frequently the subject of suspicion.⁶⁵ The foreigner Medea epitomises the element of fear present in every act of incorporating the Other through marriage.⁶⁶ Hesiod also finds choosing one’s affines problematic. His answer is a happy medium, proposing that the ideal wife is someone who lives near, an ἐγγύθι or a neighbour (*Op.*700). More precisely this is the daughter of the neighbour, or the potential affine, who shares in your feasts (*Op.* 343).⁶⁷ If no wife is above suspicion, ξενία is even more emphatic in its emphasis on Otherness and treachery. As noted the term ξένος is often awkwardly translated into English as guest-friend. This, however, hardly encapsulates the meaning of a particularly rich term which carries two antithetical meanings, ‘stranger’ and ‘honoured guest.’ Moreover these two meanings frequently intersect; Paris’ violation of Menelaus’ ξενία, for example, started the Trojan war. This double meaning may seem idiosyncratic, yet as Helms points out it is a surprisingly common designator of affines across the globe.⁶⁸ Viveiros de Castro, for example, explains how the Tupinambá word *tovajar* means both brother-in-law and enemy and ‘expressed both friendly alliance within and deadly enmity without, and very probably vice versa. It approximated and opposed in one fell swoop.’⁶⁹ Belfiore, in her study of Sophocles’ *Philoktetes*, too demonstrates how the ambivalence of the term ξένος was often deliberately played upon by

stronger association and when Hiero of Sicily and Pyrrhus decided to strengthen their ξενία tie with the marriage of their children, marriage appeared as a kind of afterthought.

⁶⁴ Helms (2010) 58.

⁶⁵ Lyons (2012) 2-3 deals at length with the problem of wives, exchange and incorporating outsiders in Greek myth and practice.

⁶⁶ On marriage rituals and the incorporation of women into the house see Vernant (1983).

⁶⁷ Maintaining good relations with your neighbours is essential for Hesiod’s farmer. Indeed, a good neighbour can be more useful than kin (*Op.* 342-351).

⁶⁸ Helms (2010) 8.

⁶⁹ Viveiros de Castro (2015) 101.

the tragedians.⁷⁰ Indeed while it is common to translate ξένος as either stranger or guest there is arguably a sense of ambivalence in every use of the term. When Alcinous states that a ξένος and a suppliant are ‘like (ἀντί) a brother to a man,’ he may well have a perfectly innocent meaning in mind. Yet I cannot resist proposing an alternative reading. ἀντί may mean ‘like’ in this case,⁷¹ yet it is difficult to avoid its more common meaning as ‘against’ or ‘opposite.’ This when paired with ξένος presents a rather different and somewhat Heraclitean play on words ‘A stranger/friend (ξένος) is opposite/equal (ἀντί) to a brother.’ It is through this kind of ambiguous affinal relation I propose we understand the volatile tie between the tribes gods and men.

Gods as Strangers?

When I refer to the gods as affines rather than describing an explicitly held Greek view, in some respects I use the term more loosely as a means of defining a type of relationship based on friendship, suspicion, distance and proximity. Nevertheless, it should be noted that calling the gods affines is far from a total imposition and that these terms are frequently employed by the Greeks in just this context. Pausanias describes mortal and immortal relations in precisely these words referring to gods and men as ξένοι καὶ ὁμοτράπεζοι ‘ξένοι and table companions’ (Paus. 8.2.4). This combination is apt as the shared feast is one of the central features of the ξενία tie.⁷² While Pausanias considers that mortal/immortal ξενία ended with the dissolution of the Golden Age, centuries after Mekone we continue to see examples of mortals attempting to reinstate this ancient tie in a ritual known as θεοξενία.⁷³ This as the name suggests was an act of ξενία to the gods and involved setting aside a meal for a divine guest at a mortal feast.⁷⁴ This is a rather specialised case yet plays, I will argue, upon a widely held idea present in every act of sacrifice. Indeed the gods were always strangers and every unknown guest a

⁷⁰ Belfiore (2000) 63-81.

⁷¹ Homer, for example, states ἀντί νῦ πολλῶν λαῶν ἐστὶν ἀνὴρ, he is *as good as* many men (*Il.* 9.116).

⁷² In Athens, for example, state ξένοι were invited to enjoy a sacrifice and feast in the hearth of the city, the prytaneion. See Herman (1987) 66; Stowers (1995) 322. In Aeschines (3.224) the two terms are similarly intertwined.

⁷³ This is entirely fitting as ξενία was an institution which was passed through the generations. One of the most dramatic examples occurs when the enemies, Diomedes and Glaucus, rekindle the old ξενία tie of their ancestors on the battlefield of Troy (*Il.* 6.215).

⁷⁴ See Parker (2011) 142. Petridou (2016) notes how ‘the deities are invited to feast from these tables and recline on the guest couches specially designed for the divine. In other words, in these rather anthropocentric rites of theoxenia, the gods are imagined as following the protocol of human dining. The divine guests are treated like foreigners, travellers, or strangers who momentarily pose a threat to the well-ordered microcosm of the city; they need to be treated with discretion so as not to be offended’ (311). The practice of θεοξενία should not, however, be mistaken as a return to Mekone. Arguably it goes the other way, men do not dine with gods, so much as particular gods dine with men. This also is evident in the most frequently invited guests are deities with close ties to humans such as Herakles and the Dioskouri.

potential god (*Od.* 1.420-21). If the idea of gods as ξένοι was widespread, the gods were also for a short period affines through marriage. Due to the absence of women in Mekone, marriage was not an option for Hesiod's first men. But when we reach the Age of Heroes the gods join humans in celebrating the marriage of Peleus and Thetis (*Il.* 24.62). This is not exceptional and while Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* does not strictly deal with marriage ties, it is essentially a long poem on the complex affinal ties resulting from mortal and immortal sexual encounters. The unions between gods and mortals even led to the creation of complex kinds of affinal ties and obligations. Menelaus, for example, is described by Homer as the son-in-law (γαμβρός) of Zeus (*Od.* 4.569).⁷⁵ These unions also resulted in the birth of demigods such as Herakles, the Dioskouri and Dionysus. These figures in some respect temporarily blur the lines between mortals and gods, but importantly do not lead to any long term confusion between the separate tribes of gods and men.⁷⁶ Indeed when the Age of Heroes ends, gods and men remain entirely distinct. There is, however, an important exception and these heroes create a new subcategory among men, the ἄριστοι 'the best.'⁷⁷ Although aristocratic men remained mortal, they were a step above the rest and could trace their genealogies back to a particular god or gods. From the perspective of the κακοὶ 'the bad or commoners' they represented a new kind of Other within an increasingly complex hierarchical chain and increasingly varied arrangement of the chairs at the sacrificial feast.⁷⁸

Sharing Food with Strangers

Before turning to how gods, aristocrats and commoners negotiated their complex affinal ties during the sacrificial feast, I wish to pause and reflect more generally on the complexities involved in sharing food in ancient Greece. Indeed, when discussing mythological narratives

⁷⁵ Because of his affinal tie with Zeus, Menelaus gains a privileged afterlife. This is rare in Homer but Hesiod is even more generous and all the children of these unions are granted eternal life at the ends of the earth (*Op.* 166-9).

⁷⁶ This kind of blurring does not occur with a ξενία tie, but is inevitable in marriage. Peleus and Thetis have an affinal tie. Achilles, the child of Thetis, however is a consanguine to a god and a son-in-law to Zeus. In this respect he blurs the distinction between the immortal and mortal tribes, affines and consanguines. This is hardly a problem peculiar to Greek mythology; affinity and consanguinity in practice always tend to blur. My point is that this only occurs on the level of specific individuals such as Achilles and in particular Herakles. The groups themselves remain ideal affines.

⁷⁷ The most manifest example of such a distinction appears in the Deucalion myth where mortals are differentiated into two genealogies, the noble descendents of Prometheus and the commoners created from stones (*Apollod.* 1.7.2).

⁷⁸ When it comes to relating to the gods, the aristocrats remained ξένοι. Petridou (2015) notes 'if one were to conclude from the narrative discussed above that offering elaborate ritualised hospitality to the gods and heroes was an Archaic and to an extent aristocratic practice, one would not be very far from the truth' (309).

it is easy to forget that relating with affines through the shared meal was a perennial problem and eating always a complex act. Valeri describes how eating:

is a pleasurable activity, but it is also an intrinsically dangerous operation, since it consists in making oneself by assimilating what is nonself. Of course, this dangerousness is inherent in any form of self-making. Humans cannot relate to themselves without relating to what is external to them and is thus potentially beyond their control. Their whole existence consists in appropriating an unfriendly world to make a friendly one. But in no other activity is this paradox as extreme as in eating, in which the nonself is brought into the most intimate possible relationship with the self: it enters the body to become one's flesh.⁷⁹

Eating as a paradoxical encounter with Otherness may explain why feasts play such a central role when interacting with gods. Indeed, the idea of transforming one's flesh through food has already been touched upon in reference to Hesiod and Homer's abundant references to the special diets of gods and men. I have also suggested that by eating together gods and men expressed an ambiguous tie, where they became more alike without ever becoming identical. This is far from a new idea and many anthropologists and historians have pointed to examples where kinship ties are strengthened or even new kinship categories are generated through food and sacrifice.⁸⁰ The idea also has a long legacy in Classical scholarship. Fustel de Coulanges in his classic work, *The Ancient City*, makes a similar point about the role of the hearth in creating patrilineal groups in Rome. He even reverses our expectation on kinship claiming that 'it was not by birth, it was by the cult alone that one recognized the agnates.'⁸¹ It is not a huge leap from the hearth to the table and Robertson Smith some years later made commensal relations central to his theory of Hebrew sacrifice describing how:

after the child is weaned, his flesh and blood continued to be nourished and renewed by the food which he shares with his commensals so that commensality can be thought of (1) as confirming or even (2) as constituting kinship in a very real sense.⁸²

Robertson Smith makes two central points. Eating together can confirm and strengthen existing kinship by birth and secondly can potentially facilitate outsiders into kinship relations. While Robertson Smith was hugely influential in terms of sacrificial theory, the more mundane aspects of sharing and kinship have only recently attracted attention. Vilaça, for example, argues that among the Amazonian people, the Wari 'food is central to defining identity. People who eat together (or consume the same type of food) become similar;' while those who eat apart gradually lose their relations. Indeed by eating and living with a Wari family, the Wari insisted that Vilaça literally became their kin.⁸³ That the Greeks do not share this precise view, it is sufficient to look at Oedipus, a child raised apart from his family,

⁷⁹ Valeri (2000) 177-8.

⁸⁰ The literature is vast. See for example Sahlins (2013) 6; Carsten (1995); Vilaça (2010); Janowski and Kerlogue (2007).

⁸¹ Fustel de Coulanges (1956) 62.

⁸² Robertson Smith (1889) 257.

⁸³ Vilaça (2010) 48.

nourished in a foreign land, yet tragically unable to overwrite his natal ties. Nevertheless, the Greek do repeatedly associate some form of kinship with eating and sharing tables. A term that has already come to our attention is ὁμοτράπεζοι or table companions. This, like the term σύντροφος being ‘reared’ or ‘fed together,’ refers to a relationship created between strangers through a shared meal. ὁμοτράπεζοι was also a more general term used for the household (οἶκος) who share the same table.⁸⁴ This blurring of meanings is not particularly surprising considering how nebulous the Greek οἶκος was. Far from the idea of a nuclear family, it encompassed, as Parker notes, ‘blood kin, affines, or members of that category of intimate non-kin known precisely as *oikeioi*, persons associated with the house.’⁸⁵ It should be stressed the Greek family was not parents and children plus these figures, this totality was the Greek family.⁸⁶ Indeed similar references to families as food-sharers rather than blood kin are surprisingly common. The East Locrians, for example, described the household as ‘sharers of the hearth’ (ὁμεστίοι).⁸⁷ Aristotle (*Pol.* 1.1252b), in a particularly rich passage describes a list of less common words including ὁμοσίπιτος (‘sharing the same meal tub’) and ὁμόκαποι (‘those eating in the same manger’) as equivalents for the common Athenian household.⁸⁸ In the same passage Aristotle also mentions the interesting term ὁμογάλακτες. The word is not explained but etymologically appears to focus on the common European (and indeed World) practice of kinship through shared breast milk.⁸⁹ While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate all these terms in detail, it is sufficient to note that in some way or other they blur the distinction between those who eat together and those we refer to as the biological

⁸⁴ See, for example, Pl. *Euthphr.* 4c; Pl. *Leg.* 9.868e.

⁸⁵ Parker (2005) 13; Stocking (2017) 14.

⁸⁶ More generally see Jones (1999) 4. Athens is not of course representative of Greece as a whole. Indeed the complex kinship terminology seen in Classical Athens is a reminder that kinship terminology and ideas are always in flux. In Classical Athens kinship was considered in terms of the *anchistea* which included the mother, father, brothers and sisters, etc. and was essentially cognatic, (i.e. traced in the male and female line) with a preference for the male line. However, the *anchistea* though legally important was not a social group or identity but referred specifically to relatives in relation to an individual. See Roy (1999) 3. If the *anchistea* did not constitute a group, an Athenian male could point to a far more extensive kinship ties such as the *oikos*, *genos*, *phratry*, *polis* and in all these cognatic ties give way to patrilineal descent. Though not every Athenian was a member of a *genos*, all were members of *phratries* and both groups could trace their male ancestors back to a historical/mythical ancestor. See Littman (1990) 22. Faraone (2008) has distinguished between the *genos* as related to ‘biological reproduction and genetic relations’ from the *oikos* as household or ‘locative’ kin, adding that these were ‘differentiated and of equal importance’ (212). While the Athenians made a distinction between locative and genetic, the idea of biological reproduction, as we will see, is somewhat problematic. Moreover, in practice the distinction between locative and genetic often blurred. Furthermore, while a strong focus remained on legitimate children in the Classical period the *genos*, often with aristocratic and restrictive membership, from the reforms of Kleisthenes in 508-7 BC onwards diminished in importance. See Littman (1990) 217. Later Aristotle could define the *oikos* as the most significant unit of the *polis* (*Pol.* 1.2.1, cf. Littman (1990) 21.

⁸⁷ Parker (2005) 13.

⁸⁸ Aristotle attributes the term ὁμοσίπιτος to the law giver, Charondas and ὁμόκαποι to the miracle worker and poet, Epimenides.

⁸⁹ See Parkes (2005). The phenomenon is evident in Greek myths where Herakles is suckled by Hera (Diodorus 4.9.6-7; Pausanias 9. 25.2). The modern Greek practice is discussed by Kenna (2001) 89 where Parkes (2005) notes ‘it is still treated as an impediment to marriage’ (591-2).

family. Indeed in some cases food is a crucial indication of relation and Plato suggests that grain not only defines the mortal race (γένος) it is the earth's bountiful supply of wheat and barley which proves the close kinship between the earth and humans (*Menex.* 237e-238a).⁹⁰ This may occupy the extreme end of the spectrum, but Xenophon's (*Cyr.* 8.7.14) advice to Cyrus captures a similar dynamic in his description of what unites a city:

εἰ οὖν καὶ ἄλλους τινὰς πειράσῃ συμφύλακας τῆς βασιλείας ποιῆσθαι μηδαμόθεν πρότερον ἄρχου ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὁμόθεν γενομένου. καὶ πολῖταιί τοι ἄνθρωποι ἄλλοδαπῶν οἰκειότεροι καὶ σύσσιτοι ἀποσκήνων οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σπέρματος φύντες καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς μητρὸς τραφέντες καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐξηθέντες καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν γονέων ἀγαπώμενοι καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν μητέρα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν πατέρα προσαγορεύοντες, πῶς οὐ πάντων οὗτοι οἰκειότατοι;

And if you want to make others protectors of your kingship, start nowhere else than with those born from the same source (ὁμόθεν). Surely male citizens are closer than those from elsewhere and house sharers (οἰκειότεροι) and co-eaters (σύσσιτος) from those who stay apart. But of all, those born from the same seed (σπέρματος), and reared (τραφέντες) by the same mother, growing up in the same home, loved by the same parents and addressing the same people father and mother. Are they not the closest (οἰκειότατοι) of all?

Xenophon's ὁμόθεν like Hesiod's refers to a shared place, in this case the polis. Yet his usage indicates just how rich the term could be including seed (σπέρματος) and an ongoing incorporative process based on those nourished together (τραφέντες). It also includes non kin, who remain ὁμόθεν through eating together (σύσσιτος) and sharing the same house (οἰκειότεροι), before encompassing all male citizens. In other words, kinship is about far more than blood and appears as something which emerges from a complex and expansive process of incorporation based on nurture and nature.

If eating and relating clearly occupied an important place in ancient Greek conceptions of kinship, the idea has not always received the attention it deserves. Indeed, even works devoted to institutions such as ξενία show a certain suspicion regarding the status of kin relations created outside of birth.⁹¹ Herman in a comprehensive survey of ξένος relations and commensality, for example, adopts a nature/act distinction, arguing that ξενία ties merely 'mimicked aspects of kinship relations,' while 'real kinship is given: it follows from birth. Ritual friendship was an acquired relationship.'⁹² Similarly Wilgaux argues that Greek

⁹⁰ Sahlins (2013) 7 n. 3

⁹¹ Stowers (1995) has drawn attention to the ambiguous association between the blood in Greek sacrificial practices and menstrual blood and argues that sacrifice can be interpreted as a kind of male birth. Earle (2012) 16, though writing more generally on food, bodies and kinship among the Conquistadors in the New World, has traced the Spanish fear regarding eating and 'transforming into something else' to Hippocratic medicine.

⁹² Hermann (1987) 29. For a different view see Fragoulaki (2013) 3-11 in her study of kinship in Thucydides. Sahlins (2013) repeatedly emphasises 'human birth is not a pre-discursive fact. A whole series of persons may be bodily instantiated in the new born child, including lineage and clan ancestors, while even the woman who gave birth is excluded' (3). Ξένοι relations show considerable confusion when examined in detail. Herman, as we have seen, differentiates the two based on inherited/acquired distinction, yet this is a matter of perspective. For example, regarding the ancestral ξενία of Glaucos and Diomedes (*Il.* 6.215), the relations was acquired by their ancestors through an act which had nothing to do with birth. Yet for Diomedes and Glaucos the relationship is an

understandings of kinship predominantly focus on ‘natural relationships’ such as blood and the mixing of bodily substances through intercourse, but downplays kinship through adoption.⁹³ Stowers and recently Stocking, both drawing theoretical inspiration from Jay, are important exceptions in their emphasis on how patrilineal kinship is ‘constructed and negotiated through rituals of sacrifice and commensality.’⁹⁴ However, in some respects these studies simply shift the emphasis from biological kinship to socially constructed kinship. This is problematic as the stress on blood relations in ancient Greece is far more than a Western prejudice but a perennial paradox at the heart of Greek ideas of incorporating the Other. Indeed, both Herman and Wilgaux marshal an impressive range of sources to support the preference for biological kin over kin by other means in ancient Greece.⁹⁵ Lycurgus (*Leoc.* 48) bluntly expresses it:

ὥσπερ γὰρ πρὸς τοὺς φύσει γεννήσαντας καὶ τοὺς ποιητοὺς τῶν πατέρων οὐχ ὁμοίως ἔχουσιν
ἅπαντες ταῖς εὐνοίαις οὕτω καὶ πρὸς τὰς χώρας τὰς μὴ φύσει προσηκούσας, ἀλλ’ ὕστερον
ἐπικτήτους γενομένας καταδεέστερον διάκεινται.

men do not hold their foster parents as dearly as their natural parents, and so towards countries which are not their own but which have been adopted, during lifetime they feel a weaker loyalty.⁹⁶

This is far from a new sentiment emerging in the Classical period and the attitude that affines and adoptees are second best to kin by blood appears as we have seen as early as Homer (*Od.* 8.581-3).⁹⁷ In other words, when it comes to incorporating the Other through the shared feast the evidence points in two directions. On the one hand, kinship ties established through ritual are of pivotal importance, on the other, blood is repeatedly stressed as superior to affinal ties. Although this could indicate an unresolved conflict in Greek ideology, there is, however, a middle ground between these conflicting views on blood and ritual kinship. The sharing of

inherited one, which was passed down by birth. Indeed the idea of inheriting what we would see as socially acquired characteristics was common in the Greek world and Aristotle discusses the commonly held idea that scars and tattoos could be passed down through the generations (*Gen. An* 724a).

⁹³ Wilgaux (2010) 229. Parkes (2005) arrives at a similar conclusion regarding Indo-European milk kinship noting: ‘in practice, this adoptive kinship ideal could never be too satisfactorily realized as a relationship wholly comparable or compatible with natal kinship’ (608).

⁹⁴ Stowers (1995); Stocking (2017). As Jay (1992) argues: ‘it is the social relations of reproduction, not biological reproduction, that sacrificial ritual can create and maintain. Where the state and social relations of production are not separable from a patrilineally organized social relations of reproduction, the entire social order may be understood as dependent on sacrifice’ (37). Cited in Stocking (2017) 13.

⁹⁵ Wilgaux’s (2010) position is somewhat more complex than this and he stresses that Greek ideas of biology are by no means identical with Western ones and argues for the importance of mixing fluids and the creation of kinship which appears, for example, in the process of σύμφυσις or ‘growing together’ in nature during sexual intercourse (cf. *Pl. Sym.* 189d).

⁹⁶ Trans. Burt (1962) modified. See Wilgaux (2010) 218-19 who points out Isaeus *On the estate of Cleonymus* 41-43 and *Nicostratus* 15-17.

⁹⁷ A preference for kinship by birth over act, by no means suggests that kinship by act had no importance. As Vernant (1983) argues regarding the complex adoption and marriage practices surrounding the Epikleros, ‘it is far less a matter of transmitting property to a collateral than of preserving through the daughter the continuing existence of a ‘hearth’’. Thus the hearth was not merely an expression of a given status, in some respect it created that relation’ (144).

food may not be able to overwrite ties by birth but it may still in some way develop upon existing relations and foster new weaker bonds.⁹⁸ This notably is similar to what we see in Hesiod's discussion of the Golden Race where special crops and shared feasts can create special non ageing bodies but cannot transform mortals into gods. In other words, eating has real affects. It can bring individuals closer, it can create similar beings to a certain ambiguous degree. Yet it cannot overwrite ontological difference and transform kin into non-kin or mortal into god.

Many of the ambiguities I am trying to unravel come to the fore in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, a drama which pivots on how wives relate to husbands, mothers to children, fathers to sons, and ξένοι to ξένοι (*Eumen.* 657-661):

καὶ τοῦτο λέξω, καὶ μάθ' ὥς ὀρθῶς ἐρῶ.
οὐκ ἔστι μήτηρ ἢ κεκλημένου τέκνου
τοκεύς, τροφὸς δὲ κύματος νεοσπόρου.
Τίττει δ' ὁ θρώσκων, ἡδ' ἅπερ ξένῳ ξένη
ἔσωσεν ἔρνος, οἷσι μὴ βλάβῃ θεός.

I will explain this, too, and see how correctly I will speak.
The mother of what is called her child is not the parent,
but the nurturer (τροφός) of the newly-sown embryo.
The one who mounts is the parent, whereas she, as a ξένη to a ξένος,
preserves the young plant, if the god does not harm it.⁹⁹

This is not a typical stance. Indeed, the argument, far from a balanced and considered position is part of Apollo's efforts to justify matricide. It may also seem like the last place to look for a discussion on kinship among strangers and the text has been interpreted variously as an example of misogynistic male ideology, cutting edge science and an expression of the contested nature of Greek thought.¹⁰⁰ The manifest aim of Apollo's argument is to prove that a female element is not a necessary part of reproduction, a fact he illustrates with Athena's birth from Zeus' head (662-66). Yet despite his use of an unusual precedent, Apollo's claim is more traditional than is often realised.¹⁰¹ Whether referring to Athena's unusual birth or anyone else, his theory of procreation is based on two key relations, 'the new seed' (νεοσπόρος) which in his view is the superior element, and a secondary element the 'feeder' (τροφός) which is interestingly likened to a ξενία tie, a point I will return to shortly. A male can at least mythically fulfil both roles, yet as Apollo and most Greeks were well aware this

⁹⁸ Indeed, the Greeks held nurture alongside nature to be of central importance in child development and practices such as shaping new-born infants abound. See Martin's (1995) excellent discussion on the Greek body, esp. 26

⁹⁹ Trans. Weir Smyth (1926) modified.

¹⁰⁰ For the male ideologically driven view see Zeitlin (1978). For the idea that Apollo's claim was barely credible see Sommerstein (1989) 208. For a general discussion see Buxton (2013) 156-8.

¹⁰¹ Despite his reliance on mythic precedents, the core of Apollo's reproductive theory is often associated with the Presocratic philosopher, Anaxagoras. The idea goes back to Aristotle (*Gen. An.* 736b 31-3) cf. Mitchell-Boyask (2013) 119-20.

was the exception rather than the rule. Indeed, despite a plurality of competing claims in Greek medicine, including Hippocratic two seed theories, Leitao argues that ‘all Greeks during all periods subscribed to what I would call a two-substance theory of reproduction, according to which both men and women contributed some material substance to the process.’¹⁰² Apollo’s view by stressing the presence of a seed and feeder too complies with this distinction. Indeed, if Apollo undermines, without excluding, the τροφός relation, fifty lines earlier the chorus stress the importance of nurture (*Eumen.* 605-8):

Ὀρέστης: ἐγὼ δὲ μητρὸς τῆς ἐμῆς ἐν αἵματι;
 Χορός: πῶς γάρ σ’ ἔθρεψ’ ἂν ἐντός, ὃ μαιφόνε,
 ζώνης; ἀπεύχῃ μητρὸς αἷμα φίλτατον;

Orestes: Then am I my mother's kin by blood?

Chorus: How else could she have nurtured you, murderer, beneath her belt? Do you reject the nearest kinship, that of a mother?¹⁰³

The chorus’s claim develops upon the meaning of τρέφω arguing that more than simply feeding the child it also involves the creation of a blood relation. While the chorus, by insisting that Orestes is kin precisely because he was nourished in his mother womb, draw an antithetical conclusion to Apollo, their positions are not mutually exclusive. Instead they emphasise a different aspect of a more complex process involving nurture and seed.¹⁰⁴ In this respect, Apollo’s comparison between a mother and a ξένη suddenly becomes quite relevant to our discussion. The term could be translated as a stranger in this context and indeed this translation suits Apollo’s emphasis that the male is the real parent. It is not, however, a particularly satisfactory reading for Apollo’s comparison between the mother who nourishes and protects (σώζω) the seed. If the idea of protection and nurture makes no sense in respect to a stranger, it is perfectly in tune with a guest friend and at this point we reach the crux of my argument.¹⁰⁵ Apollo’s comparison between a mother and a ξένη is based on the implicit idea that ξενία creates some form of kinship and even perhaps some form of blood through nourishment.¹⁰⁶ At the same time at this point we reach a barrier of sorts. Not only is the connection between a ξένος and blood kin never made in any Greek source, the relationships as we have seen are repeatedly contrasted. This leaves us in a rather ambiguous zone, a ξένος

¹⁰² The classic example emerges from poetic metaphors for the plough and the field. See Loraux (2000) 103 and Leitao (2012) 18-58.

¹⁰³ Trans. Weir Smyth (1926).

¹⁰⁴ This view shows similarities to that proposed by Hippon of Rhegium (DK 38 A 14), who claims: εἰ μὲν ἡ γονὴ κρατήσῃεν, ἄρρεν εἰ δ’ ἡ τροφή, θῆλυ ‘a male child [would result] if seed should prevail, a female child, if nourishment.’ Trans. Leitao (2012). See Leitao (2012) 27 for a further discussion of this passage.

¹⁰⁵ Mitchell-Boyask (2013) 119-20 discusses the term ξένη as possessing multiple meanings in this context.

¹⁰⁶ This is hardly a radical innovation and the idea that food creates blood is not particularly novel. Aristotle, for example, argues that food formed the basis of blood which in turn was converted into both the male seed and female breast milk (*Gen. An.* 17.721b) cf. Wilgaux (2010) 223; Stowers (1995) 302-3. Aristotle, as is often the case, was not creating *ex nihilo* but developing as we have seen upon older ideas and presuppositions appearing at least as early as Homer (*Il.* 5 339-342).

is less than blood and more than a stranger, it is somehow kin and not kin simultaneously. Paradoxical as it sounds this is precisely the point. The tie created by ξενία is neither blood nor non-blood but an intermediary relation which allows two separate beings or tribes to connect while retaining their distinct identities. This kind of relation is also the key to understanding how gods and men interact during the sacrificial feast.

Sacrifice and Intermediaries

This discussion of kinship, affines and shared tables leads us back to our starting point, the Promethean divide (*Theog.* 535-544):

καὶ γὰρ ὅτ' ἐκρίνοντο θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ' ἄνθρωποι
Μηκόνῃ, τότε ἔπειτα μέγαν βοῦν πρόφρονι θυμῷ
δασσάμενος προέθηκε, Διὸς νόον ἐξαπαφίσκων.
τῷ μὲν γὰρ σάρκας τε καὶ ἔγκατα πίονα δημῷ
ἐν ῥινῷ κατέθηκε καλύψας γαστρὶ βοεΐη,
τῷ δ' αὖτ' ὅστέα λευκὰ βοὸς δολίῃ ἐπὶ τέχνῃ
εὐθετίσας κατέθηκε καλύψας ἀργέτι δημῷ.
δὴ τότε μιν προσέειπε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε:

Ἰαπετιονίδῃ, πάντων ἀριδείκετ' ἀνάκτων,
ὦ πέπον, ὥς ἑτεροζήλως διεδάσσαις μοίρας.

when the gods and mortal men were separating at Mekone,
even then he (Prometheus) with cunning intentions divided a great ox
and set portions before them, trying to deceive the mind of Zeus.
One share he made of flesh and inner parts thick with fat upon the hide,
covering them with an ox paunch;
the other he made of white bones dressed up with cunning art
and covered with shining fat.

Then the father of men and of gods said to him:
'Son of Iapetus, most glorious of all lords, good sir,
how unfairly you have divided the portions.'¹⁰⁷

Two key positions have dominated the understanding of this scene and sacrifice in general.¹⁰⁸ The first argues that sacrifice is about commensal relations and is often associated with Robertson Smith's influential *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*. The idea of commensality was, as we have seen earlier, at the core of Robertson Smith's anthropology:

The one thing directly expressed in the sacrificial meal is that the god and his worshippers are *commensals*, but every other point in their mutual relations is included in what this involves. Those who sit at meals together are united for all social effects, those who do not eat together are aliens to one another, without fellowship in religion and without reciprocal social duties.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Trans. Evelyn White (1914) modified.

¹⁰⁸ Burkert's (1983) sacrificial theory developed in *Homo Necans* is often discussed alongside these positions. It has not, however, been anywhere near as influential. See comments in the Introduction.

¹⁰⁹ Robertson Smith (1889) 251.

Robertson Smith's theory of community through sacrifice was famously adapted by Durkheim and Mauss and Hubert in their work on sacrifice.¹¹⁰ Robertson Smith was also in some form adopted by Vernant and the Paris School.¹¹¹ Yet somewhere in this genealogy, the argument went in the very opposite direction – sacrifice was not an act of communication and commensality, but an expression of difference. The most influential expression of this view is adopted by Vernant who argues that the sacrificial shares represent the absolute difference between gods and men:

By distinguishing, in the body of the ritually slaughtered animal, between two and only two parts, which are sharply contrasted because they are opposites from the standpoint of their food value- in other words, by treating sacrifice as a type of eating characteristic of man as distinct from the gods- Hesiod fashions this first sequence of the Promethean myth in the lines of traditional religious thought.¹¹²

Vernant, in other words, argues that the Promethean division signified an absolute division between men who eat to live and gods who do not eat at all.¹¹³ The division marks the birth of the separation of two tribes who are entirely distinct in diets and lifestyle. Vernant, however, does not leave it at this and goes on to argue that if sacrifice emphasises difference, it also paradoxically is a kind of communication:

The alimentary rite that brings men into contact with the divine underscores the *distance* that separates them. *Communication* is established by a religious procedure that in reminding men of the Promethean fault emphasizes the insurmountable distance between men and the gods. It is the very function of the myth, as Hesiod tells it, to reveal the origins and dire consequences of this situation.¹¹⁴

The insistence that sacrifice is both an expression of difference and a form of communication is not always accentuated in summaries of Vernant's position. Indeed, when faced with this paradoxical view scholars frequently choose one side. Thus Detienne can claim to follow Vernant and focus on sharing, whereas Parker can express his position as based entirely on separation.¹¹⁵ However, it is clear that Vernant does not choose sharing or separation, but like Hermes wants to have his meat and eat it too. This creates a certain tension in his argument. How can gods and men communicate if every aspect of sacrifice expresses the fundamental gulf that separates them? Why would they do it at all if they received no benefit from the act? This paradox which Vernant insisted upon is never resolved in his work and in some respects results from the kind of binary structuralism to which he adhered. As Cartledge summarises,

¹¹⁰ Hubert and Mauss (1898); Durkheim, (1912).

¹¹¹ Lincoln (2012b) 17. Detienne and Sissa (2000) 72. Robertson Smith was also influential on Nilsson (1955) 144. See Stocking (2017) 4-5.

¹¹² Vernant (1989) 26. Bakker (2013) follows Vernant on this point noting that 'their share in the distribution is qualitatively different from that of humans. This underscores a fundamental divide between the human and the divine, but at the same time establishes the feast-division as an essential channel of communication between the two realms' (40-41).

¹¹³ Vernant (1989) 25; Vernant (1991) 280.

¹¹⁴ Vernant (1989) 25.

¹¹⁵ Detienne and Sissa (2000) 72; Parker (2011) 140.

the Greek world was composed of binaries such as ‘Greek-barbarian, men-women, citizen-alien, free-slave, gods-mortals’ and ‘never could the twain of any of these disjunctives dichotomies meet.’¹¹⁶ While the emphasis on opposition is not misleading, it would make life very difficult if these polarities never met. For this reason the Greeks in addition to oppositions frequently resorted to an intermediary, a third term which allowed oppositions to meet while retaining their absolute distinction. A key example of such a relation is the ξενία tie which emphasises a simultaneous relation of difference and proximity. ξενία, however, is but one example of a repeatedly used device for connecting oppositions. These intermediaries were sometimes objects, particular individuals or gods, and even entire classes of beings. Hermes is an excellent example of an intermediary god who moves between categories, young and old, Olympus and the Underworld.¹¹⁷ Hermes was not the only such being and others include Dionysus, the Dioskouri and Herakles.¹¹⁸ These ambiguous children of mortal and immortal unions were also, as noted, ideal candidates for ritual theoxenia or feasts for the gods. Dionysus, the perpetual ξένος, was even annually married to the wife of the Archon in Athens.¹¹⁹ Alongside these puzzling intermediary gods we sometimes see entire classes of beings utilised in similar ways such as the heroes and the daimones. These figures again straddle the boundaries between men and gods without compromising their absolute difference. Heroes were usually deceased demigods and aristocratic ancestors who continued to remain forceful presences after death.¹²⁰ Daimones are more difficult to classify and indeed all gods can be called daimones.¹²¹ However, daimones from at least Hesiod on were also applied to a category of intermediary beings.¹²² Hesiod describes how the Golden Race became daimones after their death (*Op.*121-126):

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ γαῖ' ἐκάλυψε,—
 τοὶ μὲν δαίμονες ἀγνοὶ ἐπιχθόνιοι καλέονται
 ἐσθλοὶ, ἀλεξίκακοι, φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων,
 οἳ ῥα φυλάσσουσιν τε δίκας καὶ σχέτλια ἔργα
 ἥερα ἐσσάμενοι πάντη φοιτῶντες ἐπ' αἶαν,
 πλουτοδόται· καὶ τοῦτο γέρας βασιλῆιον ἔσχον—

but after the earth had covered this generation—
 they are called pure spirits dwelling on the earth,
 and are kindly, delivering from harm, and guardians of mortal men;
 for they roam everywhere over the earth, clothed in mist

¹¹⁶ Cartledge (1993) 16.

¹¹⁷ Vernant (1983).

¹¹⁸ Burkert (1985) 208-16.

¹¹⁹ Parker (2011) 195-6. See description in Dem. *Nea.* 59.73-78.

¹²⁰ Burkert (1985) 203.

¹²¹ Burkert (1985) 179-82.

¹²² As Sfameni Gasparo (2015) notes ‘in Hesiod’s scheme the ‘daimones-guardians’ appear as a well-defined category of beings, midway between gods and men, and acting as intermediaries between them. There are many elements that lead us to conclude that this notion is not the poet’s invention, but reflects popular belief that the daimones were subhuman beings related to, but distinct from, the gods, who acted as intermediaries between gods and men’ (417).

and keep watch on judgements and cruel deeds,
givers of wealth; for this share also they received.¹²³

Intermediary beings might be understood as weakening the absolute divide between men and gods and suggesting that difference is a matter of ‘degree rather than a difference in kind.’¹²⁴ This view, however, misses the point. Intermediaries are not a way of weakening difference, but a means of circumnavigating it. Indeed, a world defined entirely by difference would be rather a cold one. How else could a Greek leave the city if he had no ξένος to receive him? How could people marry? And most importantly how could humans communicate and beg favours from the tribe of the gods? These differences were negotiated through intermediaries and perhaps the central intermediary act in Greek society was sacrifice. Descola argues more generally that sacrifice is:

a means of action developed within the context of analogist ontologies in order to establish an operational continuity between intrinsically different singularities. For this purpose, it makes use of a serial mechanism of connections and disconnections that functions either as an attractor – to establish a connection with something else – or as a separator – to break a connection that already exists at a different level and that one seeks to dissolve.’¹²⁵

Descola does not say whether this link is established through an analogical similarity or some other means, however as far as the Greek material goes I suggest that we understand sacrifice, like ξενία, as a means of connecting two groups through the use of an intermediary, a third term, which allows each tribe to connect while retaining their distinctions. A similar idea was proposed by the great ancient analogical thinker, Plato (*Symp.* 202e-203a), who presents a clear summary on the topic in his description of the daimon and intermediary, Eros, who

ἐρμηνεύον καὶ διαπορθμεύον θεοῖς τὰ παρ’ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀνθρώποις τὰ παρὰ θεῶν, τῶν μὲν τὰς δεήσεις καὶ θυσίας, τῶν δὲ τὰς ἐπιτάξεις τε καὶ ἀμοιβὰς τῶν θυσιῶν, ἐν μέσῳ δὲ ὄν ἀμφοτέρων συμπληροῖ, ὥστε τὸ πᾶν αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συνδεδέσθαι. διὰ τούτου καὶ ἡ μαντικὴ πᾶσα χωρεῖ καὶ ἡ τῶν ἱερέων τέχνη τῶν τε περὶ τὰς θυσίας καὶ τελετὰς καὶ τὰς ἐπωδὰς καὶ τὴν μαντείαν πᾶσαν καὶ γοητείαν. θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ μίγνυται, ἀλλὰ διὰ τούτου πᾶσά ἐστιν ἡ ὁμιλία καὶ ἡ διάλεκτος θεοῖς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους, καὶ ἐγρηγοροῖσι καὶ καθεύδουσι.

Interpreting and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to men; entreaties and sacrifices from below, and ordinances and requitals from above: being midway between, it makes each to supplement the other, so that the whole is combined in one. Through it are conveyed all divination and priestcraft concerning sacrifice and ritual and incantations, and all soothsaying and sorcery. God with man does not mingle: but the spiritual is the means of all society and converse of men with gods and of gods with men, whether waking or asleep.¹²⁶

Plato may seem like a problematic figure for the interpretation of Hesiod. My point, however, is not to align the figures in every respect, but that in this particular passage Plato expresses a key insight into a perennial Greek problem on how ontological opposites can communicate

¹²³ Trans. Evelyn White (1914) modified.

¹²⁴ Garcia (2013) 173.

¹²⁵ Descola (2013b) 42 .

¹²⁶ Trans. Fowler 1925 modified.

with each other.¹²⁷ In this respect, I argue that Plato offers, much in the way an anthropologist does, an explicit attempt to address the implicit reasoning behind intermediary figures such as the daimones and the hidden logic of sacrifice. Plato's first assumption is that the whole is comprised of two separate domains, mortals and immortals, which are entirely distinct. However, between these worlds is an intermediary god, Eros, who allows these domains to form a continuous whole (τὸ πᾶν αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συνδεδέσθαι) while simultaneously not mixing (οὐ μείγνυται). This idea is moreover offered as an explanation for a wide range of institutions including sacrifice, augury, magic, divination, all of which work upon the presence of an intermediary. Plato in this passage discusses a single intermediary, the daimon Eros, and two separated domains, those of men and gods. However, the Greeks had many more social divisions, Greek/barbarian, male/female etc. They also had many kinds of intermediary substances and institutions. I will now turn to one particularly central intermediary substance which allowed for a whole host of oppositions to interact without mixing, sacrificial meat.

Meat as a Mediator

In Vernant's view the Greeks sacrificed animals because meat expressed the absolute difference between gods and men. In other words, the animal victim mapped onto the absolute distinction expressed by ambrosia and bread. This assumption resulted in a very particular reading of Mekone and the meaning of sacrifice in general. Meat, however, is not used as a sacrificial offering because it symbolises a basic ontological difference. It is used because it works as an intermediary allowing ontologically separated beings to ambiguously connect.¹²⁸ Meat is something divided into portions including skin, flesh, fat, bones and innards and is as potentially rich as the butcher's imagination.¹²⁹ It is also something repeatedly marked as distinct from grain. Herodotus, for example, describes how the Ethiopians refuse to eat bread. Nor do they eat ambrosia or some kind of perpetual crops. Instead they eat meat served on the table of the sun and live up to 120 years (3.22-3). Herodotus' account recalls Homer's descriptions of the shared feasts the Ethiopians, long after Mekone, enjoy with the gods (*Od.*

¹²⁷ As always, there is a danger of ascribing a single set position to Plato. However, it is of note that Lovejoy (1936) starts his great chain of being with Plato. I do not, of course, argue that Plato and Hesiod propose identical views but that more generally they share the same problem of connecting ontologically separated domains.

¹²⁸ See Stocking (2017) 28 for a related point.

¹²⁹ The meal as Douglas (1991) notes is both a creative and structured process where 'the rules of the menu are not in themselves more or less trivial than the rules of verse to which a poet submits' (273). Ekroth (2011) also emphasise the creativity of sacrifice. I am also indebted to the useful discussion by Mc Clymond (2010) 143-145 who refers to the almost infinite potential of meat divisions and the creation of cosmic relations. These complications are now increasingly recognized in later Greek inscriptions such as the divisions described at Cos (LSCG 151). See Stocking (2017) 46-47.

1.25). Meat was at times eaten among kin in domestic settings, yet in general it was something set aside from everyday foods.¹³⁰ It was eaten at festivals among male citizens, among ξένοι, even by particular kinds of gods and men. Meat in all of these instances appears in contrast to the shared meals which strengthened the bonds among the household. It was a special substance which created communal bonds which are distinct and even opposed to those by birth, it was something shared by affines. This is how it worked in Mekone, and this is how it works among the mortals of Hesiod's own day.

Before discussing the complex role of meat divisions in the equal feast, I must discuss a potential problem for my argument, the widespread idea that the gods do not eat meat. This view was most famously proposed, as noted, by Vernant but has occupied a pivotal role in sacrificial interpretations thereafter.¹³¹ It is, however, an idea which is incorrect. Indeed, if the gods did reject meat, what are we to make of the shared feasts they enjoy among the Phaeacians, Ethiopians and the Golden Race. Nor are these ambiguities confined to the ends of the earth. The goddess, Hekate is offered dogs at crossroads and Demeter pigs in pits.¹³² Are these less than gods for this? Indeed the more sacrificial texts examined, the clearer it becomes that the gods are offered meat and at least in some instances are depicted eating it.¹³³ Many of these examples come from Classical and Hellenistic texts and we could always attempt to salvage a dichotomy in the Archaic period. However, even within sacrificial scenes in Homer and Hesiod, a great deal of variety and ambiguous shares present themselves. Homer, for example, repeatedly refers to a meaty share offered to the gods described through the verb ὠμοθετέω. The name refers to the act of placing raw meat from all the limbs, laid in fat and offered alongside barley. Suk Fong Jim argues this share far from representing a non

¹³⁰ See Faraone (2008) 216 and Isaeus (8.15–16): According to Vernant (1989) 131 meat was something usually restricted to sacrificial meals. Parker (2011) 131 adds some complications to this view but argues that it generally upholds.

¹³¹ The position that gods do not eat meat often appears in discussions of the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* where the infant god cements his divine status by refusing to eat mortal meat. As Vergados (2013) stresses in his recent study of the hymn 'gods do not eat meat' (328). However, Hermes' crisis in my view does not focus on whether he will be a god or a man, but on what kind of god he is going to be. Nor should we forget that if the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* states that the god does not eat the share, Apollodorus (3.10.2) states quite simply that he does.

¹³² See Parker (2011) 156–8. These offerings do not represent an identical form of sacrifice to the Olympian type described above. My point, however, is that the gods can receive a meat share.

¹³³ Alongside these examples, Parker (2011) 141 documents a number of further instances where offerings of raw meat and cooked entrails are directly served to gods. The conference *la cuisine et l'autel* (2005) is dedicated to the subject. Stocking (2017) 6–7 summarising the proceedings concludes 'in light of these important studies, it seems impossible to maintain Vernant's original assumption, which served as the basis for much of his argument, namely that the meat of sacrifice should be considered a 'mortal portion.' Detienne alongside Sissa (2000) has revised his earlier position and argues 'the Greek Gods were carnivorous. Ambrosia and Nectar were of course, their special, Olympian forms of nourishment, but they were by no means averse to the meat of animals, provided it was served up to them in the form of an *odor*' (75).

meaty share, represents the animal as a whole.¹³⁴ Vernant was, of course, well aware of this share and others which to some degree weakened his claim and in a footnote he recognizes another ambiguous third share, the σπλάγχνα ‘innards’. Vernant notes that ‘although food for humans, the splankna organ filled with blood, roasted directly over the flames of the altar, have a status that puts them more on the side of the gods and makes the gap separating the two forms of existence less acute.’¹³⁵ While this might seem to strike a fatal blow to the strict mortal immortal divide, Vernant insists that the problem is Homer’s. Hesiod, on the other hand, by eliminating the innards from his sacrificial narrative ‘in some way banishes the problem.’¹³⁶ Even this less than satisfactory evasion is not strictly true. Both of Hesiod’s divisions contain a problematic share of fat (δημός). In the mortal case this is present in the fat disguised in the ox’s belly. For the gods, the bones are concealed in this shining fat (538-41). Thus even in the key example of non-meat eating gods, there is greater overlap than Vernant would like. There is also one final share of the animal which remained central throughout the centuries. The gods in addition to their allotted portion, first and foremost receive the animal itself, perfect and whole. As Suk Fong Jim emphasises when speaking of sacrifices to the gods, the sources do not talk about how many smoke offerings are made but how many animals are consecrated.¹³⁷ If the animal itself is the real offering, every following share, in every kind of complicated division, is already implicated in the shared feast.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Suk Fong Jim (2014) 57.

¹³⁵ Vernant (1989) 226 n.17. The share Vernant describes is not mentioned in Hesiod’s divisions, but plays an important part in Homeric sacrifice. See, for example, *Il.* 1.464.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Suk Fong Jim (2014) stresses ‘ideologically the gods were presented with the whole animal’ (57). Valeri (1985) makes the same point in a Hawaiian context noting that ‘the entire offering is consecrated to the gods and from this standpoint is completely eaten by him’ (56).

¹³⁸ If it is now abundantly clear that gods in the Archaic and Classical periods were frequently offered meat, Vernant’s influence is persistent and a number of scholars continue to insist that even if the gods are offered meat, they do not eat it. Stocking (2017) 1 makes this absolutely central to his discussion of sacrifice and argues that, unlike the Babylonians and the Indians, the Greeks did not imagine the gods eat their sacrificial portions. Rather the gods receive honour from sacrifice. This main evidence for this claim emerges from a lack of any clear descriptions of meat eating gods, rather than a clear statement that the gods actually refuse meat. My own assumption is the reverse and unless it is clearly stated that the Olympians do not eat meat, I take it that like their Babylonian counterparts, they probably eat the food offered to them. However, Stocking does offer some intriguing points of support. In the *Hymn to Demeter* (310-3) for example, when mortals cease to sacrifice to the gods, the gods are described as deprived of honour (τιμή) rather than food. The idea of hungry gods deprived of sacrifice was also the butt of jokes by Aristophanes (*Av.* 1519) and Lucian (*De Sacr.* 9). These texts can hardly be used uncritically. Indeed, the supposedly satirical sketches of Aristophanes are not a far cry from Hesiod’s description of oath breaking gods deprived of ambrosia and nectar in the *Theogony* (793-803) and in general comic representations are difficult to assess precisely because they point in two directions. Certainly it is suggested in these comic representations that by Aristophanes’ time a number of people found hungry gods funny. Then again, the joke arguably works precisely because it refers to actually held views. I am thus suspicious of Stocking’s blanket statement that the Greek gods did not eat meat, but persuaded that the issue of hungry gods was problematic for some Greeks. The significance of this contested view should not be seen as a major problem and even among those who laughed at hungry gods, the vast majority continued to sacrifice to them. In this respect, how gods received their shares and what they did with them is far from the most significant

The Equal Feast Reconsidered

At this point it might be useful to summarise my position so far. Men and gods are opposed tribes or affines. During the Golden Age, their relations were very close, currently they are considerably more distant. Nevertheless, whether they share a single table or not, in both cases they are never equal and relate as affines through particular divisions of the sacrificial animal. I argue therefore that sacrifice among men of the current day remains a kind of distant *ξενία*, a new configuration of an always inherent difference, where gods and men negotiate their fair share in the division of destinies that is sacrifice. The central feature of the feast is hierarchical difference.¹³⁹ This difference was stressed even when mortals and immortals shared the same table in terms of their unequal lifetimes (Hes. fr. 1.1-7 M.W.). After Mekone this minimal difference increased drastically and Hesiod specifically calls the Promethean shares *ἐτερόζηλος* ‘zealous for one side.’ This emphasis on unequal shares and distributions is at the very core of feasting practices and a key means of enforcing differences among affines, including gods and men, but also among different ranks of men such as kings, aristocrats and commoners. Although the gods no longer sit side by side with men at the same table, their presence in the feast is clear and vouched for by Zeus himself who stresses (*Il.* 24.69):

οὐ γάρ μοί ποτε βωμὸς ἐδεύετο δαιτὸς ἔϊσης
λοιβῆς τε κνίσσης τε: τὸ γὰρ λάχομεν γέρας ἡμεῖς.

For my altar was never deprived of libation and burnt meat (κνῖσα)
in the equal feast, the honourable share (γέρας) allotted (λάχομεν) to us.¹⁴⁰

issue. I argue that sacrifice in all cases entails more than nutrition. As Valeri (1985) stresses regarding Hawaiian divinities ‘to eat is to encompass, to possess, to transform’ (56).

¹³⁹ Valeri (1985) notes that hierarchy ‘involves distinction as much as connection’ (57). The feast, too, expresses hierarchy in terms of non-inclusion and marginalised groups such as women, slaves and foreigners. See Stowers (1995) 327. Naiden (2012) 61-70 argues that sacrificial shares were likely limited to a minority of participants in most instances. Although there is a clear presence of hierarchy in feasting and sacrifice, Homer curiously refers to the feast as ἴσος equal (*Il.* 7.321). For Seaford (2004) 41 the term is clear and he argues that equality in the feast, means just that - people, though not gods, are treated the same. This position is difficult to maintain. Firstly, the superior gods are part of this equal feast. Zeus, as noted, himself stresses this point (*Il.* 24.69): οὐ γάρ μοί ποτε βωμὸς ἐδεύετο δαιτὸς ἔϊσης/ λοιβῆς τε κνίσσης τε: τὸ γὰρ λάχομεν γέρας ἡμεῖς. (For my altar was never deprived of libation and burnt meat κνῖσα in the equal feast, the honourable share γέρας allotted λάχομεν to us). See also *Il.* 4.48. Zeus is not only part of the equal feast but paradoxically he receives an honourable share (γέρας). Zeus may well be more equal than others but the same appears to be the case for a number of mortals who receive superior shares. Hitch (2009) 108 therefore has argued that ἴσος does not refer to equality at all but to a share appropriate to each. See also Stocking (2017) 8-9; Bakker 2013: 38-42. And what was appropriate according to the Greeks was to recognize the superiority of the gods and godlike men.

¹⁴⁰ See also *Il.* 4.48. The idea of the gods as participants in the feast may seem to overlook some obvious differences between current day sacrifice and the shared meals of mythical times. In Mekone men and gods sat together at a single table, now the gods’ offering is burnt or left on altars. I do not wish to deny these differences, but the idea that gods continue to participate in the feast is vouched for by Zeus himself, who explicitly refers to his portion as his honorary share in the equal feast (*Il.* 24.69). Similarly Athena refers to sacrifice as ‘the feast of the gods’ (*Od.* 3.336). Bakker (2013) in his recent study on Greek meat, argues against imposing artificial distinctions between the sacrificial offerings to the gods and the feast that follows. He notes ‘the *dais* is thus always a sacrifice. The gods are always participants in the *dais*’ (40). This is a central feature of the feast I argue

Zeus not only stresses his presence at the feast he refers to his specific share of honour as a γέρας. This share was not strictly reserved for the gods and Ajax, for example, like Zeus is also honoured with a γέρας (*Il.* 7.321). Despite this we should not conflate the two shares and while Ajax and Zeus both receive a γέρας share they are far from identical. Zeus' γέρας is described as κνῖσα or the steam and odour of the meat, while Ajax receives a choice cut of the animal, the chine.¹⁴¹ In this respect the superior treatment of mortals does not identify them with the gods but is a recognition of their likeness to the gods and status above the commoners (*Il.* 12.310-13):

Γλαῦκε τί ἦ δὴ νῶϊ τετιμήμεσθα μάλιστα
ἔδρη τε κρέασίν τε ἰδὲ πλείοις δεπάεσσιν
ἐν Λυκίῃ, πάντες δὲ θεοὺς ὥς εἰσορόωσι;

Glaukos, why is it you and I are honoured before others
with pride of place, the choice meats and the filled wine cups
in Lykia, and all men look on us as if we were immortals?¹⁴²

This stress on difference and hierarchy is what defines the sacrificial distribution and through the intermediary powers of meat the animal body is reassembled to form a hierarchal 'chain of honour' where gods are at the apex and men well below.¹⁴³ The equal feast, in this respect, is a complicated affair based on internal hierarchies among men, hierarchies among gods and the manipulation of shares of meat which allow for these beings to come into contact through an ambiguous shared meal. This complexity also opens up a good deal of space for debate and more than reflecting a given social order, the shares and divisions attempt to create a

from Hesiod's Mekone to St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (10.18-20): οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι.

'I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils [i.e. daimones]' trans. King James.

¹⁴¹ These are both signs of honour, yet there is no confusion between gods and men and these respective portions clearly stress something very different about their recipients. I stress that by focusing on the shared meal I am not saying that the feast collapses difference. Differences are stressed everywhere. We see difference in the contrasts between altars against tables, priority of serving, type of share and method of preparation. Sacrifice may bring mortals and immortals to the same feast, yet it does not mean that gods and men are the same beings. In this respect, while I argue that we indeed need to move beyond Vernant's dichotomy based on carnivorous men and non-meat eating gods, these shares do say something about the particular qualities associated with these beings. And as is often the case the message is rather complex. As has long since been noted the choice of a particular animal often reflects an effort towards creating an analogous relation between offering and god. As Larson (2016) notes 'correlations, but not rigid requirements, existed between individual deities and the species, age, sex and color of animals presented to them. For example piglets were often given to Demeter and, surprisingly often, to Zeus; female animals were more likely to preferentially assigned to goddesses, and uncastrated male animals to gods' (204). Can similar analogies be detected between divinities and the particular sacrificial divisions themselves? Can we for example see the meat offerings to Demeter and Hekate not as reflections on their statuses as gods but expressions of their chthonic domain? Similarly could smoke offerings to the Olympians have nothing to do with their refusal to eat meat, but simply reflect an appropriate means of serving deities who are difficult to see and reside in the heavens. The Greeks would hardly be exceptional in this respect. In the Vedic tradition, fire is a means of feeding gods who dwell in the sky and 'agni [the god of the hearth] is the mouth of the gods' AsGS 4.7.22. This view would also help explain what happens at the shared feasts at the ends of the earth. When men and gods sit side by side in one place, they can see each other eating.

¹⁴² Trans. Lattimore (1951)

¹⁴³ The term is adapted from Ekroth's (2011) 36 discussion of Classical material.

particular order among its participants. This element of negotiation is crucial and sacrifice, as we have seen, is incredibly flexible and allows for variations in procedures and shares. In other words, sacrifice is far from a commemorative rite but an act of creating, enforcing and manipulating social order. Moreover there is always a possibility that Ajax or Achilles may contest the particular sacrificial distribution or the gods reject their offering at the feast.¹⁴⁴ This negotiation takes place through the manipulation of the animal's body, a cosmic act where the divisions, as McClymond notes:

are physically manipulated and distributed to different parties, so they are ordered in a new *spatial* arrangement or pattern. Thus, apportionment takes a ritually chaotic victim's body and organizes that body into a ritually ordered microcosm. Chaos (the natural animal body) is transformed into ordered substance (the ritually arranged body).¹⁴⁵

This description applies to the making of the world as much as it does to the destruction of an animal. Sacrifice and creation in Hesiod are always acts of negotiation and attempts to impose order on a chaotic world made of disparate elements. Indeed, when it comes to apportionment cosmology and sacrifice are inseparable and every act of sacrifice is a return to Mekone.¹⁴⁶

Conclusions

This chapter has explored eating, sharing food and sacrifice as a means of creating, dissolving and above all negotiating volatile affinal ties. I have argued that although sacrifice often repeated certain themes, it was a flexible and creative act, showing great variation and possibilities for manipulating rites. Every sacrifice, from the Promethean division to the current day, was part of navigating this kinship and an attempt to create a particular ideal. The core assumption in these negotiations was that sacrifice is an attempt to connect affines through the use of intermediaries which allowed oppositions to connect, without blurring their ontological integrity. In some cases these differences were between strangers and non-strangers ξενία, at others it was between the distinct tribes of gods and men. Even after Mekone, the original table companions remained affines, albeit moving to the hostile side of the relationship. This was, however, part of an always inherent ambiguity in the affinal tie.

¹⁴⁴ A key example of a sacrifice rejected by the gods appears in Sophocles' *Antigone* (1012-13). Mortal disputes over divisions were frequent and Thucydides, for example, discusses sacrificial priority in relation to the conflicts between Corinth and Corcyra (1.25.4). See Stowers (1995) 328.

¹⁴⁵ McClymond (2008) 142.

¹⁴⁶ To complement my argument on sacrifice and apportionment I offer a fuller analysis of a single Homeric sacrificial scene in Appendix Three.

To repeat the words of Alcinous (*Od.* 546-7) ‘A stranger/friend/god (ξένος) is opposite/equal (ἄντι) to a man.’¹⁴⁷

Before concluding, one basic issue remains to be discussed. Why did the Greeks sacrifice at all? Vernant beautifully explains each share and its meaning, yet leaves this question curiously unanswered. Indeed, if sacrifice is a commemoration which reflects a stable and fixed cosmic order, it becomes in some respects a redundant act. In this focus on sacrifice as part of a finished and ideal world order, we once more see how Chaos has been pushed aside. Yet I have repeatedly pointed out, that from Mekone onwards, sacrifice was not about a commemoration but about creating a relationship. This point has been emphatically emphasised by Puett, who stresses that ritual is rarely about reflecting order:

In fact, it is quite the opposite: ritual actions involving order and harmony are only necessary among actors who see the world as inherently fractured and fragmented. If ritual participants thought the world was inherently harmonious, why bother with the rituals?¹⁴⁸

In other words, ritual is an attempt to deal with a chaotic world.¹⁴⁹ This claim may be quibbled and there were undoubtedly some rituals offered in times of abundance and good cheer. On the whole, however, Puett is correct: people perform rituals such as sacrifice because they want the world to be different than it is. An obvious example appears in the opening of the *Iliad*, when Apollo sends a plague to punish Agamemnon’s hubris. Agamemnon in turn responds by offering sacrifice as an attempt to deal with this chaos (1.314). Others considered it in more mercantile terms and Euthyphro (Plat. *Euth.* 14d) saw sacrifice as the science of asking and giving to the gods (ἐπιστήμη ἅρα αἰτήσεως καὶ δόσεως θεοῖς). In both cases sacrifice is not about repeating an act laid out once and for all by Prometheus and Zeus. It is an attempt to live in a problematic world, a world where things go wrong, where people fall ill, and the unexpected is always around the corner.

¹⁴⁷A general theory of sacrifice will inevitably be the subject of criticism and I should add a disclaimer at this point. Parker (2011) notes regarding the complexity of the offerings that ‘we fumble in interpreting these variations, and it is very plausible that different Greek communities deployed the repertory of symbols in different ways. The basic components, however-foodstuffs-are always the same’ (150). I have attempted to keep my position as flexible as possible, but inevitably my argument will not apply to every case where an animal is ritually killed. One issue I do not discuss is holocaust offerings where the victim was entirely destroyed and the intention appears to be separation full stop. See Parker (2011) 144. This does not contradict my model, however, and this is arguably simply another configuration of an offering, where the emphasis is on creating distance rather than proximity. I have also not discussed the sacrificing of vegetables and cakes. See Stowers (2011) for a survey of these offerings. While every sacrifice needs to be considered in its proper context, I do not see why these offerings cannot behave like meat, that is, as intermediaries which are divided and distributed in different ways.

¹⁴⁸ Puett (2008) 31. Puett instead argues that we should understand ‘ritual as a subjunctive—the creation of an order as if it were truly the case’ (20).

¹⁴⁹ Stocking (2017) too notes ‘sacrificial procedures always contain within them the potential for conflict’ (172).

CHAPTER THREE

Orpheus and the Creation of the Cosmos

The next two chapters discuss the earliest surviving theogony attributed to the legendary singer, Orpheus.¹ The poem known as the *Derveni Theogony* (c. sixth century BC) is in many respects traditionally Hesiodic and Orpheus, like Hesiod, describes a succession of divine kings, including the castration of Ouranos by Kronos and the coronation of Zeus.² Despite this fidelity to Hesiod's basic narrative, through a process of omissions and additions, I argue that Orpheus enacts a total transformation of his source materials, rewriting Hesiod's ontology of difference into an ontology of continuity or what I call pantheism. I begin by locating Orphism's place among contemporary developments in Presocratic philosophy and especially the enigmatic writings of Heraclitus. This sets the groundwork for the bulk of this chapter which focuses on the poetic realisation of this pantheistic vision through a series of key transformations of Hesiod's narrative.

Rewriting Chaos

In Chapter One I argued that despite the many attempts to impose cosmic order upon Hesiod, his emphasis was on difference as the defining principle of the cosmos. I referred to this as an analogistic cosmology where disorder and multiplicity precede order and any cosmic arrangement is always liable to dissolution. Although it should be stressed that some version of this Hesiodic world view remained central throughout Greek antiquity, it was by no means unchallenged and starting from the sixth century BC a number of competing cosmologies came to the fore. How to understand these challenges to the traditional world view remains intensely debated. In a popular, though increasingly problematized reading, Hesiod and the wider Greek tradition faced a war on two fronts. From the Eastern Greek colonies in Ionia, the mainland was assailed by the so called nature-philosophers and from the Northern lands of Thrace, Scythia and as far as Mongolia, by wonder workers and shamans.³ Both of these

¹ Orpheus is not a historical figure but a name associated with a body of poetry written at different times by different authors. Although, I will follow the ancient convention and refer to Orpheus as if he were a real person, it is important to stress that the poetical corpus associated with his name stretches over a millennium and was written by multiple authors.

² Dating the text is tentative. As Papadopoulou (2014) xi notes the papyrus contains three components, the poem which may date to the sixth century, the commentary (late fifth-fourth centuries) and the papyrus itself (mid fourth century BC).

³ For a discussion in favour of Greek shamanism see Dodds (1951); West (1983) 4-7; Kingsley (2010). For a convincing criticism of the Greek shamanism hypothesis see Zhmud (2012) 207-21; Bremmer (2002) 27-40; Puett (2002) 81-94.

groups brought with them seemingly antithetical ideas. The shamans including semi-mythical figures like Abaris and Orpheus introduced strange notions like metempsychosis, vegetarianism and gave a new lease of life to the irrational and ecstatic side of Greek thought represented by the most un-Greek of all gods, Dionysus.⁴ The East offered the opposite, the beginning of Greek science and philosophy inaugurated by the ‘nature-philosophers’ or φυσιόλογοι. Far from the irrational stories about gods and monsters, one of their most celebrated claims was that the world is not a chaotic mess but an ordered whole, a cosmos.⁵ Many of these nature-philosophers criticised aspects of popular religion and instead turned towards the underlying and regular nature of this cosmos. Some even tried their hand at predicting and explaining natural events such as Thales’ alleged prediction of an eclipse (DK 11 A 17), Anaximenes’ of an earthquake (DK 13 A21) and Xenophanes’ discussion of rainbows (DK 21 B 32).

If the vision of sixth century Greece as a bipolar land of science and shamans still has some adherents, there is an increasing consensus among historians and philosophers that this narrative is inadequate and unable to explain the many figures who blur these two categories.⁶ Orpheus is a good example. Where he came from and why some Greeks started to write poetry associated with his name remains a mystery. Even as a mythical character his biography is somewhat unclear. Orpheus is notably absent from the poetry of Homer and Hesiod, yet by the mid sixth century, the poet Ibycus can refer to him as Orpheus of the renowned name.⁷ From this point on, his life can be pieced together through scattered references in tragedies, epics and his own poetic works. Born of a Muse and a Thracian King, or in some versions the god Apollo, he was a bard whose song enchanted men, animals and stones. As one of the Argonauts in Apollonius’ *Argonautica* he sat shoulder to shoulder with Herakles and Jason in their search for the Golden Fleece. Orpheus also had another side to him and as early as Aeschylus, he developed a reputation as a religious reformer of Bacchic rites.⁸ Orpheus the cult leader quickly became closely associated with the composition of theogonies, hymns and unusual practices such as the rejection of animal sacrifice and divinisation. The most important evidence for early Orphism are known as the Derveni papyrus and the gold plates.⁹ The Derveni papyrus includes the earliest known Orphic

⁴ Dionysus’ Mycenaean origins have been established with the decipherment of Linear B.

⁵ On the history of the word κόσμος see Finkelberg (1998).

⁶ The literature on the subject is expanding quickly. For a general criticism and some new perspectives on the transition from myth to reason see Buxton (1999) and especially the contribution by Most (1999). Another good general survey is Osborne, R. (2006) and Osborne, C. (2006).

⁷ Ibycus (Fr.17).

⁸ See Graf and Johnston (2007) 165-75 for further details on the biography of Orpheus.

⁹ For the Orphic identification of the plates see discussion in Chapter Four.

theogony and a philosophical commentary on the poem. The gold lamellae, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Four, provide dead souls with directions and prescriptions to help their transition from mortals into gods.¹⁰ In many respects, Orpheus the ecstatic cult leader from Thrace may seem like the perfect example of Northern shamanistic influence. The earliest evidence is, however, considerably more diverse and includes, in addition to Greece's Northern border, a substantial amount of evidence from Crete and South Italy. Moreover, Orpheus' earliest poetic works are roughly contemporary with figures like Thales and possess a distinctly Milesian stamp. Finkelberg, for example, argues that 'in the 6th century Orphic lore and Presocratic speculation were kindred teachings, differences between which resulted from different shaping of current religious and moral ideas rather than from any real divergence in the basic outlook.'¹¹ This combination of supposedly antithetical philosophical and mythical strands is not limited to mystics such as Orpheus, but appears in a number of central philosophical figures. Indeed, the father of logic, Parmenides, may have drawn inspiration from Orphic poetry and ritual practices.¹² Similar arguments can be made in respect to other influential philosophers including Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Empedocles.¹³ While these cases might be explained as exceptional or illustrations of mixed influences, even the scientific Milesians, as Hussey points out, 'turn out to have been like modern science in important respects, and unlike it in other important respects.'¹⁴ A key difference from modern science appears in their views on religion. Vlastos reminds us 'few words occur in their fragments more frequently than the term 'god.''¹⁵ Thus Thales, the astronomer and adherent of a water based cosmos, reportedly said that everything is full of gods, attributed souls to magnets and may even have described the cosmos itself as 'ensouled' (DK 11 A1). Thales left no written texts and how accurate these reports are is difficult to say. Nevertheless, the testimonies are themselves telling and broadly consistent with reports about his successors. Anaximander spoke in poetic language of 'the unlimited' (ἄπειρον) as the simultaneous source of generation, cosmic steersman and principle of retribution (DK 12 A9; B1).¹⁶ Anaximenes, according to Aetius, said (DK 13B 2):

¹⁰ The Orphic evidence will be discussed in more detail throughout the next two chapters. For a general introduction to Orphism see Parker (1995); Johnston and Graf (2007). On the gold plates see Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008). On the Derveni papyrus see Betegh (2004). For a more sceptical survey of Orphism see Edmonds (2013).

¹¹ Finkelberg (1986) 334.

¹² See Tor (2017) 271-73.

¹³ On the mystical side of Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans see Burkert (1972); On Empedocles and Parmenides see Kingsley (1995) and (2003). On Heraclitus see Leon Ruiz (2007).

¹⁴ Hussey (2000) 889.

¹⁵ Vlastos (1952) 97. For specific treatments of the Presocratics as theologians see Jaeger (1936) and Drozdek (2007).

¹⁶ What precisely is meant by the term ἄπειρον remains highly debated. See Kahn (1960) 231-39.

οἶον ἢ ψυχὴ ἢ ἡμετέρα ἀήρ οὔσα, συγκρατεῖ ἡμᾶς, καὶ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον πνεῦμα καὶ ἀήρ περιέχει.

As our soul, which is air, controls us, so do breath and air encompass the whole world-order.¹⁷

Heraclitus, though born in Ephesus, was in some respects the fourth Milesian.¹⁸ If Thales discussed water and Anaximenes air, Heraclitus gave a central role to everliving fire (DK 22 B 30). While fire is often called an element, rather than a stable entity, Heraclitus places the emphasis on process and transformation. This idea is expressed in his most famous statement (DK 22 A6) ‘you cannot step into the same river twice’ (δὺς ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν ποταμὸν οὐκ ἂν ἐμβαίης)¹⁹ and was applied to the elements themselves (DK 22 B 36):

ψυχῇσιν θάνατος ὕδωρ γενέσθαι, ὕδατι δὲ θάνατος γῆν γενέσθαι, ἐκ γῆς δὲ ὕδωρ γίνεται, ἐξ ὕδατος δὲ ψυχὴ.

For souls it is to die to become water, for water it is to die to become earth, from earth water is being born, from water Soul.²⁰

Heraclitus’ emphasis on continuity and change marks a central shift from the analogistic assumptions of Hesiod. Indeed, in one of the few explicit criticisms of his predecessors, Heraclitus censures the Boeotian poet for his problematic dualism (DK 22 B57):

διδάσκαλος δὲ πλείστων Ἡσίοδος· τοῦτον ἐπίστανται πλεῖστα εἰδέναι, ὅστις ἡμέρην καὶ εὐφρόνην οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν· ἔστι γὰρ ἓν.

The teacher of the multitude is Hesiod; they believe he has the greatest knowledge – who did not comprehend day and night: for they are one.²¹

¹⁷ Trans. Graham (2010) modified.

¹⁸ The literature on Heraclitus is vast. For a general introduction to his thought see Hussey (1999). For his collected fragments and a commentary see Kahn (1979). My own reading is closest to that of Finkelberg (2017).

¹⁹ DK 22 A 6: Pl. *Crat.* 402a8-10. The fragment possesses multiple variations. See Finkelberg (2017) 154-6. Heraclitus’ theory of flux is among the most debated issues in his philosophy. See Graham (2013); Taran (1989) for general discussions. The controversy is based on a distinction between radical and moderate theories of flux. The radical flux doctrine described by Plato in the *Theaetetus* holds that all things are in motion all the time (180 b-c). This radical view is more of a straw man argument than a genuine summary of Heraclitus’ position. Nevertheless, it has become a key focus of criticism in Heraclitean studies. Adamson (2014), for example, states that ‘the flux interpretation of Heraclitus is wrong and it’s all Plato’s fault’ (33). KRS (1957) also questions the radical flux thesis and asks ‘can Heraclitus really have thought that a rock or a bronze cauldron, for example, was invariably undergoing invisible changes of material?’ (197). Both Adamson and KRS then attempt to reformulate a moderate thesis of flux. However, the distinction between moderate flow and extreme flow is not something I find entirely clear. Flux whether moderate or extreme is a matter of degree and the debate, especially as KRS formulate it, says more about the difficulty many people have with process philosophy. Lloyd (2012) 23, on the other hand, compares Heraclitean change to the Chinese phases where rather than stable elements, water, for example, is better understood as soaking downwards, fire flaming upwards etc. Heraclitus’ cosmos as a whole is based on a similar idea. From the surviving fragments of Heraclitus it is abundantly clear that flow and change are essential to his views. As Guthrie (1980) argues ‘his main purpose seems to be to show that all stability in the world is merely apparent, since if observed with understanding as well as with the senses it proves to be only a resultant of unremitting strife and tension. This is the tenor both of the fragments and of other testimony, in particular that of Plato, whose remarks consort well with the fragments themselves. Perhaps the strongest evidence of all is the primacy given to fire’ (466). This emphasis on flow does not make it impossible to identify things. On the contrary Heraclitus was obsessed with how names relate to reality. I discuss Heraclitean flow more generally in Appendix Four.

²⁰ Trans. Betegh (2007). See Chapter Four for a further discussion of this passage.

This passage strikes at the crux of their conflicting ontologies and in place of Hesiod's world of absolutely unlike oppositions such as night and day, Heraclitus stresses their ongoing transformation in terms of process or flow. As Drozdek describes 'Night is always followed by day and vice versa, they constitute a unity, a whole, νυχθήμερον'[nightday].²² The idea of the cosmos as a perpetual flow of opposites changing into each other was also intimately associated with a new kind of cosmic god (B 67):

ὁ θεὸς ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη, χειμὼν θέρος, πόλεμος εἰρήνη, κόρος λιμός. ἀλλοιοῦται δὲ ὅκωσπερ πῦρ, ὅπότεν συμμιγῇ θυώμασιν, ὀνομάζεται καθ' ἡδονὴν ἐκάστου.

god is day night, winter summer, war peace, surfeit hunger. It alters as when mingled with perfumes, it gets named according to the pleasure of each.²³

This kind of process theology where god is closely identified and integrated into the transformations of the natural world, I will argue, is also the key to understanding early Orphic conceptions of god.

Orpheus Amidst the Philosophers

The identification of Orpheus and Heraclitus may seem surprising and Orphism is more frequently located at the intersection between the Bacchic mysteries and Pythagoreanism.²⁴ This identification is not so much inaccurate as vague. The Orphics are not only related to, but

²¹ Heraclitus probably did not specifically direct this statement at the genealogical relation between Night and Day in Hesiod's poem and may have had Hesiod's description of the gates of Night and Day (*Theog.* 748-67) in mind. See Kahn (1979) 108-9. Elsewhere Heraclitus criticises Hesiod alongside Pythagoras (DK 22 B40) as a polymath without understanding.

²² Drozdek (2007) 28. This emphasis on flow is not only seen as the most distinctively Heraclitean idea it is often stressed as an exception in a Greek world obsessed with substance and stasis. In particular the idea is often opposed to Parmenides whose rigid monism supposedly denied change and becoming altogether. As Graham (2013), for example, notes 'whereas they attempt to explain change in terms of constant realities and their modifications, Heraclitus attempts to explain constancy in terms of ongoing change. Whereas in some metaphysical sense they are all philosophers of stasis, for whom (especially from Parmenides on) stability is fundamental and change problematic, Heraclitus is a philosopher of process, for whom change is fundamental and stability problematic' (319). Heraclitus' thought was, however, more widespread and influential in the Greek world than is usually stressed. This is not to deny the originality of his thought. Heraclitus' certainly makes flow central to his thought and draws our attention to the consequences of a world in motion in a way unmatched by anyone else. However, Heraclitus should be thought of more as a particular development of Milesian thought and many of his central ideas, including an underlying pantheistic unity in motion, are not unparalleled, either before or after. Anaximenes' stress on substance change, rarefaction and condensation (and the same I suspect applies to the other Milesians) is after all a kind of process. See Finkelberg (2017) 247. Furthermore while no later philosopher appears to have adopted Heraclitus' views in every respect, this emphasis on flow and unity enjoyed wide spread influence in the history of philosophy among both his immediate contemporaries and throughout antiquity especially among the Stoics. See Long (1996).

²³ Trans. Kahn (1981). The reconstruction of the text is debated. Diels supplies πῦρ. My reading follows Kahn (1981). For a more extensive commentary on this fragment and its place in Heraclitus' theology see Appendix Four.

²⁴ Burkert (1985) 298.

are self proclaimed Bacchoi.²⁵ Pythagoreans, from what we can glimpse from the problematic early sources, probably show doctrinal similarities such as vegetarianism and metempsychosis with Orphism, but little commonalities with Bacchic religion.²⁶ I do not doubt that the Pythagoreans and Orphics have much in common, but, given the fragmented sources on both, any comparison will inevitably involve reconstructing one problematic source in light of another. It will also downplay possible differences.²⁷ I argue therefore that we cannot usefully compare these groups without first establishing their respective characters and potential differences and that a good starting point in this task is to study the repeated intersections between Orphism and Heraclitus. These intersections, too, have a long and complex history. In an extreme position, Macchioro looking primarily towards Heraclitus' eschatological and religious writings argued that Heraclitus was himself an Orphic.²⁸ While Macchioro's work has generally been received critically, Heraclitus and his relation to Orphism are currently being revised. Betegh has discussed the Orphic gold plates in relation to Heraclitus' eschatology and Sider has focused on the influence of Heraclitus on the Derveni commentator.²⁹ Finkelberg recently has argued at length that both the Orphics and Heraclitus share a 'common conceptual scheme.'³⁰ Similar opinions were also voiced throughout antiquity. Plutarch (*De E.* 388 d) discusses the Orphic myth of Dionysus in terms of Heraclitean philosophy³¹ and Clement of Alexandria even argued that Heraclitus plagiarized many of his ideas from Orpheus (*Strom.* 6. 2.271-2).³² More generally, the ancient sources frequently depict Heraclitus as a religious and even mystic figure and in his *Life of Heraclitus*, Diogenes Laertius describes him as a priest who dedicated his book in the temple of Artemis and died as an ascetic living off grass and herbs (2.1). While this biography is largely

²⁵ The association is common. Herodotus discusses Orphic and Bacchic customs as united (2.81.2) A gold plate from Hipponion describes the initiates as Bacchoi. The Bone plaques from Olbia may refer to the name Dionysus (Dio) alongside the designation Orphics.

²⁶ Zhmud (2012) 229.

²⁷ Recently there have been attempts to distance these groups. See Betegh (2014); Bernabé (2013); Zhmud (2012) 221-239. These studies somewhat over-emphasise the differences between the Pythagoreans and the Orphics and problematically do not take into account the position of Empedocles.

²⁸ Macchioro (1930). See also Guthrie's (1952) 224-231 evaluation of Macchioro. Heraclitus still may appear a rather controversial choice. Kahn, for example argues, that he was 'an uncompromising rationalist' and critic of the mysteries. Heraclitus states 'the mysteries current among men initiate them into impiety' (DK 22 B14). Kahn (2004) 266 takes this statement at face value. However, Heraclitus may have had a more ambiguous meaning in mind. Osborne (2009) and Adoméas (1992) 92 have reinterpreted these fragments according to the unity of opposites. In this light, the idea of the mysteries being impious is similar to statements on doctors who heal by cutting and burning (DK 22 B 58). In other words, both are paradoxical statements where healing is associated with harming and expresses a logic where defiling or harmful actions in one context are purifying and beneficial in another.

²⁹ Betegh (2004) 325-49; Sider (2014).

³⁰ Finkelberg (2017) esp. 126-46.

³¹ Finkelberg (2017) 140-1.

³² Finkelberg (2017) argues that 'Clement's confidence that Heraclitus' plagiarism does not require special proof suggests that this view, which in effect annexed Heraclitus' teaching to Orphism, was prevalent in his day' (141).

apocryphal, Heraclitus is increasingly recognized as a kind of theologian and indeed a large amount of his fragments refer to religious and cultic matters.³³

The question of influence, particularly in early Greek history, is always controversial. Much of Heraclitus' thought may have been original, but at least some of his ideas on the soul and his general emphasis on flow arguably drew upon more general orientations of the age and from the same currents as early Orphism.³⁴ It is therefore, often unclear whether we should speak of parallel development or direct influence. The multiple associations between Heraclitus and Orphism will become clearer over the next two chapters, but a good example of their shared orientation is found in the Orphic bone plaques from Olbia. These enigmatic plates are notable not only for their self designation as Orphic, but for their terse Heraclitean like phrases.³⁵ Tablet A reads:

σῶμα ψυχή	body soul
βίος θάνατος βίος ἀλήθεια	life death life truth

Tablet B is similar:

εἰρήνη πόλεμος	peace war
ἀλήθεια ψεῦδος	truth lies
Διόν(υσος)	Dio(nysos)

The plates were discovered in a Greek colony in Olbia, Ukraine, and are dated to the late fifth century. They are, therefore, somewhat later than Heraclitus, though I would not reject the possibility that similar Orphic formulas were already well known by this period.³⁶ This is not really the most important question and whichever way the influence went, the plaques show some striking similarities in tone and occasionally vocabulary with a number of Heraclitus' fragments including the important oppositions war and peace (DK 22 B 67) and life and death (DK 22 B 48).³⁷ More than sharing a few words, it is their terse mirror-like phrasing which links these plaques with Heraclitus. In particular the triple formula, life-death-life, suggests a

³³ Most (2013) argues based on a broad definition that about 30 fragments involve religious practices or the gods in some way.

³⁴ How widespread Heraclitean ideas were is difficult to gauge. Plato considered himself to be surrounded by Heracliteans (*Theaet.* 179d).

³⁵ For an edition of the plaques and commentary see West (1982).

³⁶ Sider (2014) and Finkelberg (2017) 138 argue these are close to Heraclitus' use of oppositions. West (1982) 23, however, argues the plaques have more to do with Pythagorean oppositions. However, no overlaps are found between the bone plaques and the Pythagorean table of oppositions reported by Aristotle (*Met.* 986a 22) and West's position has not been widely accepted. The use of the triple formula life, death, life is very Heraclitean and the possible presence of Dionysus suggests that we do not associate these plates with the Pythagoreans. The direction of influence is, as noted open to debate. Sider (2014) considers the Orphic view influenced Heraclitus and argues that the formulas of the plaques are at the basis of Heraclitus' riddles: 'Heraclitus was struck by these spare Orphic oppositions which seemed to him to express powerful and basic truths about the cosmos' (147).

³⁷ Sider (2014) 145 adds (DK 22 B 88) and (DK 22 B 62).

processual view and collapse of the traditional Hesiodic division between mortality and immortality. Also of key importance is the term ψυχή ‘soul’ itself. The Presocratics had no agreed soul vocabulary and Heraclitus and the Orphics were among the first to use this term as a description of the true self.³⁸ In DK 22 B45 Heraclitus explains:

ψυχῆς πείρατα ἰὼν οὐκ ἄν ἐξεύροιο πᾶσαν ἐπιπορευόμενος ὁδόν· οὕτω βαθὺν λόγον ἔχει.

If you went in search of it, you would not find the limits of the soul, though you travelled every road – so deep is its measure.³⁹

This elevation of ψυχή was accompanied by a corresponding disdain for the body which Heraclitus calls worse than dung (DK 22 B 96). Heraclitus’ body/soul opposition, alongside the idea that life and death are part of an ongoing exchange, provide a clue both to his own and to Orphic eschatological beliefs. As the soul fragments are among the most important and clearest illustrations of their shared spheres of interest, they will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. In these cases the overlaps between Heraclitus and early Orphism are quite general and we may prefer to speak of shared orientations rather than influence. On the other hand, there are many examples where the direction of influence is more clear. I noted above that the Derveni papyrus includes both an Orphic poem and a philosophical commentary. The Derveni commentator also offers a key example of how the early Orphics adapted Heraclitean ideas and apart from quoting Heraclitus, the commentator’s general theological orientation focusing on how the many named gods are really aspects of a single super god and his repeated use of etymologies is very close to Heraclitus and especially later Heracliteans such as Cratylus. The Derveni philosophical commentary is the most important early testimony on the early influence of Heraclitus on Orphic thought. It is also a key work on interpreting early Orphic poetry and in this respect has important bearing on my own reading of the poem. However, as a full discussion of the commentator’s philosophical underpinnings would distract from my analysis of the poem, I confine my discussion to Appendix Four.

Presocratic Pantheism

This brief history of early Greek philosophy is intended only as an orientation necessary for understanding my discussion of Orphic poetry and I make no claims to have offered a thorough survey of either the Milesians, Heraclitus or the philosophical fragments of Orpheus. Such a task is clearly impossible in so short a space. I do, however, wish to highlight certain commonalities in these diverse approaches and in particular their common shift from Hesiodic difference to the assumption of order and continuity. As Finkelberg puts it:

³⁸ See Robinson (1986).

³⁹ Trans. Graham (2010).

The early sixth century witnessed the emergence of a new religious attitude. The traditional ‘religion of distance’ began to yield to the belief in man’s kinship with gods: the soul was identified with the individual’s self and came to be seen as divine and only temporarily attached to the perishable body, a belief heavily loaded with eschatological implications.⁴⁰

In other words, these figures mark an important shift from a world populated by many gods in many places, to one where everything is divine. Rowe describes this orientation as a ‘typical Greek “pantheistic” view.’⁴¹ Pantheism, a word I have now repeatedly used, is admittedly a rather vague term. For its critics, pantheism is often taken as the absolute ontological identity between the world and god.⁴² Drozdek for this reason argues against identifying Heraclitus as a pantheist noting ‘although Heraclitus’ god is immanent in the world, he is not – as is often assumed – a proponent of pantheism. God-Logos is in full control of the events in the world, but identification of God with the world is inadmissible.’⁴³

This understanding of pantheism is common, yet modern proponents of pantheism often avoid it and argue more cautiously that ‘although pantheists differ amongst themselves at many points, they all agree in denying the basic theistic claim that god and the world are ontologically distinct.’⁴⁴ In other words, the key feature of pantheism is not an absolute identification between god and world so much as a stance against ontological distinction between the world and god. A related view is sometimes specified as ‘panentheism’ which allows for more nuanced positions, such as those proposed by the Stoics, where god permeates the world as a whole but is not identical with it.⁴⁵ My usage is more specific and I argue that pantheism, reinterpreting Descola’s four ontologies, is an ontology based on a continuity of interiority and physicality where everything is made of the same essential stuff.⁴⁶ I will elaborate this position in more detail in Chapter Four. In this chapter it is enough to understand pantheism as a position emphasising the essential continuity and kinship between all things. I would also like to stress that like naturalism and analogism, pantheism is not a concrete philosophy or theology but a basic assumption which may show significant

⁴⁰ Finkelberg (2017) 302.

⁴¹ Rowe (1980) 15. A good illustration of this pantheistic view and its relation to traditional religion appears in the Hippocratic text *On the Sacred Disease*. Here the author argues that epilepsy (the sacred disease) is not the result of divine possession as commonly thought but has a natural and regular cause. This, however, is not a rejection of divinity outright but a reformulation of the Hesiodic view that divinity was something ontologically separate from the mortal sphere. Instead the divine and the natural are one and the same. The sacred disease is divine, in the same way that all diseases are divine, because divinity permeates the whole cosmos in an ordered and regular fashion. See Lloyd (2000) 30.

⁴² Schopenhauer, for example, rejected Spinoza’s pantheism because in his view ‘to call the world “God” is not to explain it; it is only to enrich our language with a superfluous synonym for the word “world.”’ cited in Levine (1994) 27. Dawkins more recently repeats a similar criticism in the *The God Delusion* (2006) referring to pantheism as ‘sexed up atheism’ (40).

⁴³ Drozdek (2007) 41.

⁴⁴ Owen (1971) 65. See Levine (1994) 2. Another helpful study on poetry and pantheism is Maffie’s (2014) study of Aztec pantheism esp. 79-137.

⁴⁵ See Appendix Four for a discussion of this view and the related view of the Derveni commentator.

⁴⁶ This view is adapted from Scott (2014) 15 and Matthews’ (2017) notion of ‘homologism.’ See Introduction.

differences in practice. Thales, for example, may be more concerned with eclipses than religious cults. Others, such as the Orphics might focus on the relations between animals, men and gods. Despite these clear differences, I argue that they both share a basic ontological assumption which emerged as a rejection of Hesiodic dualism and the foundational difference between gods and men. This could be expressed in Thales' ensouled magnets (DK 11 A 22) or Orpheus' enchanted stones (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.26–30) but in either case we see repeated common themes: unity over diversity, kinship over affinity, cosmos over chaos.⁴⁷

Orpheus' Poetic Pantheism

Much of the Orphic material I have so far discussed dates from the fifth and fourth centuries, a period during which Orphism had already begun drawing on philosophers such as Heraclitus. These new influences did not, however, mark a new direction but rather complemented the existing pantheistic orientation of its poetry. Although a genealogy of gods at war might seem like an unusual place to find pantheism, Orphic poetry is frequently described in these terms. Finkelberg describes Orpheus' 'pantheistic feeling.'⁴⁸ Betegh comments that Orphic poetry expresses pantheism in 'embryo'⁴⁹ and 'a move towards a more abstract conception of divinity.'⁵⁰ Alderink summarises Orphic poetry in general as 'monistic.'⁵¹ It may be noted here that although Betegh and others attribute pantheistic qualities to Orphic poetry, they are somewhat hesitant to describe Orphic poetry as pantheism full stop. Rather Orpheus anticipates aspects of pantheism without fully articulating a true pantheist position. As Burkert puts in early Orphic poetry we see the beginnings of 'the philosophical speculation which culminated in the pantheism of the Stoics.'⁵² I will argue that this hesitancy is misplaced and that Orphic poetry from the *Derveni Theogony* on can rightfully be said to express a coherent pantheist position. Poetry, however, often used different means than philosophy to convey these ideas and before discussing the narrative of the earliest Orphic poem, the *Derveni Theogony*, it will be useful to examine how the better preserved later Orphic texts expressed this position. A good example of Orphic pantheism appears in an Orphic hymn preserved by Macrobius (*Sat.* 1.23.21):

τήκων αἰθέρα διὸν ἀκίνητον πρὶν ἔόντα ἔξαν
 ἔφηνε θεοῖσιν Ἔρῳ κάλλιστον ἰδέσθαι.
 ὃν δὴ νῦν καλέουσι Φάνητά τε καὶ Διόνυσον
 Εὐβουλήα τ' ἄνακτα καὶ Ἀνταύγην ἀρίδηλον·

⁴⁷ Finkelberg (2017) 247 calls this a 'common conceptual scheme.'

⁴⁸ Finkelberg (2017) 258.

⁴⁹ Betegh (2004), 221.

⁵⁰ Betegh (2004) 221.

⁵¹ Alderink (1981) 30.

⁵² Burkert (1985) 131 cited in Meisner (2015) 155.

ἄλλοι δ' ἄλλο καλοῦσιν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων.
 πρῶτος δ' ἐς φάος ἦλθε, Διώνυσος δ' ἐπεκλήθη,
 οὐνεκα δινεῖται κατ' ἀπείρονα μακρὸν Ὀλυμπον·
 ἀλλαχθεὶς δ' ὄνομ', ἔσχε προσωυμίας πρὸς ἐκάστων
 παντοδαπὰς, κατὰ καιρὸν ἀμειβομένοιο χρόνοιο.

Melting the bright ether that was before now unmoved,
 he revealed to the sight of the gods most beautiful Eros,
 who now they call Phanes and Dionysus.
 Sovereign Euboules and Antauges seen from afar:
 among men who dwell on earth, some give him one name others another.
 First he came into the light, and was named Dionysus,
 because he whirls along the limitless length of Olympus;
 but then he changed his name and took on forms of address of every sort
 from every source, as suits the alternating seasons.⁵³

This poem is late but a useful introduction to Orphic poetic pantheism. Indeed, despite its date many of the philosophical ideas expressed in it can be traced to the Derveni commentator in the fourth or fifth century and, as I will soon discuss, to the *Derveni Theogony* itself. One of the central features of Orphic poetry is the collapse of clear distinctions between the various gods. The poet in this case specifically tells us that the beautiful god, Eros, is known by many names including Phanes, Dionysus, Eubouleus and Antauges. A second issue is that these names are as much proper nouns as they are descriptions of processes and events. This is entirely transparent with Phanes and Antauges whose names both signify come to light or shine.⁵⁴ Other names are kinds of etymologies and Dionysus is given an interesting interpretation from the verb δινεύω. This term is a characteristic description of Phanes elsewhere (e.g. *OH* 6.7) and refers to a whirlwind like movement which sets everything in motion. Finally, we are given an explanation regarding the unity of these gods:

ἀλλαχθεὶς δ' ὄνομ', ἔσχε προσωυμίας πρὸς ἐκάστων
 παντοδαπὰς, κατὰ καιρὸν ἀμειβομένοιο χρόνοιο.

But then he changed his name and took on forms of address of every sort
 From every source, as suits the alternating seasons.

This passage explains that the many named gods are really a single god with manifold aspects, alternating with the seasons. In this model the one god is ever-present and never truly cedes power to another. Rather first, middle and last, the god appears in a series of transformations changing his body and name through time.⁵⁵ This passage is also very Heraclitean and the term exchange ἀμειβομένοιο, for example, recalls Heraclitus DK 22 B 33

⁵³ OF 539. Trans. Herrero de Jáuregui (2015) modified. See also the discussion of this poem in Bernabé (2010). The fragment is often read with the additions of (OF 539, 540, 542, 543).

⁵⁴ Euboules means 'good counsel' while Antauges appears to be a variation on Phanes and means literally 'appear,' from ἀνταγάζω 'expose to the light, illuminate.'

⁵⁵ According to Parker (1987) 'the orphic myth of succession in heaven takes on a new colour if Protogonos and Zeus and Dionysus are in some sense the same god, that is, if Zeus was implicit in Protogonos and Protogonos reincarnated in Dionysus.' (494). Parker, who probably has Zeus' ingestion of the cosmos in mind, does not elaborate precisely on how this idea works in the succession.

ἀνταμείβομαι.⁵⁶ More than the exact words the sentiment as a whole is reminiscent of Heraclitus' long list of names for the one god in DK 22 B 67 and in particular the explanation:

ἀλλοιοῦται δὲ ὅκωσπερ, ὁπότεν συμμιγῇ θυώμασιν, ὀνομάζεται καθ' ἡδονὴν ἐκάστου.

It alters as when mingled with perfumes, it gets named according to the pleasure of each.⁵⁷

In these respects, the poem neatly encapsulates in poetic form a very similar idea to the philosophical fragments of Heraclitus where the many names and the one god are united through their dizzying motion. This view is not uncommon in Orphic poetry and in an *Orphic Hymn to Zeus*, which is part of the same poetic tradition as the *Derveni Theogony*, Porphyry explains 'they supposed Zeus to be the mind of the world, and that he created all things therein, containing the world in himself' (τὸν γὰρ Δία τὸν νοῦν τοῦ κόσμου ὑπολαμβάνοντες, ὃς τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδημιούργησεν ἔχων τὸν κόσμον).⁵⁸ The problem with these passages, like many others associated with the name Orpheus, is their late dates and Porphyry writing in the third century AD and Macrobius in the fifth century AD, are arguably somewhat problematic support for a poem written over a millennium earlier. Late sources certainly problematise the study of early Orphism, but they do not rule out continuity and Bernabé discusses in his survey of later Orphic gods that we 'find some ideas in the poetry ascribed to Orpheus which remain practically unaltered across the centuries.'⁵⁹ Perhaps the most commonly repeated idea is precisely that the many named gods are all partial references to the one supreme god in motion. Numerous poems not only confuse names, such as calling Phanes Zeus, but also they tell us distinct deities are the same. For example in the *Rhapsodies*, Artemis can be called 'Pluto, Euphrosyne and powerful Bendis' (OF 258).⁶⁰ Elsewhere, Bernabé describes how a goddess can become another in a given context and Rhea, for example is transformed into Demeter when she gives birth to Zeus (OF 206).⁶¹ At other times the connection is made through etymologies where Demeter becomes Ge meter, i.e. earth mother (OF 399).⁶² Bernabé concludes that 'the Orphic tendency to unity may lead to an image of Zeus as supreme god who oscillates between creator god and cosmic demiurge, on the one hand, and a deity identified with the universe, on the other hand.'⁶³ It is perhaps not surprising that

⁵⁶ The context of the Heraclitean fragment is also of note. Plutarch (*De E* 388f) also cites Heraclitus as a means of understanding the allegorical meaning of an Orphic myth. See Finkelberg (2017) 140 and my discussion of this passage in Chapter Four.

⁵⁷ Trans. Kahn (1981). The fragment's use of ἀλλάσσω is similar to Heraclitus' ἀλλοιόω.

⁵⁸ Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 3.9.2 (OF 243 I B = OF 168 K). Trans. Meisner (2015). See Appendix 1 for the poem itself.

⁵⁹ Bernabé (2010) 422.

⁶⁰ OF 258 = (I) Procl. in *Plat. Remp.* 1. 18. 12.

⁶¹ OF 206 = (I) Procl. in *Plat. Cratyl.* 90. 28.

⁶² Bernabé (2010) 424-5. OF 399 = (I) Diod. 1.12. 4.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 440.

Bernabé describes these features more generally as ‘a kind of pantheism.’⁶⁴ However, with these generalities once again comes a word of caution. For a start, Bernabé’s article deals with what he calls ‘later Orphic theogonies.’ The definition encapsulating theogonies from the Hellenistic period to the early Imperial Period, is, he admits, somewhat arbitrary but importantly it excludes the *Derveni Theogony* from the discussion.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Bernabé adds a familiar explication noting that ‘extreme formulations (are) more a Stoic addition to the development of Orphic doctrines than a purely Orphic idea.’⁶⁶ Bernabé, like many others, exhibits a certain caution when dealing with early Orphism and carefully avoids applying ‘extreme formulations’ which are reserved for proper philosophers such as the Stoics. The distinction between Orphic proto-pantheism and the extreme pantheism of the Stoics is, however, an idea often left a little vague. Indeed, many of the ideas Bernabé observes in later Orphism are, as he is well aware, already present in the *Derveni papyrus*. Column 14.7, for example, etymologises the name Kronos, not as an individual and distinct god but as the striking mind of the super god: ‘naming the Mind that strikes things against each other Kronos’ (κρούοντα τὸν Νοῦν πρὸς ἄλληλ[α] Κρόνον ὀνομάσας).⁶⁷ Moreover in column 22.7-15 the commentator tells us that many separate goddesses are really one (ἢ αὐτή). This particular idea however is not simply an example of the commentator’s interpretative procedure but one he supports with a quotation from Orpheus (22.12):

Δημήτηρ [Ρ]έα Γῆ Μήτηρ Ἑστία Δηῶι.
Demeter Rhea Ge Meter Hestia Deio.⁶⁸

While the lack of punctuation in this list implies the unity of these figures, the line does not specifically state that these goddesses are the same.⁶⁹ Fortunately we possess independent confirmation for this reading and Betegh points out that a similar idea was noted by Philochoros in the late fourth century. The testimony is reported by Philodemus who writes ‘in the *Hymns* Orpheus in Philochorus (says) that Ge and Demeter are the same as Hestia.’⁷⁰ A second clear and almost unanimously agreed upon example of early Orphic pantheism

⁶⁴ Ibid. 428.

⁶⁵ The exclusion does not imply that Bernabé considers that all of his observations do not apply to the *Derveni papyrus* but simply that this text is not discussed in the article. A footnote tells us that the *Derveni papyrus* will be discussed elsewhere by Janko (424 n. 9). The reference is not specified. This may be Janko (2010) but the approach is very different.

⁶⁶ Bernabé (2010) 440-41.

⁶⁷ Trans. Betegh (2013) modified.

⁶⁸ This does not appear to be from the theogony itself but taken from an early and otherwise unpreserved collection of hymns.

⁶⁹ Herrero de Jáuregui (2015) notes ‘we must assume, therefore, that the syncretistic strategy that it deploys is also present in early Orphic hymns. In fact, such a strategy is present already in the line quoted by the *Derveni* commentator from “the Orphic hymns”: Δημήτηρ [Ρ]έα Γῆ Μή[τ]ηρ (τε καὶ) Ἑστία Δηῶι.’ (240).

⁷⁰ Betegh (2004) 190. Moreover the idea that two or more gods are the same is demonstrably early and appears for example in Aeschylus’ *P.V.* 311-13. See Seaford (1986).

appears when Zeus having eaten the god Protogonos along with everything else becomes solitary and recreates the cosmos. Not only is the pantheism expressed in this scene in Finkelberg's words 'obvious',⁷¹ the vivid imagery of Zeus' literal identification with everything shows a more extreme version of pantheism than anything discussed by the Stoics.⁷² The issue, however, is not whether the *Derveni Theogony* has pantheistic ideas, which it clearly does, but the consistency of the poet's thought. And here the general consensus is that Orpheus makes a good effort but ultimately falls short of expressing a genuine pantheistic position. When it comes to where and why Orphic poetry fails, rarely is a clear explanation given. I can only speculate, but one possible reason for reserving pantheism for the Stoics is an assumed history where genuine pantheism emerges from polytheism through a gradual process. This process begins by attributing more power to a single god, henotheism, and finally ends up in making the cosmos as a whole divine. The early Orphics may have an impressive Zeus sometimes defined as one with the cosmos, yet with their genealogy of fighting gods they occupy a kind of middle position between henotheism and pantheism proper. This view misunderstands what pantheism is. Pantheism certainly can emerge from polytheism. It can also emerge from monotheism. In neither case is it an accumulation of power but a basic assumption about how divinity relates to the world. In Abrahamic theology, for example, no amount of divine power will ever make God pantheistic, because God by definition, as Augustine reminds us in his *Confessions* (10.6), is separate from his creation. A similar issue prevents Hesiod and Homer from being described as pantheists. If men and gods are as Apollo put it in no way alike (*Il* 5.440–20), no amount of power will ever make Zeus pantheistic. What is required is not an idea of a more powerful god but a fundamental shift in understanding what divinity is and how it relates to the world. In other words, pantheism is no more complicated than polytheism or monotheism, it is simply a different kind of assumption about how beings relate to each other. This is a very basic idea, realised in many times and places, which requires no great philosophical sophistication. An inscription from a twelfth century BC Egyptian tomb, for example, describes the creator god Amun as:

Your eyes are the sun and the moon,
Your head the sky,
Your feet the underworld.⁷³

⁷¹ Finkelberg (1986) 325.

⁷² As discussed in Appendix Four the originality of Stoic thought needs to be revised in light of the *Derveni papyrus*. As Herrero de Jáuregui (2010) puts it in relation to supposedly Stoic paraphrases in later Orphic poetry these 'pantheistic ideas are customarily attributed to Stoic influence, when in reality their presences already in the *Derveni Papyrus* should suggest that the influence went in the other direction and that Stoic pantheism found inspiration in Orphic expressions rather than the reverse' (311). I stress that even if Orphism had no direct influence on Stoicism, it remains more reasonable to assume that early Orphism influenced later Orphism.

⁷³ *Imiseba* (TT 65) Assmann (2014) 18.

This is a clear and very Stoic expression of pantheism which predates Stoicism by over half a millennium. This is not an expression of pantheism in embryo but pantheism pure and simple. The same, I will argue, is true of the *Derveni Theogony*.

Protagonos and Early Orphism

The *Derveni Theogony* is the earliest preserved Orphic poem and may date to the sixth century BC.⁷⁴ It survives in fragmented quotations, from an even more fragmented text known as the Derveni papyrus.⁷⁵ Our knowledge of the text is in this respect very partial. Nevertheless, enough quotations survive to reconstruct the basic narrative which like Hesiod's *Theogony* focuses on the glorification of Zeus' rule. One of the longest fragments reads:

Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένετο, [Ζεὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέραυνος]
Ζεὺς κεφαλῇ, Ζεὺς μέσσω, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται.

Zeus was born first, Zeus bearer of lightning is last
Zeus is the head, Zeus the middle, from Zeus are all things made.⁷⁶

The paradoxical idea of Zeus as simultaneously first, middle and last is the interpretive key to understanding the pantheistic orientation of the poem. Zeus' first birth is also a useful starting point to the problems inherent in studying such a fragmented poem. Who comes first is, as we have seen, a central cosmological problem. In Chapter One, I discussed how Aristotle differentiated two contrasting ways of writing a cosmology. The first he attributes to the theologians who separate the first principle/god and the Good and the second to certain philosophers who place the Good at the outset of their cosmological texts. In the first group he has Hesiod in mind, who, as discussed, placed the reign of Zeus at the culmination of his poem. In the latter Aristotle names the Persian Magi, the philosophical poet Pherecydes and the Presocratics Anaxagoras and Empedocles (Aristot. *Met.* 14.1091a-b). These varied figures in one way or another are associated with placing a supreme god at the very outset of their cosmologies. Pherecydes (DK 7 B1), for example, rewriting the Hesiodic genealogy, places his version of Zeus, Zas, as part of a primordial divine triad who 'always were' (ἦσαν ἀεὶ) and then describes how Zas sets about creating the cosmos.⁷⁷ Anaxagoras' god is somewhat more abstract and described as νοῦς (mind) which orders the chaotic material of the cosmos (DK 59 B 12). Although nothing is said about Orpheus in this passage, where Aristotle located Orphic

⁷⁴ See Papadopoulou (2014) xi.

⁷⁵ See Appendix One for a collection of the most important fragments from the poem.

⁷⁶ Trans. Betegh (2004). The quotation consists of two fragments from the Derveni papyrus. The first half is taken from col. 18.12 and the second line is quoted in full in col. 17.12. The phrase as a whole is repeated in an almost identical form in the Orphic *Hymn to Zeus* in the Ps. Aristotelian text *De Mundo*. 401a-b and the *Hymn to Zeus* known to Porphyry (OF 243 =(I) Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* 3. 8. 2 = Porph. *Περὶ ἀγαλμ.* fr. 354F).

⁷⁷ See Schibli's (1990) 128-129 reconstruction of the narrative.

poetry in this schema became the focus of a heated debate surrounding Orpheus' ontological assumptions among the ancient commentators. Ps. Alexander Aphrodisias (probably Michael of Ephesus)⁷⁸ and Syrianus not only argued that Aristotle had Orpheus in mind among the above theologians, but claim that Aristotle's list of gods is part of an Orphic theogony.⁷⁹ Ps. Alexander, for reasons that are not entirely clear, attempts to prove this assertion by first incorrectly summarising Aristotle's text and then citing an entirely different Orphic theogony starting with the mysterious god Ericepaïos. Syrianus' *On Aristotle's Metaphysics* 13-14, like Ps. Alexander, too assumes that Aristotle has Orpheus in mind among the theologians. Syrianus, however, argues that Aristotle got it wrong. Orpheus like Anaxagoras and Pherecydes placed the Good at the forefront of his poem and rightly deserves a privileged place among the philosophical elite. To prove this he once again quotes from an Orphic poem, once again starting with the strange god Ericepaïos (OTF 167 F I).⁸⁰ As with ancient debates, so too with modern, and the presence or absence of the mysterious Ericepaïos or more precisely using his more common Orphic title, Protogonos, remains a key controversy in early Orphic scholarship and a key interpretive problem in how we understand the *Derveni Theogony* as a whole. After all there is, as Aristotle stressed, a significant difference between placing what he called the Good at the outset rather than at the end of the narrative.

Before discussing the mysterious first god of the *Derveni Theogony*, it is worth briefly exploring why Syrianus considered the god Ericepaïos/Protogonos to be of such pivotal importance in understanding the ontological assumptions of Orphism. His character and key attributes are nicely summarised in one of the *Orphic Hymns*:

Πρωτόγονον καλέω διφυῆ, μέγαν, αἰθερόπλαγκτον,
 ὠογενῆ, χρυσεῖαισιν ἀγαλλόμενον πτερύγεσσι,
 ταυροβόαν, γένεσιν μακάρων θνητῶν τ' ἀνθρώπων,
 σπέρμα πολύμνηστον, πολύοργιον, Ἴρκεπαῖον,
 ἄρρητον, κρύφιον ῥοιζήτορα, παμφαῆς ἔρνος,
 ὅσσων ὃς σκοτόεσσαν ἀπημαύρωσας ὁμίχλην
 πάντη δινηθεῖς πτερύγων ῥιπαῖς κατὰ κόσμον
 λαμπρὸν ἄγων φάος ἀγνόν, ἀφ' οὗ σε Φάνητα κυκλήσκω
 ἡδὲ Πρίηπον ἄνακτα καὶ Ἀνταύγην ἐλίκωπον.
 ἀλλά, μάκαρ, πολύμητι, πολύσπορε, βαῖνε γεγηθὼς
 ἐς τελετὴν ἁγίαν πολυποίκilon ὀργιοφάνταις.

I call upon Protogonos, first born and of a double nature, great, roaming in Ether,
 Born from an egg, exulting in his golden wings,
 Bellowing like a bull, origin of the blest and of mortal men,
 Seed full of memory, honoured in many secret rites, Ericepaïos

⁷⁸ See Kotwick (2014) 75-90.

⁷⁹ Aristotle refers to theogonies beginning with 'Night and Ouranos, or Chaos, or Okeanos' (*Met.* 14.1091b). Whether these refer to a specific theogony or, as I think, the general kinds of gods many theogonies including Hesiod's place at the beginning of their poems is unclear. For further discussion of this passage see Martinez (2012).

⁸⁰ The similarities between the two passages suggest that Syrianus is the basis for Ps. Alexander's confused passage. See Kotwick (2014) 84.

The unspeakable, hidden and whizzing, all-shinny shoot,
 You who removed the dark mist from the eyes,
 And swirl everywhere in the kosmos with the beating of your wings,
 Bringing bright and pure light: wherefore I call thee Phanes,
 Lord Priapus and quick glancing Antauges,
 But, blessed, full of wile and full of seed, come rejoiced
 To this pure festival, full of variety, for those who reveal the mysteries.⁸¹

Even from a quick reading of this poem it is clear that Protogonos is no ordinary god, but a demiurge with some remarkable features. The hymn dating to around the first century AD summarises many of Protogonos' most memorable features, including the many named god's miraculous birth from an egg, his golden wings and dual sex, and his dizzying motion as he swirls around the cosmos.⁸² Although, the most detailed descriptions of Protogonos are late, most of these attributes can be dated either to the early Hellenistic or Classical periods. *Erikapaios*, one of Protogonos' few non-Greek titles, appears in the third century BC Gurob papyrus (col. 1.22) and a form of the name is possibly referenced to in a fourth century gold plate from Pherai (L 13 OF 493) where the name is etymologised as a mini-sentence, Ἀνδρικεπαιδόθυρσον which, as Burkert notes, could be read as 'Man-and-boy-thyrsos.'⁸³ Phanes, a far more common name for the god, is first recorded in the fourth century Timpone Grande gold plate (L 12 OF 492).⁸⁴ Alongside Phanes, the Timpone Grande plate also mentions Protogonos.⁸⁵ Furthermore a theogony like fragment from Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, plausibly delivered by Orpheus himself, places Eros, Protogonos, Night and perhaps Aither in close succession:

ᾠ πότνια θεῶ[ν
 φ]άος ἄσκοπον [αἰ-
 θέ]ρι πρωτόγονο[
 ἦ]θελ' Ἐρως ὅτε Νύ[ξ].

⁸¹ Trans. Morand (2015).

⁸² See Morand (2015) 214-8. The details are very similar to Damascius' description of Protogonos from the *Rhapsodies* (OF 80 I B Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis).

⁸³ Burkert (2004) 82. John Malalas in his *Chronographia* describes it as an 'an eastern word' meaning life-giver, Ζωοδοτήρ (4. 91).

⁸⁴ For a reproduction of the plate see Appendix One.

⁸⁵ The word Protogonos is clearly legible in the plate yet there is some debate regarding to whom this title refers. The text is composed of disjointed words, interspersed with unintelligible letters. Crucially, however, the plate begins with a clear reference to Protogonos and later more ambiguously mentions Phanes. This important fourth century gold plate, until very recently, has played a rather marginal role in this debate. Guthrie (1993), for example, notes that Diodorus is the first to mention the god 'unless indeed it is included in the jumble of deities invoked in the weird and unintelligible inscription of the gold tablet unearthed in South Italy and known as the Timpone Grande table...but it must remain doubtful.' (96). Betegh and Bernabé discuss the plate but attempt to distance Protogonos from Phanes. Betegh (2011) 222, associates Protogonos with Ouranos. This is in part based on the clear appearance of Gaia and absence of Ouranos in the gold plate. This argument is not convincing when it comes to such a fragmented text and one cannot help feeling that Betegh is attempting to square the Protogonos of the gold plate with his reading of the *Derveni theogony*. This forcing of the evidence is also true of Bernabé's (2008) 142-44 identification of Phanes in the Timpone Grande plate with Dionysus based on a puzzling reference in Diodorus 1.11.2. Bremmer (2013), on the other hand, considers the plate as obvious: 'Protogonos needs no illustration, as he is a familiar Orphic figure' (43). Aside from the co-presence of Protogonos and Phanes in the plate, one of the few legible statements is an epitaph associated with the god in later poetry, σὺ κλυτὲ δαΐμον (OF 140). This recalls Erikapaeus description as περικλυτός in OF 140 = Proclus in *Plato Tim I*. For the importance of the plate in general see Santamaría Álvarez (2016a) 208-209.

Queen of the gods
Unintelligible light [aither]
Protogonos
Eros wished, then Night.⁸⁶

While these fragments are important sources on the god's early presence, other than his name very little is said about Protogonos' characteristics. However, from Aristophanes' probably Orphic inspired parody in the *Birds* (693-7) we can guess that alongside his impressive birth from an egg, Protogonos had already acquired his golden wings by the fifth century BC:

Ἐρέβους δ' ἐν ἀπείροσι κόλποις
τίκτει πρότιστον ὑπηνέμιον Νύξ ἢ μελανόπτερος ὤον,
ἐξ οὗ περιτελλομέναις ὥραις ἔβλασταν Ἔρως ὁ ποθεινός,
στίλβων νῶτον περὺγοιν χρυσαῖν, εἰκῶς ἀνεμώκεσι δίναις.

Firstly, blackwinged Night laid a germless egg in the bosom of the infinite deeps of Erebus, and from this, after the revolution of long ages, sprang the graceful Eros with his glittering golden wings, swift as the whirlwinds of the tempest.⁸⁷

Neither Protogonos nor Phanes are named in this passage and a definite Orphic identification remains uncertain. However, Eros is among Protogonos' many names in later poetry and both the egg from which the god bursts out, his impressive golden wings, and whirlwind-like movement are ubiquitous Orphic details.⁸⁸ Some aspects are, however, notably absent and the passage says nothing, for example, about Protogonos' dual sex. Santamaría Álvarez has suggested this attribute is early and can be inferred from specific details in Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium*.⁸⁹ Another tentative clue for this attribute appears in Empedocles' negative description of his sphere shaped god (DK 31 B 29): 'two branches (wings?) do not shoot out of his back, nor feet or swift knees, neither generative organs' (οὐ γὰρ ἀπὸ νώτοιο δύο κλάδοι αἰσسونται, οὐ πόδες, οὐ θοὰ γούνα), οὐ μήδεα γεννῆεντα).⁹⁰ Empedocles does not say wings here but 'branches' (κλάδοι)⁹¹ and does not specify that his god lacks male and female genitalia. Nonetheless, why someone would describe a god as not

⁸⁶ OF 65 = Frag. 758a.1103–08. See West (1983) 111–12. That Orpheus recited the theogony is conjectural, though plausible. He is not only a character in the tragedy but the setting is also in Thrace. As Bremmer (2011) 4 points out another fragment from the same play discusses how Euneus is given a music lesson by Orpheus. This would be an ideal time to recite a theogony.

⁸⁷ Trans. O'Neill, Jr. (1938).

⁸⁸ OF 80.1. See also OF 123.4, 136; 102.3; 143. See Santamaría Álvarez (2016a) 211. The comparison has not proven convincing to all and Betegh, for example, argues that Aristophanes' cosmology is an eclectic mix where no detail can be securely identified as Orphic or anything else. It is true, as Betegh (2004) 149 points out, that details such as the egg also appear in Epimenides, yet it should be stressed that if these ideas really were so common at the time, and are clearly a major feature of later Orphic theogonies, they are likely to have been present in early Orphic poetry too.

⁸⁹ See Santamaría Álvarez (2016b). The idea is far from conclusive but there are some clear echoes of Orphic poetry such as Plato's paraphrase of the Orphic oath of secrecy (*Symp.* 218b).

⁹⁰ See also (DK 31 B 134).

⁹¹ Cornford (1937) 56 suggests Empedocles has either arms or wings. Rowett (2013) 26 refers to wings but does not explain why. A similar ambiguity appears in Pherecydes and KRS (1957) note in relation to Pherecydes' winged oak tree that 'the oak is winged partly at least because of the spreading, winglike appearance of these same branches' (65).

possessing these features is very strange, unless we assume another influential account did and Orpheus is the most likely suspect.⁹² The few hints and allusions to Protogonos in the Classical period may seem rather slight. However, at least some are secure and given Euripides' and Aristophanes' testimony alongside the Timpone Grande gold plate, they suggest that Protogonos may even have been widely known at this time.⁹³

We can surmise then, without saying anything about the *Derveni Theogony*, that Protogonos was an important and impressive god in early Orphism. Palmer, for example, has taken this further and even argued that the Orphic god is in part the inspiration behind Presocratic divinities and in particular, Xenophanes' god.⁹⁴ Whether or not Xenophanes knew about him, this comparison is as useful for its similarities as much as for its differences. Xenophanes' god is clearly an equal in power to Protogonos. In DK 21 B 23 he writes:

εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος,
οὐ τι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοῖος οὐδὲ νόημα.

One god greatest among gods and men,
not at all like to mortals in body nor in thought.⁹⁵

There are certain broad similarities between Xenophanes' god and Protogonos. Both are characterised by their impressive power, both are unlike men. More generally, both show a shared tendency for an increasing pantheistic identification with the world.⁹⁶ At the same time, as Palmer also points out, Xenophanes (DK 21 B 11) would have found much to criticise in Orpheus' narrative and Xenophanes' god is as far as possible distanced from the anthropomorphism of Homeric gods.⁹⁷ This moreover appears to be part of a more general shift among Greek intellectuals who began questioning or even rewriting some of the more illicit details of Greek mythologies.⁹⁸ Orpheus, however, did not participate in this trend and

⁹² For further possible similarities between Empedocles and Orpheus see Riedweg (1997) and Chapter Four.

⁹³ See Santamaría Álvarez (2016a). It is difficult to say with any certainty which names and features Protogonos had acquired by this early date. The lack of secure references could be read as implying that Protogonos was only partially developed in early Orphism. It is certainly true that the god acquired more names and features with time, however, rather than endorsing a teleological path towards a super god fully described in the Hellenistic period or even later, I argue that Protogonos' tendency towards growth both in terms of forms and names is part of his character from the beginning.

⁹⁴ Palmer (1998) 28 has the Orphic Zeus primarily in mind but also makes the point about Protogonos-Phanes.

⁹⁵ Trans. Graham (2010).

⁹⁶ We can detect two key trends in Xenophanes' thought in this fragment. The first is his move towards a single overpowering god, who hears and sees all (DK 21 B24) and controls everything with his thoughts (DK 21 B25). The second related feature is that he is described as unlike men in body and mind. This is more than saying that his body and mind is greater than that of mortals, but that his body and mind are somehow different. Elsewhere he elaborates that the god does not run about (DK 21 B 26), but stays in one place and most importantly does not suffer the moral weaknesses popular mythology ascribes to the gods (DK 21 B11).

⁹⁷ Palmer (1998) 28.

⁹⁸ See, for example, a related scepticism in Pindar (*Ol.* 9.35).

his gods, if anything, are more morally suspect than Homer's.⁹⁹ Indeed, abundant power aside, Protogonos has little in common with Xenophanes' divinity. Far from being described in terms of negation, Protogonos increasingly takes on human and even animal characteristics. Alongside these excessive features Protogonos' whizzing around the cosmos flapping his golden wings also grossly fails to take Xenophanes' (DK 21 B 26) advice that a proper god should remain still and not flutter from one place to another (οὐδέ μετέρχεσθαι μιν ἐπιτρέπει ἄλλοτε ἄλλῃ). In this respect, Protogonos, and Orphic poetry in general, falls short not only of Xenophanes' ideals, but in all probability would have been viewed suspiciously by many Greeks.¹⁰⁰ Although Protogonos' excessive features could be related to the early and still largely Hesiodic nature of Orphic poetry, I argue that rather than catching up with Xenophanes' sublime divinity, it is heading in another direction and with each new poem it adds more and increasingly shocking details in terms of both the narrative and Protogonos' increasingly monstrous appearance. Protogonos' excess was obviously something noticed by ancient authors and this importantly did not stop them from comparing him to the Platonic and even Christian God.¹⁰¹ These writers perhaps do not take Protogonos' strange features literally but interpreted them as a poetic means of expressing divine difference. In other words, excess and simplicity are two paths towards naming the unnameable. This could be the case, however, where the Presocratics almost exclusively favour negative or thin descriptions for their divine beings,¹⁰² Orphic poetry relies almost exclusively on excessive descriptions and as Bernabé points out only 'very rarely (do) we find non-anthropomorphic formulations of the gods.'¹⁰³ It is therefore worth considering that excess may have a meaning in itself which differentiates the Orphic conception of divinity from the negative descriptions of Xenophanes. One possible point of comparison is Hesiod's Zeus, the hybrid king.¹⁰⁴ Zeus'

⁹⁹ Not only are the same wars and intrigues described, a central part of the narrative deals with the murder of a god by the Titans. In the *Rhapsodies*, Protogonos has incestuous relations with his daughter Night (OF 144-171 B) and as early as the Derveni papyrus, Zeus has relations with both his mother and probably his daughter as well (col. 26).

¹⁰⁰ See Isoc. *Bus* 38-9.

¹⁰¹ Proclus in *Plat. Tim.* 1.428.15, for example, argues that 'the very great Phanes is nothing other than the very first Living Thing, or as Plato would say, the Living-Thing-itself' (ὁ μέγιστος Φάνης οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστὶν ἢ τὸ πρότιστον ζῶον καί, ὡς ἂν φαίη ὁ Πλάτων, τὸ αὐτοζῶον). Trans. Meisner (2015). Christian apologists, with the exception of Lactantius (1.5.4), did not have a favourable view of Orpheus. See Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui (2010) 177.

¹⁰² Presocratic God/gods are often discussed in very abstract terms. In some cases they are integrated into the world. In others they are more akin to abstract figures guiding the world but somehow distinct from it. Anaxagoras' Nous, for example, is a material deity, but is still importantly not described in terms of a physical body. It is unlikely that any Presocratic imagined a distant transcendent deity, yet it was from negative and minimal descriptions such as those by Xenophanes that the idea took shape. Socrates in the *Phaedo* for example was decidedly unimpressed by the marginal role played by Anaxagoras' divine Nous (98b-c).

¹⁰³ Bernabé (2010) 431.

¹⁰⁴ It is also worth pointing out that Protogonos may have been in part inspired by Hesiod's Typhoeus. As we have seen hybrid creatures abound in the *Theogony* and certain characteristics such as the dragon head and bull like voice are especially reminiscent of Zeus' adversary (*Th.* 825; 832).

excess I argued was based on his combination of *Metis* and *Bia* or intelligence and force. By incorporating both within himself, Zeus did not become less bodied, but more. He became, I argued, a fuller expression of divinity, the whole against the parts. In a similar respect Protogonos' attributes might be seen as an extreme even totalising example of this and where Zeus simply takes on a greater role, Protogonos' almost endless list of names including Phanes, Zeus (OF 141), Priapos, Erikpaioi (OH 6), Metis, Eros, Bromis (OF 141) and Dionysus (OF 60) identifies him with the whole cosmos, i.e. with Pan (OF 86).¹⁰⁵ If this excess was anathema to Xenophanes, it has a good deal more in common with Heraclitus' god. Like Orpheus, Heraclitus was not concerned with the trend of sanitizing Greek myth and embraced the shameful acts and multiplicity of the Greek pantheon in its entirety. He even made 'War' a synonym for his divinity, who like Protogonos was best described not in terms of negation or even a concrete set of features but in an excessive list of paradoxical attributes and names including: night/day, winter/summer etc. (DK 22 B 67). Heraclitus' God and Protogonos in their close identification with the world are in some respects typically Presocratic. They too, however, show an important difference from the divine conceptions of philosophers like Xenophanes, and Heraclitus and Orpheus by characterising their god by motion, excess and change in place of stability, negation, and wholeness, create a very different cosmos.

The *Derveni Theogony* and the Reverend Phallus

Protogonos is clearly an impressive figure whose main attributes were established by at least the Classical period. In this respect, he marks a pivotal transformation of Hesiod's narrative which placed Chaos at the very outset. However, despite the solid evidence for Protogonos' early presence, one of the central debates in the scholarship hinges on the presence or absence of the golden winged god in the *Derveni Theogony*.¹⁰⁶ This debate is surprising as the 'reverend king Protogonos' (Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου) is clearly named in col. 16.3 and a plausible assumption is that the firstborn king is none other than the common Orphic god. However, the Greek word 'protogonos' literally means first born and could in theory refer to any first born god. Moreover, since Ouranos is said to rule first, many have argued that the epitaph Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως 'firstborn king' refers to him (col 14.6).¹⁰⁷ This, however, is

¹⁰⁵ On the many names of Protogonos see West (1983) 203. OF 141= (I) Procl. in *Plat. Tim.* I 336. 6; OF 60= (I) Diod. 1. 11.2; OF 86 = Damasc. *De princ.* 123 bis.

¹⁰⁶ The most thorough defence is by Santamaría Álvarez (2016a), however, the controversy is now so entrenched I doubt this will be the last word.

¹⁰⁷ Homer uses it, for example, of firstborn lambs (*Il.* 4.101-103).

only the tip of the iceberg and even more controversy surrounds the translation of the term αἰδοίου. Some read it as the masculine adjective αἰδοῖος ‘reverend’, others as a neuter noun αἰδοῖον ‘phallus’. This reading entirely transforms the sentence from ‘the reverend firstborn king’ to the new and strange phrase ‘the phallus of the first-born king.’¹⁰⁸ This may seem like a very odd translation and if we were reading Homer or any other poet from the period, it would be immediately rejected in favour of the reverend king.¹⁰⁹ However, the translation is not simply the product of modern scholarship’s overactive imagination but a view that goes back to the papyrus itself where the commentator stresses that Orpheus understands the word as a phallus (13.7-10) and, largely because of the fragmented condition of the papyrus, it is unclear whether this is part of the commentator’s unusual interpretative procedure or a detail present in the poem itself.¹¹⁰ This has led to two widely diverging readings which have polarised scholarship on the text. For Betegh, Bernabé and others, the passage refers to the phallus of the firstborn king Ouranos, whereas for Parker and West, the text refers to the reverend king Protogonos.¹¹¹ Despite the subtle arguments made by both sides, there are some strong reasons for associating αἰδοῖος/αἰδοῖον with Protogonos rather than the phallus. In col. 13.4 the term αἰδοῖος/αἰδοῖον is used to refer to the time when Zeus swallows something:

αἰδοῖον κατέπινεν, ὃς αἰθέρα ἔκθορε πρῶτος.
he (i.e. Zeus) swallowed down the reverend one, who was first born from the aither.¹¹²

The idea of being born from the aither strongly associates the term with the god Protogonos who is frequently associated with aither.¹¹³ In Proclus (OF 124-125) Protogonos is called the

¹⁰⁸ Trans. Betegh (2004).

¹⁰⁹ See for example αἰδοίη βασιλεία Hom. *Od.* 18.314; βασιλεῦσιν ἄμ' αἰδοίοισιν Hes. *Theog.* 80. Santamaría Álvarez (2016a) 149-50 gives many more examples.

¹¹⁰ West (1983) 85 argues αἰδοῖον in the poem refers to the reverend one and that the commentator’s reading is part of his allegorical method, moving between the similar terms reverend and phallus and making the final association with the sun because the phallus is a generative source. Bernabé (2002) 106 considers the three step identification process too complicated for the commentator. However, while the logic of this identification is difficult to understand, I do not think it is too complicated. The punning of reverend and phallus was already used by his favourite philosopher, Heraclitus (DK 22 B15), and arguably the commentator simply illustrates his ingenuity through this complex identification. Still we might wonder, why not directly equate the reverend one with the sun as later authors did and leave out the phallus altogether. Santamaría Álvarez (2016) 141-143 has recently attempted to surmount the problem and preserve the understanding of both poem and commentator, arguing that the commentator does not in fact make an equation between αἰδοῖον but is using an analogy. Thus when he says, αἰδοίωι εἰκάσας τὸν ἥλιο[v·], ‘εἰκάζω means “compare to,” not “identify with.” In other words, the commentator likens the sun to the phallus, he does not identify the two. Rather his aim is simply to identify, the reverend one to the sun, by expressing that like a phallus it is a generative principle. It should also be pointed out that the understanding of αἰδοῖον in col. 16.1 is entirely dependent on one’s interpretation of col.13.

¹¹¹ Those who argue for the presence of Protogonos-Phanes include West (1983) 85; Brisson (2003); Kouremenos (2006) 26–28; Laks and Most (1997); Parker. (1995); Sider (2014); Santamaría Álvarez (2016a). In their estimation the first born god in the Derveni papyrus is identical or similar with Protogonos-Phanes of the later *Rhapsodies*. The second group take the neuter noun αἰδοῖον meaning phallus and include Burkert (1992) 90–92; Bernabé (2002b); Betegh (2004) 120–122. The reading has also proved more influential in discussions which do not deal specifically with textual problems in the Derveni papyrus such as Edmonds (2013) 169 and Miguel Herrero de Jaguregui (2010) 298 n. 3.

¹¹² Trans. Betegh (2004) modified.

‘very beautiful son of aither’ (περικαλλῆς Αἰθέρος υἱός).¹¹⁴ In the *Hymns* (6.2) he is called ‘aither-roaming’ (αἰθερό πλαγκτὸν). Damascius (OF 121) even uses the same verb when he describes the cloud from which Protogonos is born or leaps out from (ἐξέθορε).¹¹⁵ In col. 13.4 of the Derveni poem apart from the reference to a birth from aither, the use of the masculine pronoun ὃς suggests an agreement with αἰδοῖον (reverend) and thus rejects the phallus reading which requires a neuter pronoun. However, Betegh and others circumnavigate this problem by reading ὃς as a ‘possessive genitive, subordinated to the neutral noun αἰδοῖον.’¹¹⁶ This assumption does not, however, cohere with the fact that the god in question is said to have been born from the aither. The possibilities are limited and this certainly cannot apply to Ouranos who is the son of Night (col. 14.6). Nor does the idea make much sense in regard to the phallus of Ouranos. It does, however, nicely dovetail with later descriptions of Protogonos’ birth. At this point things get even stranger and to accommodate for the phallus reading, Burkert and Bernabé adopt an unconventional reading of θρώσκω as ‘ejaculate’ rather than ‘to be born.’ The sentence now refers to the phallus ‘who *first ejaculated* the ether.’¹¹⁷ This is certainly a possible and fascinating reading which, as Burkert points out, is paralleled by the Egyptian sky god Anum’s ejaculation into the upper air. There is, however, a general consensus that θρώσκω as ‘ejaculate’ is a rare reading whereas the meaning ‘to leap out’ or, especially concerning the birth of a god, to be born is common and intuitive.¹¹⁸ If the passage refers to the birth of a god born from the aither, and since Ouranos the son of Night is disqualified, the most likely candidate is Protogonos. In other words, the most intuitive reading, supported by Classical and later texts, is also the most consistent with the fragmented papyrus itself. The debate, unfortunately, does not end here and if my reading solves one set of textual problems, it too necessitates creatively reading the clear statement that Ouranos is said to be the first to reign, Οὐρανὸς Εὐφρονίδης, ὃς πρότιστος βασιλεύσεν (col 14.6). This is certainly a problematic line but can be circumnavigated. For Parker the idea of first is here ‘used loosely, as a mere title of respect,’ while others have pointed out a potential solution in a fragment (OF 174) cited by an Aristotelian scholiast where Ouranos is described as the god

¹¹³ The translation is debated and Laks and Most (1997) translate col. 13. 4 as ‘who was the first to leap forth into aether.’ Although the term aither is in the accusative, Betegh notes ‘the accusative can, in principle, here mean two things. It can either mean the source or the direction of the movement described by the verb... on either construal, it is clear that the aither must have existed before the birth of the ‘first-born’ (154-5).

¹¹⁴ OF 124 = Procl. *in Plat. Tim.* I 433.31; OF 125 = Lactant. *Divin. inst.* 1.5.5.

¹¹⁵ OF 121 = Dam. *De princ.* 123. See also OF 123 I = Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 148.25 Couvr.

¹¹⁶ Betegh (2004) 113.

¹¹⁷ Burkert (2004) 92-3. Bernabé (2007) 107-8 argues for a similar reading. Santamaría Álvarez (2016a) points out ‘this meaning and construction is unparalleled in the extant Greek literature’ (150).

¹¹⁸ See Betegh (2004) 155. Santamaría Álvarez (2016a) 150.

‘who ruled first among the gods after his mother Night’ (ὃς πρῶτος βασιλεύσε θεῶν μετὰ μητέρα Νύκτα).¹¹⁹

If the Protogonos reading is by no means problem free, it is imperative to realise that there is no single coherent way of reconstructing the fragmented text and whether we place Protogonos first, Ouranos, or the phallus of Ouranos, we must choose from conflicting fragments. In this respect, the likelihood of any reconstruction must be judged by an external standard, the comparative material. The comparative argument for the phallus reading rests almost entirely on a non-Greek poem, the Hurro-Hittite Kumarbi epic.¹²⁰ A phallus is indeed swallowed in this poem, yet not only are the narrative details different, how this poem dating to the thirteenth or fourteenth century BC exerted influence on Orphic authors in the sixth century is entirely unexplained. Nor is it clear why this very particular and memorable narrative simply disappeared after the Derveni poem, never to be repeated or even alluded to in later Orphic poetry or by its critics.¹²¹ The Protogonos reading on the other hand is well

¹¹⁹ OF 174=(I) Alex.Aphrod. in *Aristot. Metaph.* 821.19. Parker (1995) 491. See also Kouremenos et al. (2006) 28 and West (1983) 233. Betegh (2004) 118-9 points out that in this case the sentence is qualified by saying ‘after his mother Night’ and that this does not appear in the Derveni papyrus. This is a fair point yet the idea of ruling ‘first’ after someone else still has a rather paradoxical ring to it. Firstness in Orphism, at least when applied to Zeus means something quite different from Hesiodic poems. Brisson (2003) 28 offers a number of potential parallels including Proclus’ (OF 175 = in *Tim. Ill* 176.18-24) reference to an Orphic poem discussing the very first marriage (πρώτιστος γάμος) in relation to Gaia and Ouranos despite the fact that earlier unions existed prior to this. Santamaría Álvarez (2016a) 56-57 points to an intriguing passage referring to a king who does not rule: Μνημονεύουσι δὲ τῶν χρόνων, ἵνα καὶ τῆς ἐπανόδου δηλώσωσι τὸν καιρὸν, καὶ σαφῶς ἡμᾶς διδάξωσι, ὥς τηνικάδε βασιλεὺς Ἑβραῖος οὐκ ἐβασίλευσε (They [sc. Zacharias and Agaeus] make mention of the time (in which their prophecies began) to declare the moment of the return and to clearly teach us that at this time the Hebrew king did not reign) *Interpretatio in xii prophetas minores* MPG 81, 1876, 17, on *Zacharias* 1.1.

¹²⁰ In the *Kumarbi* succession after Atum, the equivalent of Ouranos, is castrated, his son, Kumarbi, swallows his severed phallus. After the act Kumarbi, a male god, becomes pregnant and gives birth to the Hittite Zeus, Teshub. The narrative indeed describes swallowing a severed phallus, but it does not describe how Teshub recreates the cosmos and in many respects the narrative is closer to Hesiod’s *Theogony* than the Derveni poem. On the Hurro-Hittite narrative see López-Ruiz (2010) 90-4.

¹²¹ Diogenes Laertius (1.5) has also been used to support this reading: ἐγὼ δέ, εἰ τὸν περὶ θεῶν ἐξ ἀγορεύσαντα τοιαῦτα χρηὶ φιλόσοφον καλεῖν οὐκ οἶδα, <οὐδὲ> τίνα δεῖ προσαγορεύειν τὸν πᾶν τὸ ἀνθρώπειον πάθος ἀφειδούντα τοῖς θεοῖς προστρίψαι, καὶ τὰ σπανίως ὑπὸ τινῶν ἀνθρώπων αἰσχροῦργούμενα τῷ τῆς φωνῆς ὀργάνῳ. ‘Now, considering the sort of things he said about the gods, I hardly know whether he ought to be called a philosopher; for what are we to make of one who does not scruple to charge the gods with all human suffering, and even the foul crimes wrought by the tongue amongst a few of mankind.’ Trans. Hicks (1972). Betegh (2004) 121 notes that Diogenes Laertius’ testimony ‘is almost compelling’ in favour of his view and certainly for others the comparative material has proven extremely memorable. For example, when Edmonds (2013) 169 n. 20 refers to Betegh’s ‘cogent arguments’ it is not his detailed arguments for reading col.13.4 but the Hittite material that he recalls. See also Burkert (2004) 91. However, the passage has a number of serious problems. For a start, it is unclear if swallowing a severed phallus and αἰσχροῦργέω really are equivalents. See Kouremenos (2006) 26 n. 68; Sundell Torjussen (2008) 234; Santamaría Álvarez (2016a) 162. If we accept that they are, we still have to explain how this event was known to Diogenes Laertius while it eluded everyone else. That the detail was too offensive to be repeated by later poets is not a valid explanation. The Derveni commentator had no problem elaborating on this detail. At the same time, he was very disturbed by the poem’s description of divine incest (col. 26). This squeamishness did not lead to the detail being omitted and later poetry even adds increasingly bizarre details. Even if we assume that Diogenes did know of such a narrative, where did he hear it from? The event is not mentioned by any Platonists and even the Christian apologists who were particularly eager to point out the heresies of pagan myths make no reference to this act. However, Christian apologists do refer to another similar act between Zeus and Hera. See Theophilus of

supported. Not only is the god mentioned as early as the Classical period, in later texts including the *Orphic Hymns*, the *Hieronymian Theogony* and the *Rhapsodies* he is among the most frequently described of the Orphic gods.¹²² While the use of later texts to support earlier readings is sometimes viewed suspiciously, later Orphic texts surely have a superior claim to Hurro-Hittite material. Indeed while no two Orphic theogonies are the same,¹²³ the differences between Orphic accounts should not be exaggerated¹²⁴ and many of the greatest divergences emerge from the texts we know least about. The Derveni poem, for example, is often compared with a theogony known to Aristotle's pupil, Eudemos. However, despite imaginative reconstructions, all that is known securely about this poem is that it started with Night.¹²⁵ On the other hand, the more detailed Orphic theogonies such as the *Rhapsodies* and the theogony associated with Hieronymus and Hellanicus substantially agree in the main narrative details.¹²⁶ Both start with primordial deities such as Night and Aither. Both give a central position to Protogonos-Phanes and his miraculous birth from an egg. Both describe the struggles for authority which follow until finally Protogonos-Phanes is swallowed by Zeus. Finally, both describe how Zeus after swallowing Protogonos recreates the cosmos.¹²⁷ With the discovery of the Derveni papyrus, which uncontroversially agrees in part with these narratives, the antiquity of Orphic poetic ideas became apparent. West was so confident of the close relation between these poems that he proposed a hypothetical urtext from which all other Orphic poems derive naming it after this firstborn god, the *Protogonos Theogony*.¹²⁸ Others are more sceptical of this methodology and while there is always a danger in

Antioch 3.3. Where Theophyllus learned of this event is not specified in this passage but in 3.8 he links it with an allegorical account by the Stoic Chrysippus. While the event is thus not actually identified with Orpheus, Chrysippus, according to Vellius allegorically interpreted Orphic myths. See Struck (2004) 118. Moreover, not only was this widely cited in the second century AD by Diogenes's near contemporaries Chrysippus' description of this act was also known to Diogenes himself and described in his life of Chrysippus (D. L. 7.7 187). It is very likely that this scene is what Diogenes associates with Orpheus' Zeus.

¹²² Apart from his impressive description in the *Orphic Hymns* (OH 6) and presence in the *Hymn to Zeus* known to Porphyry (OF 243), Platonist commentators provide a great deal of information about this figure. Damascius even dedicates two chapters to the first born god in Orphic theologies in his *Problems and Solutions concerning first principles* (123-4). Here he describes the *Rhapsodies*, which he sees as the standard version, a very brief description of a theogony referred to by Eudemos (a pupil of Aristotle), and finally a fuller description of a theogony by Hieronymus and Hellanicus. The second major source is gleaned from the numerous digressions made by Proclus in his commentaries on Plato. Dates are difficult to specify with any certainty. On these figures see West (1983) 176-78. Damascius wrote in the sixth century however the material he quotes from is much earlier. According to Bernabé (2010) 423 the *Rhapsodies* may date to the first century BC, Hieronymus second century BC, Eudemos to the 400 BC.

¹²³ Betegh (2004) 140; Edmonds (2013) 142.

¹²⁴ West (1983) remains the most ambitious reconstruction of the main Orphic theogonies.

¹²⁵ See Damascius *de principiis* 123. I am unable to follow West's (1983) 116-39 reasons for constructing the Eudemean theogony based on Plato's *Timaeus* and Apollodorus' *Bibliotheka*.

¹²⁶ Even the sceptical Edmonds (2013) 72-3 notes a certain family resemblance among the different texts.

¹²⁷ The initial stage before Protogonos shows the most significant disagreements in the multiple accounts. Hieronymus's version appears to have given a greater role to the god Chronos and to some extent blurred his characteristics with those of Protogonos. See West (1983) 224 for a brief comparison.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 68-116.

reconstructing earlier poetic material from later sources, at times the correspondences are too close to be ignored.¹²⁹ In the *Rhapsodies* we are told how Zeus swallows Protogonos (OF 241):

ὡς τότε πρωτογόνοιο χαδὼν μένος Ἑρικεπαίου
τῶν πάντων δέμας εἶχεν ἐῖ ἐνὶ γαστέρι κοίλῃ,
μειῖξε δ' ἐοῖς μελέεσσι θεοῦ δύναμιν τε καὶ ἀλκὴν,
τοῦνεκα σὺν τῷ πάντα Διὸς πάλιν ἐντὸς ἐτύχθη,
αἰθέρος εὐρείης ἡδ' οὐρανοῦ ἀγλαὸν ὕψος,
πόντου τ' ἀτρυγέτου γαίης τ' ἐρικυδέος ἔδρη,
Ὠκεανὸς τε μέγας καὶ νείατα Τάρταρα γαίης
καὶ ποταμοὶ καὶ ποντος ἀπείριτος ἄλλα τε πάντα
πάντες τ' ἀθάνατοι μάκαρες θεοὶ ἡδὲ θέαιναι,
ὅσσα τ' ἔην γεγαῶτα καὶ ὕστερον ὀππὸς' ἔμελλεν,
ἐν γένετο, Ζηνὸς δ' ἐνὶ γαστέρι σύρρα πεφύκει.

And so, swallowing the strength of first-born Erikepaïos [another name for Phanes]
he had the body of everything inside his own hollow belly
and he mixed into his own limbs the god's power and strength.
And so along with him everything was fashioned again inside Zeus
the gleaming height of the broad aither and heaven,
the seat of the unharvested sea and glorious earth,
great Ocean and Tartarus, depth of the earth,
and rivers and the boundless sea and all other things
and all the immortal blessed gods and goddesses
all things that existed and would exist later,
became one, having grown together in the stomach of Zeus.¹³⁰

It is a remarkable coincidence that this passage shows some striking similarities with the best preserved and longest fragment from the *Derveni Theogony* found in col. 16.3-6:

Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου· τῷ δ' ἄρα πάντες
ἀθάνατοι προσέφυν μάκαρες θεοὶ ἡδὲ θέαιναι
καὶ ποταμοὶ καὶ κρήναι ἐπήρατοι ἄλλα τε πάντα,
ἅσσα τότε ἦν γεγαῶτ', αὐτὸς δ' ἄρα μούνος ἔγεντο

Of Protogonos the reverend one, and on him (Zeus) all
the immortals grew, blessed gods and goddesses
And rivers and lovely springs and everything else
That had been born then; and he himself became solitary.¹³¹

There is no doubt that these two texts, one from as early as the sixth century BC, another recorded in the fifth century AD are closely related. As Parker points out in addition to the similar events, the presence of the identical phrases μάκαρες θεοὶ ἡδὲ θέαιναι; ἄλλα τε πάντα;

¹²⁹ Betegh's (2004) 93 methodology excludes this kind of comparison as a vicious circle and argues for a 'close reading of the papyrus itself' and 'preference to the internal evidence in the reconstruction of the poem in all those cases where this procedure does not result in untenable consequences' (93-4). Due to the multiple directions in which the internal evidence points to this is not in fact possible. It is worth contrasting his position with Rusten (1985) who argues that 'the events of the Derveni Theogony (although not its individual verses) can be assumed to be largely identical with those in the later poem ascribed to Orpheus (called the *Rhapsodies*) which the Neoplatonists Proclus and Damascius quote and summarize at length. Therefore the fragments of these poems have considerable (although not absolute) authority for reconstructing the text of the poem which the commentator had before him' (122).

¹³⁰ Trans. Parker (1995) modified. OF 241= Procl. *In Plato. Tim.* I 324.14.

¹³¹ Trans. Betegh (2004) modified.

and the close ἄσσα τότ' ἦν γεγαῶτ' 'prove that the second passage in fact ultimately derives from the first.'¹³² Parker concludes that 'it is natural to suppose that the original context was the same.'¹³³ While *The Rhapsodies* were written a good deal earlier than Damascius' citation, the continuity we see between texts dating nearly a thousand years apart is compelling testament to the continuity and stability of Orphism and the presence of Protogonos in both.

Protogonos and creation in the *Derveni Theogony*

The debates on the correct reconstruction of the *Derveni Theogony* have understandably deflected attention from an analysis of the narrative itself. The early stages of the *Derveni Theogony* are fraught with debates and interpretational difficulties, and to date no single reading has offered an account free from contradictions, nor is this possible. This does not mean we should not attempt to do so and in what follows I offer a plausible reconstruction of the main events and an analysis of their meaning.¹³⁴ Perhaps the most important innovation and transformations of Hesiod's dualism is found in Orpheus' Protogonos. We can infer a great deal about the god from Classical and later sources, yet other than the presence of his name, the Derveni papyrus does not tell us very much about the first born god. There are, however, at least some clues to his nature. Protogonos may or may not have been born from an egg, he was associated with an impressive birth from the aither (13.4):

αἰδοῖον κατέπινεν, ὃς αἰθέρα ἔκθορε πρῶτος.

he drank the reverend one, who was born from the aither first.

While I have translated θρόσκω as birth the word really refers to an astonishing leaping into existence that demarcates this divine birth as something exceptional. In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* for example we are told how Apollo (119):

ἐκ δ' ἔθορε πρὸ φάωσδε: θεαὶ δ' ὀλόλυσαν ἅπασαι.

¹³² I should stress that sharing the phrase 'μάκαρες θεοὶ ἠδὲ θέαιναι' would hardly be compelling if taken in isolation. As Sider (2014) 246 points out this is a variation on a Homeric phrase appearing for example in *Od.* 8.341. However, when these phrases appear in an identical context the possibility of shared influence is almost certain.

¹³³ Parker (1995) 491. Meisner (2015) 291 also points out the shared use of [θεῶν] τροφὸς ἀμβροσίη Νύξ Proclus (OF 112 I B = in *Plat. Cratyl.* 92.9).

¹³⁴ My reconstruction is close to West (1983) 100 and notably differs somewhat from the better known reconstructions of Betegh (2004) and Bernabé (2007). This is in a large part because of the disagreement on where to locate Protogonos. Bernabé argues that Night is a primordial goddess. Night is clearly an early figure but her status as the starting point of the poem is not clear but assumed based on comparisons with the Eudemean theogony. This assumption is no stronger than the comparison between the Derveni papyrus and the *Rhapsodies*, and in fact considerably weaker in that we know almost nothing about the Eudemean theogony. See Damascius *de principiis* 123. On the other hand, as noted above, we can pinpoint some almost exact parallels from the Derveni poem and the *Rhapsodies*. The primordial place of Night is also problematic because of the clearly important and early presence of Aither.

From (Leto) leapt towards the light and all the goddesses let out a cry.¹³⁵

Apart from this astonishing birth, the god's name is a pivotal clue to his personality. The importance of names is in fact a common feature of Orphic poetry and not something confined to the etymological tradition. Phanes, like the later name Antauges, as noted, are descriptions as much as a proper name and both signify 'to appear.'¹³⁶ Protogonos, his only name mentioned in the papyrus also expresses a particular divine quality. As explained in the *Etymologicum Magnum* 'they call him Phanes and Protogonos because he became the first one visible (φαντός) in Aither.'¹³⁷ The idea of Protogonos as a quality will be shown to be of crucial significance in Zeus' recreation of the cosmos. At present it should be pointed out that the title 'firstborn' is somewhat misleading. Protogonos may be the first born of the gods, but he is in no known poem the first god present in the cosmos. The early stages of the Derveni papyrus are unclear but as Protogonos is said to have been born from the Aither, at least this figure precedes him. It is also possible that Night was there prior to Protogonos, though the issue is complex because of the multiple births of Night in later Orphic poems.¹³⁸ No evidence either supports or rejects the presence of other primordial gods, but it is certainly possible that Χρόνος (Time) was present at this stage.¹³⁹ These early figures may seem to take away from the grandeur of Protogonos' status as literally first born but it should be noted that in the Greek tradition creation was rarely *ex nihilo* and figures such as Time, Necessity, Aither, are arguably more the prerequisites which allow creation to take place than rivals to Protogonos' power.¹⁴⁰ In a fragment cited earlier, Aither, for example, was described as without motion before the birth of Protogonos (OF 539).¹⁴¹ In this respect, whether Protogonos is literally first or preceded by something else is of less importance than the nominal status of priority and the emphasis that the cosmos really starts with his energetic birth from the Aither. Although the position is not clearly stated we can also make an educated guess that Protogonos was a creator god in the Derveni poem. This is a staple feature in later poetry where following his birth, Protogonos sets about ordering the cosmos and was present as early as the theogony in Aristophanes' *Birds*.¹⁴² While we cannot assume Protogonos occupied a similar role as

¹³⁵ See Santamaría Álvarez (2016a) 150-1 and n. 56 for further examples.

¹³⁶ The two are very close. The LSJ defines φαίνω as 'bring to light, cause to appear' and ἀνταυγάζω as 'expose to the light, illuminate.'

¹³⁷ OF 126 = *Et. M.* 287.29-32. See Meisner (2015) 277.

¹³⁸ There is no evidence in favour or against the idea that Night has multiple births in the *Derveni theogony*. Meisner (2015) rejects the idea as a Platonist invention (285-97). This is possible though phrases like thrice born are Orphic and Dionysus is described as such in the *Hymns* (30.2).

¹³⁹ This figure occupies an important role in the *Rhapsodies* and Hieronymian account. See OF 66 = Procl. in *Plat. Resp.* 2.138.8 Kroll.

¹⁴⁰ See Herrero de Jáuregui (2010) 301. The most famous example of this is found in Plato's *Ti.* 30a.

¹⁴¹ OF 539. = Macrob. *Sat.* 1.23.21.

¹⁴² That this is an old idea is suggested by Aristophanes' description of Eros in *Av.* 700-3.

demiurge in the *Derveni Theogony*, the idea is certainly suggested and when Zeus later swallows Protogonos we are told that with him he swallows rivers and springs, gods and goddesses in short ‘everything that had been born or come into being then’ (ἄσσα τότε ἦν γεγαῶτ’) (col. 16.6). I will return to this passage in more detail later, at present I wish to stress that the taken for granted assumption that by swallowing Protogonos, Zeus also swallows everything else that ‘had at that time been brought into being,’ seems to refer to a definite act of creation in the past associated with an earlier creator god. How Protogonos creates these things is less certain. In the *Rhapsodies* Protogonos starts by mating with himself and giving birth to Night, who he in turn mates with to produce the other gods.¹⁴³ Again, the detail is neither confirmed nor contradicted by the *Derveni* poem and I propose we take it as one possible guideline. An important consideration is whether we accept the evidence for Protogonos’ male and female genitalia. If this detail was present from an early date, it presumably played a role in the narrative and suggests, as in other versions of the poem, that Protogonos creates all subsequent generations by mating with himself.¹⁴⁴

The Children of Protogonos

In my study of Hesiod’s *Theogony*, I argued that Chaos is not only the starting point of the cosmos, it is the defining assumption of the cosmos itself and the basis for Hesiodic dualism. In a similar respect, I argue that Protogonos is the basis for Orphic pantheism. Protogonos, however, cedes control and retreats from the narrative for a significant period of time. This is admittedly strange behaviour for a pantheistic super god and a key problem in understanding the coherence of the Orphic poem is in understanding how the narrative unites this image of a pantheistic super god within a Hesiodic succession of gods. A common strategy in the *Orphic Hymns*, early and late, is to directly to tell us that the many different gods are really the same. This strategy, as Herrero de Jáuregui points out, may be more suitable for hymns where a ‘typical series of strung-together epithets make it possible to also juxtapose the names of

¹⁴³ The sequence in the *Rhapsodies* is somewhat complex and involves three Nights. See West. (1983) 70; Betegh (2004) 141-2. The first is a primordial goddess, the second Phanes produces by mating with himself. After he mates with Night and gives birth to the rest of the next generation including Ouranos and Gaia. The presence of multiple gods with the same name is not something we can discount in the *Derveni Theogony* and introduces a potential difficulty in reconstructing it on a logical basis.

¹⁴⁴ Another, more indirect argument in support of Protogonos as the father of Night emerges in the broad similarities between Protogonos and Zeus’ creations. The *Derveni* poem describes how Zeus is the son of Rhea (26.9). However, since Zeus has by this stage eaten the cosmos and recreated it, Rhea is in a sense his daughter. He then mates with her and produces Persephone. It is at least a possibility that this event, like in the *Rhapsodies*, is a doublet of Protogonos’ original incestuous acts. Chysippus (fr. 1078, 1081 SVF) may have made this connection and according to Philodemus he wrote about Orpheus and other poets that ἅπαντά τ’ ἐστὶν αἰθὴρ, ὁ αὐτὸς ὢν καὶ πατὴρ καὶ υἱός, ὥς κὰν τῷ πρώτῳ μὴ μάχεσθαι τὸ τὴν Πέαν καὶ μητέρα τοῦ Διὸς εἶναι καὶ θυγατέρα. ‘Everything is aither, which itself is both father and son, so that even at the start it does not conflict that Rhea is both the mother of Zeus and his daughter.’ Trans. Meisner (2015) 147-8.

gods, who are thus very tangibly identified with one another, without need for explanation, more by mystical intuition than by logical reasoning.¹⁴⁵ Theogonies, on the other hand, which depict successions, birth, war and the change of rule would quickly become confusing if expressed in these terms. Another option found in later poetry is to interpret the different gods as the unfolding of a single One (OF 539):

ἀλλαχθεὶς δ' ὄνομ', ἔσχε προσωυμίας πρὸς ἐκάστων
παντοδαπὰς, κατὰ καιρὸν ἀμειβομένοιο χρόνοιο.

But then he changed his name and took on forms of address of every sort
from every source, as suits the alternating seasons.¹⁴⁶

This is an idea arguably lurking behind Zeus' identification as first, middle and last in the Derveni poem, yet is nowhere clearly stated in the surviving fragments of the Derveni poem. Nevertheless, there are clues which suggest that a similar idea is present in *Derveni Theogony* many of which become more obvious if contrasted with the Hesiodic narrative. One of the most concrete expressions of Hesiod's dualism, I argued, appears in his division of the cosmos into two entirely separate genealogies, the lineage of Gaia and the descendents of Chaos. Night, the most emblematic of Chaos' lineage, has an impressive genealogy of gods and goddesses including Strife, Toil, Forgetfulness, Famine, and tearful Sorrows, Fighting, Battles, Murders, Manslaughters, Quarrels, Lying Words, etc. (*Theog.* 210-40). These abstract gods were exemplary of Hesiod's dualism and plague the cosmos with violence and war until Zeus enforces order. One of the most important transformations of Hesiod found in the *Derveni Theogony* is the collapse of the division between Gaia and Night and even the transfer of much of Gaia's creative role to Hesiod's mother of all evils. Indeed, Orpheus' Night has little in common with her Hesiodic counterpart and instead of threatening the stability of the cosmos, she is given a nurturing role illustrated by the epitaph 'nurturer' 'τροφός' (col. 10.11).¹⁴⁷ This characteristic is also reflected in her peaceful relations with the other gods whom she continues to assist by proclaiming oracles from her shrine (col. 11.1). Night is not only a nurturing goddess she is also incorporated into a single genealogical line and, supplanting Gaia's position, is made the mother of Ouranos (col. 14.6). Who Ouranos' father is remains less clear.¹⁴⁸ Bernabé argues that the use of the matronymic Εὐφρονίδης

¹⁴⁵ Herrero de Jáuregui (2010) 318.

¹⁴⁶ OF 539 = Macrob. *Sat.* 1.23.21. Trans. Herrero de Jáuregui (2015). See also the discussion of this poem in Bernabé (2010) 439. The fragment is often read with the additions of OF 539; 540; 542; 543.

¹⁴⁷ Bernabé (2007) 106; Betegh (2004) 168. Indeed, Night takes the mother-like role further than Hesiod and where Gaia's character is somewhat temperamental, Night is consistently helpful.

¹⁴⁸ Damascius' *First Principles* (123-4) is one of the main sources. However, as the book is specifically concerned with first principles after an excellent discussion of the primordial gods the author loses interest. In Hieronymian versions Ouranos and Gaia emerge from the two fragments of Protogonos' egg. See West (1983) 180. The detail is derived from Athenagoras (*Leg.* 18.4) This is not the case in either the *Derveni Theogony* (Col

indicates Ouranos has no father,¹⁴⁹ yet Apollo (*Hymn Merc.* 513) and Hermes (*Hymn Merc.* 42), for example, are both frequently given matronymics despite being the children of Zeus.¹⁵⁰ The text is too fragmented to say anything with certainty but it is possible that Ouranos' father is Protogonos. It is also possible that through a union between Night (either a primordial Night or a second born Night) and Protogonos the gods Gaia, Okeanos and the Moira are born.¹⁵¹ While the exact genealogical connections will remain hypothetical, what is clear is that by assigning to Night the role usually granted to Gaia, Orpheus collapses Hesiod's multiple genealogies in favour of a single line of descent.

Before moving on to the clearer sections of the poem, it is worth pausing to reflect on Orpheus' transformations of Hesiod's account so far. The most obvious example appears in the removal of multiple genealogies, Chaos, Gaia, Eros, in favour of a single genealogical line starting with Protogonos. A second though related issue appears in the Orphic use of incest in the divine successions. In the *Rhapsodies* at least, Protogonos mates with himself and produces Night, who alongside Protogonos, later begets Ouranos. This may seem in some respects comparable with Hesiod's narrative where Gaia by herself bears Ouranos and in turn Ouranos and Gaia produce the second generation of gods together (*Th.* 125-50). This similarity is not surprising and in most polytheistic narratives the possibilities of partnerships is severely limited in the early stages of the cosmos. There are, however, some notable differences between incest in Hesiod and incest in Orpheus. In Hesiod, Gaia does not mate with herself but simply gives birth to Ouranos perhaps by splitting herself in two. Following from this, the relations between Gaia and Ouranos are immediately hostile and illustrate the first step in a series of beings increasingly divided and genealogically distant. Orphic incestuous unions on the other hand, are peaceful and importantly appear as a device which is repeatedly used at strategic points in the narrative. Skipping ahead a little in the plot, Zeus, after his recreation of the cosmos, mates with his own mother (col.16). It is important to note that the act of incest is even more complex considering that he has just given birth to her. Although the detail is not present in the Derveni poem, in later versions, following this union Zeus mates with his daughter, Persephone. Persephone in turn gives birth to the most complex of all Orphic gods, Dionysus. These incestuous acts horrified many Greeks, and even the

14.6) or the *Rhapsodies* which both note that Ouranos is the son of Night (OF 149). OF 149 = Herm. in *Plat. Phaedr.* 154.23.

¹⁴⁹ Bernabé (2007) 108.

¹⁵⁰ See Sider (2014) 243-4.

¹⁵¹ The latter three are all mentioned in the papyrus but their genealogical position can only be guessed.

Derveni commentator was suspicious of their moral content.¹⁵² Nevertheless, the confusing kinship relations they create may offer a partial solution on how the many gods are really one. Discussing cosmic incest Sahlins explains:

as a social reproductive capacity, incest is a modality of the famous autonomy of the Olympian gods, their self-sufficiency, of which their freedom from labor is another. In social terms, incest is a denial of dependence on others for reproduction, hence another aspect of immortality. And as it is among humans a crime against kinship, a transcendent anti-structural act, it becomes for the gods the proof that they are stronger than society—and thus able to constitute it.¹⁵³

In other words, Olympian incest produces a society of gods who are independent from mortals. Orphic genealogies do something even more extreme. Rather than differentiating two societies, mortal and immortal, the emphasis is on collapsing genealogy altogether. Protogonos reproduces entirely from himself and mates with his own offspring and becomes the grandfather, grandmother, father, paternal and maternal uncle and brother of Ouranos. This dazzling complexity of relations circumnavigates the distance usually created through genealogies. In other words Orphic genealogies rather than fork out as we see in Hesiod, fold in upon themselves.

A second important addition to the Orphic narrative is the substitution of peaceful successions in place of Hesiod's uniformly hostile relations. The clearest illustration of this appears in the *Rhapsodies* where Phanes willingly hands the sceptre to Night and Night in turn willingly to Ouranos and later Zeus to Dionysus.¹⁵⁴ Because of these peaceful successions, Proclus and, more recently, Santamaría Álvarez, have argued that the Orphic poems revise earlier theogonies and attempt to 'moderate violence.'¹⁵⁵ Although the only clear example of this in the *Derveni Theogony* is the peaceful tie between Night and Ouranos, the idea certainly has some appeal. After all, if the succession is really an expression of a single unfolding god, the idea that these different forms are in constant conflict with each other might seem counterintuitive. However, like earlier attempts to align Protogonos with Xenophanes' conception of an ideal god, the idea that Orpheus mitigates violence is rather difficult to square with the text as a whole. Orpheus indeed emphasises fellowship and unity among particular gods. Nonetheless, not only is the traditional animosity between Ouranos and Kronos, and in turn Kronos and Zeus, maintained, Orpheus adds some new monstrosities to

¹⁵² In fact the commentator disliked the content so much that in col. 26 he attempts unsuccessfully to explain the detail away.

¹⁵³ Sahlins (2011) 87.

¹⁵⁴ West (1983) 234-5.

¹⁵⁵ Proclus (OF 98 IV B = *in Plat. Cratyl.* 54.21 Pasquali). Meisner (2015) 243. Santamaría Álvarez (2017) 123.

the popular tradition.¹⁵⁶ Two pivotal new additions stand out and underline the centrality of violence in Orphic poetry. The first is Zeus' eating Protogonos and the second Dionysus' murder at the hands of the Titans. In other words, the Orphic succession downplays some violent acts, but in general not only repeats everything Xenophanes disliked in Homeric and Hesiodic poetry, it also adds a number of further atrocities which as Euthyphro phrased it would knock him out (ἐκπλήσσω, Pl. *Eu.* 6c). Orphic poetry thus seems to point in two directions. On the one hand, it emphasises an unfolding of the One expressed in incestuous and peaceful successions, on the other, it describes violence and war against this unity including castrations, swallowing and even murder. It is possible to see this combination as the result of a fusion of incompatible ideas from the Presocratics and Hesiod. However, we should not exclude the possibility that they form a single view focusing on an underlying creative and destructive force. In his study of Aztec pantheism, Maffie describes the comparable struggles between Aztec gods as 'agonistic inamic unity' and defines this as 'the continual and continuous cyclical struggle (*agon*) of paired opposites, polarities or dualities.'¹⁵⁷ A similar idea is nicely summarised in an Orphic context in the etymology of the goddess Persephone (*OH* 29.16). The goddess, born from an incestuous union and soon to give birth through another act of incest to a dying god, is paradoxically described as (*OH* 29.16):

Φερσεφόνη: φέρβεις γάρ αεί καί πάντα φονεύεις.
Persephone: For you always nourish and kill all. ¹⁵⁸

The name Persephone is here divided into two parts, Pher as φέρβω 'to nourish,' phone as φονεύω 'to kill.'¹⁵⁹ In other words, the goddess' very name reveals a unity of opposites where nourishment is always accompanied by death. The idea that violence is a kind of principle of progression in early Orphism is also hinted at in the oppositions in the Olbian bone plaques including the dichotomies life/death/life and crucially war/peace.¹⁶⁰ These plates also remind us of the most celebrated exponent of 'War' as a cosmic principle, Heraclitus. For Heraclitus, War appears not only alongside peace in his description of the god (DK 22 B67), but as another name for the god himself. In DK 22 B 53, he describes how:

¹⁵⁶ How much violence occurs is difficult to gauge from the surviving evidence. However, where Platonists like Proclus may have wished to downplay violence, critics like Athenagoras had no shortage of ammunition against Orphic monstrosities (*Leg.* 18.3–20.5).

¹⁵⁷ Maffie (2014) 137.

¹⁵⁸ Trans. Morand (2010).

¹⁵⁹ Morand (2010) 163. A similar etymology of Persephone's name appears in a fragment by Cleanthes (SVFI 547): φερόμενον καὶ φονευόμενον πνεῦμα. See Domaradzki (2012) 130. Even if the Orphics adapted this example from the Stoics, though the reverse is equally possible, they did so because the idea was first compatible with Orphic ideas.

¹⁶⁰ See West (1982).

πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς, καὶ τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς ἔδειξε τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους, τοὺς μὲν δούλους ἐποίησε τοὺς δὲ ἐλευθέρους.

War is father of all and king of all; and some he manifested as gods, some as men men; some he made slaves, some free.¹⁶¹

The idea of War as a cosmic principle is in some ways part of a traditional outlook. After all, epics like the *Iliad* frequently depict the gods at war. There is, however, a notable difference; if war is central to the plots of Homer and Hesiod, it remains something directly contrasted with the order and justice imposed by Zeus.¹⁶² War in Heraclitus, on the other hand, far from a disorderly state, is a means of cosmic progression and the growth of an ever living fire.¹⁶³ Imposing a Heraclitean reading on the poorly preserved middle section of the *Derveni Theogony* may seem a little arbitrary. After all, if the section is almost identical with Hesiod's narrative, why is its meaning diametrically opposed? This is a fair point. However, the idea of destructive progression is very similar to the position described by the Derveni commentator where the castration of Ouranos by Kronos, for example, is described in terms of the god's striking mind (col. 14.2.3). More generally, each section of the poem must be read in terms of the context of the whole and while not every act of violence appears as a clear case of creative progression, some examples do. These I argue act as signposts through which we read the narrative as a whole. The most important case of creative destruction appears in the death of Dionysus which will be explored at length in Chapter Four. Another crucial example is Zeus' hostile engagement with Protogonos. After defeating his father, Kronos, and taking on the role of cosmic king, Zeus secures his role by eating his great grandfather. This act of violence is no less than a repetition of Protogonos' original creation and a pivotal example of a destructive act of creation which exemplifies the logic of the poem as a whole.

Zeus First, Middle and Last

Orpheus' Zeus is the single clearest example of Orphic poetic pantheism in the surviving poem. I noted earlier that Orphic theogonies were written at a time when the traditional Zeus became increasingly problematic. Zeus' status as a latecomer began to be perceived as

¹⁶¹ Trans. Graham (2010). Kahn (1981) notes 'the doctrine of opposition is here restated in even more dramatic and more puzzling form. How can war, the typical cause of death and destruction, be universal father responsible for birth and life? And if it is clear how warfare can account for the distinction between free men and slaves (since it was common practice to enslave the population of a conquered city), in what sense does it fix a distinction between men and gods? The resolution of both puzzles turns on the ambiguity between war in the literal sense and Heraclitus' use of the term for a universal principle of opposition' (208).

¹⁶² Indeed the idea of War as father and king of all through the use of a standard epic formula equates War with Zeus. See Guthrie (1962) 446.

¹⁶³ Guthrie (1962) notes 'the kernel of Heraclitus's quarrel with other thinkers seems to lie in his revolt against their ideal of a peaceful and harmonious world' (448).

somehow incompatible with newly introduced ideas of god and order. The usual solution was simply to rewrite the history and place a powerful and often nameless deity at the forefront. This god could be identified with Zeus such as Pherecydes' Zas (DK 7 B 1) or more neutral names also such as Anaxagoras' Nous (DK 59 B 12) or even simply the god as in Xenophanes (DK 21 B 23). Orpheus' solution was more unusual. Like Pherecydes and the Presocratics, he too introduced a divine steersman at the beginning, Protogonos. Orpheus, however, like Heraclitus, did not wish to dismiss Zeus either. This idea is expressed in the central Orphic paradox which frames the poem as a whole:

Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένετο, [Ζεὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέραυνος]
 Ζεὺς κεφαλὴ, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται.

Zeus was born first, Zeus bearer of lightning is last
 Zeus is the head, Zeus the middle, from Zeus are all things made.

The above verse is identical with a later Orphic *Hymn to Zeus* and probably continued with:

Ζεὺς πνοὴ πάντων, Ζεὺς πάντων ἔπλετο μοῖρα
 Ζεὺς βασιλεύς, Ζεὺς δ' ἀρχὸς ἀπάντων ἀργικέραυνος.

Zeus is breath of all, Zeus the fate of all,
 Zeus King, Zeus bearer of lightning is the ruler of all.¹⁶⁴

This problem is the very backbone of the Derveni poem and the entire work is framed as kind of riddle on Zeus' priority. Orpheus' Zeus defeats his father Kronos and takes the crown. At this point he must solidify his rule. So far, so Hesiodic. He does not, however, swallow Metis and combine intelligence and force, rather he swallows the first born god, Protogonos. The most plausible reconstruction of the fragments recounts how Zeus takes Protogonos into his hands and (13.4; 16.3-6):

αἰδοῖον κατέπινεν, ὃς αἰθέρα ἔκθορε πρῶτος.

...
 Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου· τῷ δ' ἅρα πάντες
 ἀθάνατοι προσέφυν μάκαρες θεοὶ ἡδὲ θεάιναι
 καὶ ποταμοὶ καὶ κρῆναι ἐπήρατοι ἄλλα τε πάντα,
 ἅσσα τότε ἦν γεγαῶτ', αὐτὸς δ' ἅρα μόνος ἔγεντο.

He (i.e. Zeus) swallowed down the reverend one (i.e. Protogonos), who was first born from the aither.

...
 Protogonos the reverend one. And on him (i.e. Zeus) all
 The immortals grew, blessed gods and goddesses
 And rivers and lovely springs and everything else
 That had been born then (i.e. the original creation of Protogonos) and he himself became alone.

¹⁶⁴ The quotation consists of two fragments from the Derveni papyrus the first half is taken from col. 18.12, while the second line is quoted in full in col. 17.12. The phrase as a whole is repeated in an almost identical form in the Orphic *hymn to Zeus* preserved in *De Mundo* (401a-b) and it is likely that the phrase as a whole was present in the Derveni poem. The idea of Zeus as the breath of all sounds Stoic, but is already found in the Derveni papyrus (col 18.2) where air is called breath and more generally in col. 18 where the commentator identifies the Moira with Zeus and breath.

The scene occupies a pivotal role in the *Rhapsodies* and the *Hieronyman Theogony*¹⁶⁵ and that it happens to be the best preserved fragment of the papyrus is probably not coincidental. It is likely that the commentator, like later writers, quoted this passage at length because of its clear philosophical significance. In this fragment, we see not only how Zeus eats the original creator Protogonos, but with him he swallows all the gods and goddesses, rivers and springs. In short ‘everything that had been born then.’ It is surprising, given the extensive debate surrounding the reading of Protogonos as the reverend king or phallus that there is a broad consensus on the meaning of this act. For Bernabé, Zeus swallows ‘the immense generating capacity of Sky’s penis.’¹⁶⁶ Betegh takes the idea further, arguing the phallus is not simply a generating capacity but ‘can easily be seen as some kind of origin or principle of all generation.’¹⁶⁷ As Edmonds puts it, whether Zeus swallows Protogonos or a phallus ‘in either case the idea is the same: Zeus incorporates within himself the generative principle, whether it is the hermaphroditic Phanes who generates the other gods by copulating with himself/herself or it the generative member of the oldest god, Ouranos.’¹⁶⁸ I am far from convinced that to swallow a phallus and to swallow the first born god are actually equivalent acts. Although the idea that the phallus represents a generative principle is an association clearly made by the commentator, the idea is weakly supported by the poem itself. Ouranos it should be noted in any interpretation is not the oldest god, but the son of Night (col 14.6). In the narrative he probably mates with his sister Gaia, who in turn gives birth to Kronos and the other gods. Later Kronos castrates Ouranos and from the severed phallus Aphrodite is likely born (col. 21. 5). In this respect, the phallus of Ouranos as a ‘principle of all generation’ has a partial claim at best. At worst it is an unclear metaphor, which although not literally responsible for the creation of everything, somehow stands in as a symbol for this creation.¹⁶⁹ It is also for these reasons a weak answer to the riddle of how Zeus achieves the status first, middle and last. On the other hand, Zeus achieving priority by swallowing the god Protogonos is simpler, more profound and, in general, a more satisfying answer to the Orphic riddle. It might help clarify my point by reflecting on Hesiod’s description of Zeus’ encompassment of Metis. In Chapter One I argued that Hesiod’s poem can also be read as a kind of riddle focusing on how

¹⁶⁵ See West (1983) 218; 239.

¹⁶⁶ Bernabé (2007) 114. Betegh (2004) 174.

¹⁶⁷ Betegh (2004) 174.

¹⁶⁸ Edmonds (2013) 170. See also Betegh (2004) who takes the phallus reading and notes ‘the same logic works also if we take it that Zeus swallows not Ouranos’ phallus but Phanes, as Phanes is customarily identified with Eros’ (174).

¹⁶⁹ There is a tendency to pass over the many obscurities entailed in eating ‘a principle of all generation.’ While Betegh and Bernabé do not say it directly, I think it is implicit in their arguments that the phallus is a principle of all generation not in a literal sense but a symbolic one. It is a part of Ouranos, a metonymy standing for power and generation. This may be the case and this understanding of the phallus has an early advocate in the commentator himself (col. 13.6-9). I am, however, sceptical if the poet, if a phallus was intended at all, made the leap from a generative power and the generation of all.

Zeus can achieve stable power in an unstable world. The solution involved swallowing Metis, the personification of cunning intelligence. This was not a metaphorical eating of female power, and but a literal eating of a goddess. The transparency of Hesiod's poetry also applies to that of Orpheus. In both cases a particular problem arises, how can Zeus succeed where others failed, and both poets utilise clear and unambiguous personifications to solve these problems.¹⁷⁰ In neither account does Zeus swallow a metaphor, he swallows a god who is simultaneously an attribute and a word. Metis is cunning intelligence and Zeus absorbs this goddess into himself and takes on this power/word. Similarly, in the Derveni poem, Zeus can become first, middle and last because he swallows a god who is simultaneously a personification/power/word, Protogonos or priority. In this reading Zeus is first not because he eats a symbol which represents a creative power, but because he eats priority itself.¹⁷¹

Zeus' answer to the problem of priority could be read in a number of ways. In one reading we might propose that Orpheus' Zeus, like Hesiod's is imposing a new relation, pantheism, on a previously chaotic cosmos. In other words, the unity of everything and good rule did not exist prior to this point and pantheism is a solution to a previously disordered world.¹⁷² The view is possible but is inconsistent with the pantheistic interpretation of the commentator, excludes the impressive role of Protogonos, and ignores Orpheus' transformation of the goddess Night. It also, as I will discuss in Chapter Four, downplays the fact that Zeus is not the final word in the Orphic narrative and like Protogonos, Zeus cedes kingship to a successor, Dionysus. The second reading of Zeus' ingestion of Protogonos, and the one I have attempted to argue, is that starting with Protogonos' birth from the Aither the cosmos was always pantheistic and Zeus by swallowing Protogonos is not changing this order so much as closing a circle. Proving such a point is not easy in such a fragmented text, but the reading is certainly suggested by the unusual description where Zeus not only swallows Protogonos, but with him all the gods, rivers, springs and everything else. The terminology is very specific and we must ask why eating a god, even one as important as Protogonos, entails eating everything else? A

¹⁷⁰ Once again the Orphic poem is very similar, even as it significantly transforms the meaning of Hesiod's text. In Orpheus and Hesiod both acts of swallowing a divinity occur on the cusp of Zeus' new reign and involve solving a problem in the universe. Indeed the scenes were so closely associated that Protogonos may even take on the name Metis (col. 15.6) at this point as occurs in later poems. See Betegh (2005) 113.

¹⁷¹ Like Hesiod, this act is simple but effective. Zeus can be born first, because he literally swallows priority, combining and internalising the god. Guthrie (1952) in his discussion of the *Rhapsodies* also sees the Orphic answer in such transparent terms. As he puts it 'there is no subtlety about the answer. Zeus swallows Phanes, and with Phanes, who is the first-born, and origin of all, he may be regarded as taking into himself all things that exist' (81). On the other hand, if the text refers to the phallus of the first born god, this idea and our understanding of the coherence of the Orphic narrative is lost. In this respect, scholars who wish to downplay later parallels and adopt the phallus reading have a good deal of work remaining. They cannot assume a neat equivalence between the phallus and creation but must explain why Zeus becomes first and why this act involves an internalisation of the cosmos. In both cases there is nothing obvious in these associations.

¹⁷² Bernabé (2007) 120.

clue is provided in the word προσφύω. West translates it as ‘become one with’ though notes that the meaning is more literally ‘grow towards.’¹⁷³ In this respect the poetic imagery of Zeus eating Protogonos is somewhat akin to a tree with diverse branches and roots growing backwards into a seed. That this idea is intended as more than a metaphor is made clear when the text specifically states that everything literally grows into Zeus until he becomes solitary (μοῦνος ἔγεντο). If everything grows into Zeus when he eats Protogonos, the implication is that everything was already connected because the whole cosmos first grew out of Protogonos.¹⁷⁴ Zeus then by eating Protogonos, is not so much eating something separate from himself, but is eating his own roots.¹⁷⁵ First, middle and last indeed. In this respect, Zeus as first, middle and last is not simply an honorific title but a novel and somewhat paradoxical expression of a cyclic cosmos where, as Heraclitus describes it, beginning and end are common (DK 22 B 48). A similar view is also expressed in the commentator’s reading (17.7-9) who describes a cyclic cosmos in relation to the passing and eternal return of the elements and the name Zeus:

καὶ τοῦτο αὐτῷ διατελεῖ ὄνομα ὄν,
μέχρι εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος τὰ νῦν ἑόντα συνεστάθη
ἐν ᾧπερ πρόσθεν ἑόντα ἠιωρεῖτο.

will continue to be his name until the things that are now have got set together in the same form in which they were floating as they were before.¹⁷⁶

The commentator discusses the cycle in terms of elemental configurations but to understand how the poet might express this idea in a linear theogony of births and successions, it might help to see the event in terms of the predestination or time traveller paradox. This is a popular science fiction plotline where the protagonist goes back in time, impregnates an ancestor and creates a singularity or a regression paradox. This paradox raises the strange idea that if the

¹⁷³ Note the related expression φύω in the *Rhapsodies* (OF 241). Προσφύω is more specific and West (1983) 88-9 illustrates its meaning with an example from the *Odyssey* (12.433) where Odysseus hangs from a tree. Sider (2014) on the other hand, citing the same Homeric example gives an almost opposite reading and argues that ‘the verb usually indicates close/tight attachment of something that still retains its dissecting nature’ (256).

¹⁷⁴ West agrees that the passage and vocabulary point in this direction but rejects the reading because ‘whatever Protogonos represents, there is no suggestion that he was identified with the world and with the totality of gods’ (89). However, since almost everything we know about the early Protogonos comes from this paragraph, should we not take this suggestion seriously? This idea it may be noted has a close parallel in the dialectic between the one and the many in Empedocles. Here too the Sphere’s unity and dissolution is described in terms of all things growing together and apart (DK 31 B 17). See Chapter Four.

¹⁷⁵ The imagery evokes the ouroboros or serpent who eats his own tail. There is no indication that the Derveni author had this specific image in mind. However, later Orphic poems frequently use snake imagery. Athenogoras’ summary in *Plea for the Christians* probably drawing on the Hieronymos theogony describes the scene in vivid serpentine imagery ‘or who will admit that Phanes himself, being a first-born god (for he it was that was produced from the egg), has the body or shape of a snake, or was swallowed by Zeus, so that Zeus might be infinite?’ (18.4) and later describes Zeus’ mating with Rhea in similar lines ‘and how he persecuted his mother Rhea when she refused to wed him, and, she becoming a she-snake, and he himself being changed into a snake, bound her with what is called the Heracleian knot, and mated with her – of which the rod of Hermes is a symbol; and again, how he violated his daughter Persephone, in this case also assuming the form of a snake, and became the father of Dionysus’ (18.3). Trans. Herrero de Jáuregui (2010).

¹⁷⁶ Trans. Betegh (2004). See Betegh (2004) 258-9 for a discussion of the cyclic cosmos.

person is to be born at all, it means he has already gone back in time and begat himself. Yet, to father himself in the first place he must have been born. In Orphic terms Zeus, the great-grandson by swallowing Protogonos and recreating the cosmos, actually becomes Protogonos, the first born god, and the circle is complete.¹⁷⁷ I am not proposing that the *Derveni Theogony* describes a literal act of time travel but that the regression paradox is a useful means of conceptualising the equally paradoxical idea of god eating his own roots and becoming first, middle and last. It also helps make sense of the repeated emphasis in the *Hymns* that many gods are really the same. Although in the *Derveni Theogony*, Zeus is not identical to Protogonos, later Orphic poetry does strongly suggest this reading. In an Orphic *Hymn to Zeus* recorded by Porphyry, Zeus' description during his creation closely echoes earlier depictions of Protogonos (OF 243) and Zeus is said to possess golden horns (χρύσεια κέρατα) and wings. Here Zeus, in many respects, does not simply eat the firstborn god, he becomes him and the poet hints that Protogonos and Zeus are not only the same through a mystic identification but through a kind of temporal loop where linear time gives way to a vision where future, past and present exist simultaneously.¹⁷⁸

Recreating the Cosmos

Following his ingestion of the cosmos, Zeus recreates everything afresh. The details, as usual, are sparse but there is a clear emphasis on the underlying order of the cosmos. The poem does not seem to recount the recreation of every single god in detail but the gods which are specifically mentioned appear to be strategically used as descriptions of Zeus' ordered creation. These include Aphrodite, Peitho and Harmonia. In the commentary these figures are said to be aspects of Zeus, parts 'of the same god' (col. 21.7) and extensions of his power. While there is no indication that this particular idea was expressed by the poet, a similar idea appears earlier when the commentator notes 'Orpheus calls this breath Moira' (col. 18.34).

¹⁷⁷ Bernabé (2002b) too describes the scene in time travelling terms: 'en avalant le phallus du Ciel, suivant les prophéties de la Nuit et de son père Kronos, Zeus remonte dans le temps, il remonte à l'origine et redémarre l'histoire de l'univers, en devenant la « nouvelle mère » de celui qui avait été l'aîné. Si le Ciel a bien été le premier né, Zeus, en quelque sorte, pour avoir introduit le phallus du Ciel dans son sein, devient lui-même l'ascendant de ce premier être, tout en ayant été le dernier-né (115). An extreme version, not unlike the *Derveni* poem, occupies a prominent place in the film *Predestination* (2014). The narrative depicts a woman who gives birth to a child with two sets of genitals and is raised as a girl, Jane. Jane later transitions to a man, John, and is hired as a special agent who prevents terrorist attacks by going back in time. It later turns out that Jane/John was chosen for this role precisely because of the unusual circumstances surrounding his/her birth. At some point John realises the story of his birth and having travelled back in time impregnates Jane. The child that is born is Jane/John.

¹⁷⁸ West (1983) denies that Zeus should be equated with Phanes in this scene because Zeus has 'two eyes, not four, and no other evident peculiarities; besides, he is called the son of Kronos' (240 n. 23). I do not think that the identification needs to be total to indicate that Zeus is being deliberately depicted with features associated with the first born god in the poem.

This may suggest that the poem itself identified Moria with the breath of Zeus. On the other hand, the line itself is not part of the poem and Betegh considers the idea to be the commentator's interpretation.¹⁷⁹ Even if we cannot say with any confidence that the identifications of gods as aspects of Zeus is part of the poem or the commentator's philosophy, this ambiguity is as much a part of the papyrus' fragmented condition as it is an expression of the blurry edges between Orphic poetry and Presocratic philosophy. The issue of identification aside, clearly the poet did not arbitrarily describe the divine triad Aphrodite, Persuasion and Harmony but chose these figures as expressions of Zeus' creative and orderly cosmos. This idea is strengthened by an obscure reference to the sun (25.10), the 'equal limbed' (ἰσομελής) moon (cols. 24.2) and the cosmic boundary Okeanos (col. 23.4), all of which reflect the ordered nature of the cosmos. Moreover cosmic order is again stressed when the poet tells us not simply that Zeus gave birth to these things, but that he contrived them (col. 25.14):

[αὐτ]ὰρ [ἐ]πεὶ δ[ὲ] πᾶν]τα Διὸς φρήν μή]σατ[ο ἔ]ργα.

When the mind of Zeus contrived all things.

Zeus's ordering of the cosmos in this passage is expressed by the word μήδομαι.¹⁸⁰ Leitao argues the term in a theogonical context means 'think into existence,' others consider it more generally 'contrive.'¹⁸¹ Either way the word, which is also found in later Orphic poetry (OF 155 I-III B),¹⁸² carries a certain amount of philosophical weight and the related term μητίομαι appears in a similar position in Parmenides' cosmology where it is said (DK 28 B 13):

πρώτιστον μὲν Ἔρωτα θεῶν μητίσατο πάντων.

First of all the gods, she [the goddess] contrived Eros.¹⁸³

That Parmenides uses this term to begin his cosmogony and Orpheus to end his is of little significance. Not only should we recall that in later poetry both Eros and Metis are names for Protogonos, but more importantly as Parmenides' goddess enigmatically states (DK 28 B 5):

ξυνὸν δέ μοι ἔστιν ὅπποθεν ἄρξωμαι τόθι γὰρ πάλιν ἵξομαι αὖθις.

It is the same to me, whence I begin, for there again shall I come back.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Betegh (2004) 200-1.

¹⁸⁰ The word is also used in reference to Zeus' contriving Okeanos (col. 23.4).

¹⁸¹ See Leitao (2012) 107; Burkert (2004) 95. Proclus uses the same term to describe Protogonos' creation (*in Plat. Tim.* 2.48.15, 2.282.11, 3.142.12; OF 155 I-III B): μήσατό δ' ἄλλην γαῖαν ἀπείριτον, ἣν τε Σελήνην ἀθάνατοι κλήζουσιν, ἐπιχθόνιοι δέ τε Μήνην, ἣ πόλλ' οὔρε' ἔχει, πόλλ' ἄστεα, πολλὰ μέλαθρα. 'And he contrived another boundless earth, which the immortals call Selene, and those who live upon the earth call it Mene (moon), which has many mountains, many cities, and many houses.' Trans. Meisner (2015). See West (1983) 210 n. 111.

¹⁸² OF 155= (I) Procl. *in Plat. Tim.* II 48.

¹⁸³ Trans. Graham (2010).

¹⁸⁴ Trans. Graham (2010).

How this very Heraclitean phrase applies to Parmenides' account is unclear.¹⁸⁵ It does, however, perfectly encapsulate Zeus' repetition of Protogonos' reign as the closing of a circle.

Conclusions

This chapter argued that Orpheus rewrote Hesiod's *Theogony* in pantheistic terms where the many named gods are really refractions of a single deity and divinely ordered cosmos. In the commentary this was expressed through etymologising divine names as aspects of a divine Mind/Air/God in a world based on flux. In the poem the same message was achieved through omissions and additions which transformed Hesiod's original narrative in monistic terms. These included placing a creator god Protogonos as the first principle in the cosmos, incestuous genealogies where the gods confusingly fold in upon themselves and a notion of War as a form of destructive progression. The model is most neatly expressed in Zeus' swallowing of Protogonos and his recreation of the cosmos. This act is not, however, the end of the narrative and where Hesiod is happy to end with Zeus, Orpheus' god continues to grow and develop. Just as Protogonos was not content to reign supreme in an ordered cosmos, following the kingship of Zeus, Orpheus introduces a new contender for the throne, Dionysus. The Derveni poem is based on the riddle of Zeus becoming first, middle and last. This phrase can be read in multiple ways and we might assume that first refers to Protogonos, last to Zeus and middle to the gods in-between. It is also possible to read it another way. Zeus is not last but the middle god and the illustrious last position is given to Dionysus, a god to whom even Zeus willingly cedes his sceptre. Dionysus is not only the most important of all Orphic gods, he is also the strangest god in Orphic mythology, the immortal who dies.

¹⁸⁵ For a discussion of this passage see Bicknell (1989).

CHAPTER FOUR

Mekone Revisited

In Chapter Two I argued that Hesiod's sacrifice at Mekone was a negotiation of destinies (μοῖραι) between men, animals and gods. This was the central pivot of Hesiod's narrative which integrated human beings, animals and gods into a cosmos based on hierarchal difference. The Orphic theogonies also discuss humanity's origins in terms of a sacrificial myth, describing how the Titans (Prometheus is not specified) come together and sacrifice the god Dionysus. Zeus, enraged at the hubris of the Titans, destroys them and from their ashes humanity is born. Although the sacrificial myth in its details and function is similar to Hesiod's Mekone, its meaning, I argue, is entirely transformed by Orpheus' pantheist assumptions. Developing upon my arguments in Chapter Three, this chapter will explore the ontology of the Orphic Mekone alongside its ritual implications. As the myth itself only survives in later texts, I begin with a discussion of the evidence for the episode in early Orphic poetry. I then turn to the competing ontological assumptions in Orpheus' and Hesiod's models. I argue that where Hesiod's Mekone assumes difference as its point of departure, Orpheus places the emphasis on ontological identity and continuity. This emphasis on identity I argue has major implications for understanding the Orphic views on human/divine relations and sacrifice, which shifts from denoting an act based on connecting opposites or affines, to denoting a ritual based on sharing amongst kin.

The Murder of a God

In Mekone, Zeus and Prometheus decide mankind's fate through a division of the pieces/destinies of an animal victim. The Orphic Mekone is a much stranger tale. Here, Zeus is not the last word in the divine succession. Rather he willingly cedes his kingship to his son Dionysus (OF 296–300).¹ The reign of the child-king is, however, short lived. Lured by the Titans with toys and a mirror, the Titans kill, cook and eat Dionysus (OF 312–13).² Zeus in retaliation strikes the Titans with a thunderbolt and from their remains mankind is born (OF 318; 320).³ It might be noted that rather than cite a single passage from a surviving poem, I have here juxtaposed a number of fragments into a coherent narrative. This is unfortunately representative of the surviving evidence and while many sources document the awesome

¹ OF 296= Procl. in Plat. Tim. I 408; OF 297= Procl. Theol. Plat. 5; OF 298= Tzet. Ex. II. p. 26, 1; OF 299= Procl. in Plat. Cratyl. 55; OF 300= Procl. in Plat. Tim. III 316.

² OF 312= Clem. Alex. Protr. 2, 18, 1; OF 313= Plut. De esu earn. I 7.

³ OF 318= Clem. Alex. Protr. 2, 18, 2; OF 320= Olympiodor. in Plat. Phaed. 1, 3. For this reconstruction see Graf and Johnston (2007) 67.

power of Protogonos and Zeus, Dionysus' reign, much like the god himself, is one pieced together from stray fragments. Nevertheless, an illustrious lineage of scholars from Nilsson to Detienne argues that Dionysus' encounter with the Titans is the 'linchpin' of the Orphic cosmology and the key to understanding Orpheus' rewriting of Hesiod's *Theogony*.⁴ On the other hand, an equally important lineage including Linforth and Edmonds deny the central role and even the existence of this myth.⁵ This is not to say that every detail is in doubt; even hardened sceptics accept that at some point Dionysus was killed. The devil, however, is in the detail and resolving the when, where and how, make Dionysus' dismemberment one of antiquity's most fascinating murder mysteries. The sources for the myth are few and far between and in connecting these disparate threads the historian frequently finds himself dealing with misleading witnesses and cover-ups. Some sources provide incongruent and even misleading details; others are reluctant to specify even what they know.⁶ Diodorus (3.62.6-8), one of the first to discuss the myth in any detail, is typical in this regard:

παραδεδωκότων δὲ τῶν μυθογράφων καὶ τρίτην γένεσιν, καθ' ἣν φασὶ τὸν θεὸν ἐκ Διὸς καὶ Δήμητρος τεκνωθέντα διασπασθῆναι μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν γηγενῶν καὶ καθεψηθῆναι, πάλιν δ' ὑπὸ τῆς Δήμητρος τῶν μελῶν συναρμοσθέντων ἐξ ἀρχῆς νέον γεννηθῆναι, εἰς φυσικὰς τινας αἰτίας μετάγουσι τοὺς τοιούτους λόγους... σύμφωνα δὲ τούτοις εἶναι τὰ τε δηλούμενα διὰ τῶν Ὀρφικῶν ποιημάτων καὶ τὰ παρεισαγόμενα κατὰ τὰς τελετάς, περὶ ὧν οὐ θέμις τοῖς ἀμυήτοις ἱστορεῖν τὰ κατὰ μέρος.

And though the writers of myths have handed down the account of a third birth as well, at which, as they say, the Sons of Gaia tore to pieces the god, who was a son of Zeus and Demeter, and boiled him, but his members were brought together again by Demeter and he experienced a new birth as if for the first time, such accounts as this they trace back to certain causes found in nature... And with these stories the teachings agree which are set forth in the Orphic poems and are introduced into their rites, but it is not lawful to recount them in detail to the uninitiated.⁷

The bare bones of the myth are there, yet Diodorus out of piety refuses to divulge the myth in its entirety. If the Greeks were reluctant to speak about such matters, they failed to anticipate the desecration of their last resting places and from the 19th century until the present day archaeologists continue to unearth mysterious gold plates dating between the fifth century BC and second century AD describing underworld journeys and divine kinship. A South Italian plate (L 10b; OF 490) from the fourth century reads:

Ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρθῶν καθαρά, χθονίων βασιλεῦσα,

⁴ Major interpretations taking this view include Nilsson (1935); Guthrie (1993 [1952]), Detienne (1979); Alderink (1981); Parker (1995), Bernabé (2002a); Graf and Johnston (2007).

⁵ Linforth (1941); Edmonds (2013).

⁶ Burkert (1985) notes 'one should therefore concede that the myth of the dismemberment of Dionysus is relatively old and well known among the Greeks but was consciously kept secret as a doctrine of the mysteries' (298). Edmonds (2013) 299 is critical of the ancient silence and compares it to a modern conspiracy theory. I find this attitude puzzling as ancient silence on the mysteries is clearly a real issue appearing as early as Herodotus (2.171) in his discussion of Egyptian rites. The idea of Orphic secrecy is evident from the opening formula of the *Derveni Theogony* ordering the uninitiated to 'put doors to their ears' (col 7.9), perhaps Plato (*Phd.* 62b) and certainly Diodorus (3.62.8). The secrecy is also clear from Clement of Alexandria's wish to divulge the Bacchic mysteries in the *Protrepticus* (2.12.1–2–23.1).

⁷ Trans. Oldfather (1935).

Εὐκλεῖς {υα} καὶ Εὐβοῦλεῦ καὶ θεοὶ {καὶ} ὅσοι δαίμονες ἄλλοι
καὶ γὰρ ἐγγόνων ὑμῶν γένος εὐχομαί ὄλβιον εἶναι {ὄλβιο}
ποιόντων {δ'} ἀνταπέτευσ' ἔργων ἔνεκ' οὐ τι δικαίων.
εἴτε με Μοῖρα ἐδάμασσε' εἴτε ἀστροπῆτα {κη} κεραυνῶν.
νῦν δὲ ἐκέτις ἦκω {ικω} παρὰ ἀγνὴν Φερσεφόνειαν,
ὥς {λ} με πρόφρων πέ[μ]ψῃ {μ} ἔδρας ἐς εὐαγέων.

I come pure from the pure, Queen of the Chthonian Ones,
Eucles and Euboleus and other gods – as many daimones (as do
exist).

For I also claim to be of your happy race.

I have paid the penalty for unrighteous deeds.

Either Moira overcame me or the star-flinger with lightning.

Now I come, come as a suppliant (feminine) to Persephone,

So that she may kindly send me to the seats of the pure.⁸

Italian polymath, Comparetti, drawing on sources as diverse as Pindar (Fr. 133) and the Platonist, Olympiodorus (OF 220 K),⁹ concluded that the events described in this confusing gold plate were Orphic.¹⁰ This is a remarkable conclusion considering that the six gold plates from which Comparetti made this deduction say absolutely nothing about Orpheus, the Titans or Dionysus. Nor do any of the extant Classical sources directly refer to this event. As noted, the dismemberment narrative is vaguely referred to in the Hellenistic period by sources such as Diodorus. However, many of the crucial details, including the birth of mankind and inherited guilt are absent. Indeed the necessary material required for Comparetti's interpretation comes almost entirely from Platonist sources dating from over a millennium later.¹¹ Despite his reliance on late material, Comparetti's argument was quickly adopted by a generation of scholars who not only agreed that the Orphic dismemberment was referred to in the gold plates but that it was the central pivot on which the Orphic theogonical narrative rotated.¹² Not everyone was convinced by Comparetti's elegant but fragile reconstruction. Wilamowitz and later Linforth attempted to shatter this image arguing that Comparetti's Orphic myth simply assumed the object of its study.¹³ In other words, the gold plates could be interpreted in terms of Dionysus' murder, but the vague allusions only become obvious when viewed through an already assumed Platonist framework. Linforth thus rejected the gold plates as Orphic and inaugurated a general attitude of scepticism which set the tone for the following forty or so years.¹⁴

⁸ Trans. Graf and Johnston (2007).

⁹ OF 220 = (I) Olympiod. in *Plat. Phaed* 1.3.

¹⁰ Comparetti (1882).

¹¹ Rather than rigidly separating early, middle and late Platonism, I prefer the more general term Platonists. See Remes (2014) 2-5 for a discussion.

¹² Harrison (1903); Rohde (1898); Nilsson (1935); Guthrie (1952).

¹³ Wilamowitz (1931/1932); Linforth (1941).

¹⁴ For more on the history of Orphic scholarship see Graf and Johnston (2007) 50-65; Edmonds (2011) 3-14.

Dionysus, however, has a talent for resurrection and soon after Linforth laid him to rest, new evidence reinvigorated the ancient murder case. The most impressive finds include the bone plaques from Olbia, featuring the self designation Orphikoi and perhaps Dionysus (tab. A) as early as the fifth century BC. The Derveni Papyrus, though it omits the key details, provided a clear link between the late Orphic theogonies and those of the Archaic period. Alongside these finds a stream of impressive gold plates were discovered, some of which offered striking confirmation of Comperetti's hypothesis. A fifth century plate from Hipponium (L1; OF 474) referring to the deceased as among the 'initiates and bacchoi' (μύσται καὶ βάχχοι), that is as members of the Dionysiac mysteries, provides the pivotal cultic context required for interpreting the plates. Another plate from Pelinna (L7a-b; OF 485-6) describes how the deceased boldly declares 'tell Persephone that Bacchus (Dionysus) himself released you' (εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόναι σ' ὅτι Β<άκ>χιος αὐτός ἐλυσε).¹⁵ With these new finds the older scepticism receded somewhat. Many scholars continue to speak of the 'so called Orphics' in inverted commas, but an increasing number now agree that Comperetti was for the most part correct in his interpretation.¹⁶ A notable exception to this is Edmonds who maintains that in spite of the new finds, the supposedly central Orphic narrative is a fiction 'not told until 1879.'¹⁷ Edmonds' position has not been widely adopted among Orphic scholars. Nevertheless, beneath his at times polemical rhetoric, Edmonds indeed exposes some key weaknesses in the Orphic reconstruction which are unaddressed by his critics. Bernabé, for example, has amassed all the possible mythic referents found in the ancient sources and attempted to construct a paradigm myth from which all other versions diverge.¹⁸ The results are impressive and there is no longer any doubt that a version of the myth can be dated to at least the fourth century BC and if we follow Pausanias (8.37.5) to the compilations of Onomakritas in the fifth or sixth century BC.¹⁹ However, Edmonds' criticism of the dismemberment myth is not a question of its antiquity, as much as of its consistency and place in rituals associated with the name Orpheus. The sources support that the Titans killed Dionysus. They do not tell us whether this was the linchpin of Orphism and culmination of their poetical narratives.²⁰ They do not tell us how to read the ambiguous texts of the gold

¹⁵ For the Orphic origin of the plates and a discussion of the evidence see Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) 68-101.

¹⁶ i.e. Parker (1995); Bernabé (2002); Graf and Johnston (2007).

¹⁷ Edmonds (1999) 66. Edmonds' position has been repeatedly refined and culminates in (2013).

¹⁸ The differences result from their methodological assumptions. Bernabé (2002a) argues 'le travail du spécialiste consiste à reconstituer le paradigme du mythe' (404). Edmonds (2013) 297 questions the existence of such a paradigm and argues the myth exists only in variations.

¹⁹ Philodemus (OF 59 I-II) discusses Euphorion's (275BC) discussion of the myth. For the earliest clear reference see Henrichs (2011).

²⁰ Meisner (2015) offers a fair discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of Edmonds' work concluding in partial agreement noting 'despite the claim that the anthropogony is a lynch pin by both Orphic adherents and

plates. And most importantly, as Edmonds has repeatedly pointed out, they are unclear on the two key details which are central to modern interpretations, humanity's Titanic birth or the anthropogony and inherited guilt.²¹ Filling lacunae is arguably the historian's job, yet if someone chooses to make these details the linchpin of the myth they must explain why they do so. This arguably has not been done and of the extant fragments collected by Bernabé to support the anthropogony many are little more than passing references and are rightly questioned by Edmonds.²² This does not mean that the event was not part of an ancient Orphic myth, but that the historian must explain why he favours some sources and downplays others which either omit these crucial details or offer incompatible variants of the myth.²³ In other words, Edmonds' challenge remains valid.

Tracing the Myth through the Platonists

The Orphic sources on the dismemberment myth are few, unclear and show a number of inconsistencies. This, to some degree, is to be expected. Myths vary. Hesiod presents multiple variations within a single telling and the mythical treatment of the poets and tragedians are even more varied. Orphic myth is no exception and although there are broad similarities, none of the major theogonies are entirely consistent. We should not, however, exaggerate these variations and the close overlaps between the narratives on Zeus in the *Derveni Theogony* and the *Rhapsodies* (as well as the surviving hymns to Zeus) show that the core details were maintained for over a millennium.²⁴ We cannot be so certain when it comes to Dionysus and the extant passages of the *Derveni papyrus* problematically do not mention the dismemberment at all. Nor does any other early Orphic source. The gold plates may allude to this myth, but these allusions, as pointed out, only emerge once we have assumed the existence of the myth. In reconstructing this supposedly central myth in early Orphism we are

critics, I propose no such details are necessary. I attempt to explain how the myth fits into the Rhapsodic narrative, so that then we might see how the *Rhapsodies* as a whole fit into Orphism. From this perspective, the story of Dionysus being killed by the Titans is indeed one of the most important episodes of the Rhapsodic narrative, but it might not be the central point; rather, it could be read as the last of a series of episodes that culminate in Zeus securing his royal power' (350).

²¹ Edmonds' (2013) sceptical attitude is more precisely targeted at what he calls the four elements which he argues define the modern myth. These are 'the dismemberment of Dionysus Zagreus by the Titans, the punishment of the Titans by Zeus, the generation of human beings from the ashes of the lightning-blasted Titans, and the burden of guilt that human beings inherited from their Titanic ancestors because of this original sin' (297).

²² Bernabé (2002a). Edmonds (2013) 360-74 rightly points out some problems or key narrative discrepancies with a number of these references.

²³ Diodorus (3.62; 5.75.4) and Clement (*Protr.* 2.12.1–2-23.1) Hyginus (*Fab.* 167) omit the crucial details in his short summaries.

²⁴ In this respect I can find very little reason for following Edmonds (2013) 148-59 and viewing Orphic poetry in analogy with Sibylline Oracles as a collection of poems lacking a central narrative.

thus entirely reliant on scattered claims from later summaries and a mass of circumstantial details. I will look at the early circumstantial evidence shortly. Prior to this we need to evaluate the consistency of the late sources which, if we leave out minor discrepancies, can be broadly divided into two key variant readings. Variant One discusses how Dionysus is killed, dismembered and revived. Variant Two adds the detail that mankind is born from the remains of the Titans and Dionysus. Although Variant Two dominates modern reconstructions, many earlier sources are closer to Variant One and the majority which follow Variant Two are late and limited to the Platonic tradition. Apart from these two key variants, a number of sources give inconsistent details which cannot be reconciled with either narrative. Some of these are relatively minor, others major. The theogony in the *Orphic Argonautica* (17-20; OF 320v), for example, starting with Protogonos-Phanes and including the anthropogony nearly epitomises within a few lines the entire *Rhapsodies*. However, there is one crucial anomaly, the Giants, not the Titans are said to be guilty of Dionysus' murder.²⁵ This is a contradiction pure and simple. The majority are not so problematic and simply suffer from a lack of clarity. When Julian (*Ep.* 89b107) refers to the creation of men from the shedding of divine blood he may be referring to the myth, but prior to the late Platonist evidence, the passage is read through a glass darkly. Given the lack of detail and clarity in the early sources, it is not surprising that many scholars have turned to the fuller accounts given by the late Platonists and in particular sixth century writers such as Olympiodorus and Damascius. The late date of these sources is considered by Edmonds to be a critical weakness in the reconstruction of the myth and certainly a millennium is a long time. The date of a text, however, is of secondary importance to its reliability. Sources such Hyginus' *Fabulae* or Nonnus' *Dionysica* clearly discuss Orphic material, but as literary texts they make no pretence to be authentic copies and have no reason to remain faithful to their source material. Writers such as Clement knew Orphic sources well, yet as a Christian intent on exposing the ancient mysteries, he is evidently hostile towards to them.²⁶ The Platonic sources are on the whole more reliable and instead of listing all the possible sources for the myth, I wish to interrogate the reliability and consistency of the myth within the Platonist tradition and use this as a basis for discussing the early Orphic evidence. Perhaps the key strength of the Platonists as sources on Orphism is that they preserves a substantial number of quotations from the poems themselves. These quotations are demonstrably older than their commentaries and Damascius' citations from the *Rhapsodies*, for example, may date as early as the first century BC. Similarly, the Platonists repeatedly

²⁵ Bernabé argues the reference to γίγαντες should be read as 'the earth born' (see Diodorus 3.62.8) and hence a reference to the Titans not the Giants. This is a possible but not an intuitive reading.

²⁶ Herrero (2010) 355 suggests that Clement as a Christian was not comfortable describing a pagan myth which included eating a god and his miraculous resurrection.

cross reference each other and Damascius bolsters his interpretation of the myth with references to the fourth century BC philosopher Xenokrates. Apart from having access to the Orphic sources and earlier philosophical texts, the Platonists are also very conscientious about narrative contexts. Meisner points out that they ‘maintained a coherence in which every episode was connected to the grander narrative structure and to their overall exegetical system.’²⁷ In other words, for writers like Damascius, the myth of Dionysus does not appear as an isolated event, as it does in the majority of non-Platonist sources, but as part of a royal succession of divine kings starting with Protogonos and ending with Dionysus. This does not mean that the Platonists are problem free. The sources apart from being late, show biases and often impose unusual interpretations on the mythic material. Nevertheless, among the scattered references from literary and polemical Christian authors, the Platonists show a clear reverence for the authority of the ancient poet and remain if examined critically the most solid tradition on which to interpret and reconstruct the early myth.

This discussion of the Platonist sources inevitably begins with the sixth century AD philosopher, Olympiodorus, who, despite much criticism, remains the most lucid formulation of the Orphic myth (OF 220):²⁸

παρὰ τῷ Ὀρφεὶ τέσσαρες βασιλεῖαι παραδίδονται. πρώτη μὲν ἡ τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ, ἣν ὁ Κρόνος διεδέξατο ἐκτεμὼν τὰ αἰδοῖα τοῦ πατρός· μετὰ δὲ τὸν Κρόνον ὁ Ζεὺς ἐβασίλευσεν καταταρταρώσας τὸν πατέρα· εἶτα τὸν Δία διεδέξατο ὁ Διόνυσος, ὃν φασὶ κατ’ ἐπιβουλὴν τῆς Ἥρας τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν Τιτᾶνας σπαράττειν καὶ τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτοῦ ἀπογεύεσθαι. καὶ τούτους ὀργισθεὶς ὁ Ζεὺς ἐκεραύνωσε, καὶ ἐκ τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν ἀτμῶν τῶν ἀναδοθέντων ἐξ αὐτῶν ὕλης γενομένης γενέσθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. οὐ δεῖ οὖν ἐξάγειν ἡμᾶς ἑαυτούς, οὐχ ὅτι, ὥς δοκεῖ λέγειν ἡ λέξις, διότι ἐν τινὶ δεσμῷ ἐσμεν τῷ σώματι (τοῦτο γὰρ δῆλόν ἐστι, καὶ οὐκ ἂν τοῦτο ἀπόρητον ἔλεγεν), ἀλλ’ ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἐξάγειν ἡμᾶς ἑαυτούς ὥς τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν Διονυσιακοῦ ὄντος· μέρος γὰρ αὐτοῦ ἐσμεν, εἴ γε ἐκ τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν Τιτάνων συγκεῖμεθα γευσαμένων τῶν σαρκῶν τούτου.

According to Orpheus there were four cosmic reigns. First was the reign of Uranus, then Cronus received the kingship, having cut off his father’s genitals. Zeus ruled after Cronus, having cast his father into Tartarus. Next, Dionysus succeeded Zeus. They say that through Hera’s treachery, the Titans who were around Dionysus tore him to pieces and tasted his flesh. And Zeus, being angry at this, struck the Titans with thunderbolts, and from the soot of the vapours that arose from [the incinerated Titans] came the matter from which humanity came into existence. Therefore, we must not commit suicide – not because, as [Socrates] seems to say, we are in our body as if in a prison, since that is obvious and [Socrates] would not call such an idea secret, but rather because our bodies are Dionysiac. We are, indeed, part of Dionysus if we are composed from the soot of the Titans who tasted Dionysus’ flesh.²⁹

Olympiodorus’ summary does not specify its source. The most likely basis of his account is what Damascius calls the standard narrative of the time, the *Rhapsodies*. However, Olympiodorus, showing himself perfectly capable of omitting details if it suits his interpretational aims, deviates from this model, providing only four reigns in place of the

²⁷ Meisner (2015) 401.

²⁸ OF 220 = Olympiodorus *In Phaed.* I.3 = OF 220K = 227iv + 299vii + 304i + 313ii + 318iii + 320iB).

²⁹ Trans. Graf and Johnston (2007) modified.

usual six.³⁰ Brisson argues that this is part of his alchemical orientation, which in turn may be related to his idiosyncratic interpretation, or the secret reading, of the myth which states that our bodies are in part Dionysiac.³¹ I will discuss the composition of the Orphic self later; at present it is sufficient to note that this is perhaps Olympiodorus' most original deviation and that the detail does not appear in any other source.³² In this respect, Edmonds is absolutely correct that the mythic and interpretational discrepancies found in this key source make it a problematic foundation for Orphic knowledge.³³ Contrary to Edmonds' insistence on the importance of Olympiodorus' testimony in the reconstruction of the myth, the text is arguably of secondary importance to that of Damascius.³⁴ The point may seem slight. Damascius wrote only slightly earlier than Olympiodorus and the texts have a good deal in common. Damascius, however, has the advantage of a proven knowledge of the Orphic poetic cannon. His generous quotations from the *Rhapsodies* have already been shown to be consistent with events described in the Derveni papyrus and we have no reason to assume his testimony is any less accurate here. Damascius' exposition of the myth appears in a series of questions and answers. For example, in I. 5 he asks 'why are the Titans said to plot against Dionysus?' and 'in what sense are men created from the fragments of the Titans?' In this admittedly rather diffuse telling, we can nonetheless assemble all the key details of the Orphic myth:

- i) Zeus appoints Dionysus as the new King (I.4)
- ii) The Titans plot against Dionysus and dismember him (I.4)
- iii) The Titans are punished by Zeus (I.6)³⁵
- iv) Humans are created from the fragments of the Titans (I.8)³⁶

³⁰ The otherwise sceptical Edmonds (2013) 380 does not consider this evidence of a variation in the myth but a distortion by Olympiodorus of his source material. Omission, however, is not the same as an addition and there is no reason to think that Olympiodorus made up the details about the anthropogony or how such an easily refutable fiction would lend credence to his alchemical purposes.

³¹ Brisson (1992) 494-5.

³² Gertz (2011) notes 'it is certainly striking that Olympiodorus is prepared to speak of our 'Dionysiac' bodies, when Neoplatonists such as Proclus and Damascius would usually place a divine element in the soul alone' (42 n. 41).

³³ For Edmonds (1999) this places the history of the myth on rather shaky grounds as 'no other ancient author connects the murder of Dionysos and the creation of mankind' (40). Edmonds also claims that the passage does not refer to guilt. While this detail is not mentioned specifically by Olympiodorus in his exegesis, it does, however, remain a central part of the Plato passage on which he is commenting. Olympiodorus offers an elaboration of this passage but he accepts Plato's basic reading as obvious. This means he also includes guilt within his reading.

³⁴ Bernabé (2002) 406.

³⁵ There are three punishments listed in the passage in relation to the Titans' crime (I.7). Edmonds (2013) focuses on this ambiguity and argues that 'Damascius associates the creation of humans not with the first punishment, lightening, but with the last, the imprisonment in Tartaros' (373). This is unclear. The Greek πρὸς τὸ κοιλότερον 'hollow regions' could refer to Tartaros, earth or even human life. The passage in general is far from crystalline and should therefore be read in terms of the work as a whole. Edmonds' reading, apart from focusing on an ambiguous passage, ignores the fact that Damascius (I 8) states in very specific terms that man is constructed from the fragments of the Titans.

³⁶ Damascius does not say ashes here but 'fragments' (κλάσμα).

v) Humans can be liberated through Dionysus (I.11).

Apart from these details Damascius at times confirms his summary with quotes from the original poems. In his discussion of Dionysus' coronation, for example, he quotes a passage where Zeus addresses the gods (I 4; OF 299): 'listen, gods, this (Dionysus) is the king I give you' (κλῦτε, θεοί- τόνδ' ὕμιν ἐγὼ βασιλῆα τίθημι). This may seem slight but the passage indicates that like Olympiodorus, Damascius contextualises the myth within a larger theogonic narrative, including Zeus and Dionysus. Damascius too cites material to confirm the Orphic idea that mortal rites are performed to Dionysus as expiation for ancestral guilt (I.11: OF 350): 'celebrate rites and seeking deliverance from their forebears' sins' (οργιά τ' ἐκτελέσουσι λύσιν προγόνων ἀθεμίστων μαιόμενοι). Damascius not only quotes from the poem, his work is a stage within a more extensive history of Platonic scholarship focusing on interpreting Plato's *Phaedo* and in particular the secret logos discussed in 62b where the soul is said to be imprisoned in the body.³⁷ Damascius (I.9) describes the prison in terms of an inner psychological struggle between the Titanic and Dionysiac states of the soul:

Ὅτι ἡ Τιτανικὴ ζωὴ ἀλογός ἐστιν, ὅφ' ἥς ἡ λογικὴ σπαράττεται. Κάλλιον δὲ πανταχοῦ ποιεῖν αὐτήν, ἀπὸ θεῶν γε ἀρχομένην τῶν Τιτάνων· καὶ τοίνυν τῆς λογικῆς τὸ δοκοῦν αὐτεξούσιον καὶ οἷον ἑαυτοῦ βουλόμενον εἶναι μόνου, οὔτε δὲ τῶν κρειττόνων οὔτε τῶν χειρόνων, τοῦτο ἡμῖν οἱ Τιτάνες ἐμποιοῦσιν, καθ' ὃ καὶ τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν Διόνυσον διασπῶμεν, παραθραύοντες ἡμῶν τὸ ὁμοφυῆς εἶδος καὶ οἷον κοινωνικὸν πρὸς τὰ κρείττω καὶ ἥττω. οὕτω δὲ ἔχοντες Τιτάνες ἐσμεν· ὅταν δὲ εἰς ἐκεῖνο συμβῶμεν, Διόνυσοι γινόμεθα τετελειωμένοι ἀτεχνῶς.

The Titanic mode of life is the irrational mode, by which rational life is torn asunder: it is better to acknowledge its existence everywhere, since in any case at its sources there are gods, the Titans; then also on the plane of rational life, this apparent self-determination, which seems to aim at belonging to itself alone and neither to superior nor to the inferior, is wrought in us by the Titans; through it we tear asunder the Dionysus in ourselves, breaking up the natural continuity of our being and our partnership, so to speak, with superior and inferior. While in this condition, we are Titans; but when we recover that lost unity, we become Dionysus and we attain what can truly be called completeness.³⁸

For my argument, tracing the roots of this interpretation is as important as tracing the roots of the myth. Damascius explicitly situates his position against a long tradition of Platonic scholars including Paterius and the Pythagorean Numenius, who do not interpret Plato's doctrine in terms of the myth, and alongside Porphyry's commentary and, most importantly, Plato's student Xenokrates, who do. Alongside Porphyry and Xenokrates, we can also include Olympiodorus (*Ph.*7.10) who elsewhere in his commentary makes a similar interpretation referring to Apollo's assembly of Dionysus' fragments as a transition from 'the Titanic life to

³⁷ Pl. *Ph.* 62b: οὐ μέντοι ἀλλ' ἴσως γ' ἔχει τινὰ λόγον. ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐν ἀπορρήτοις λεγόμενος περὶ αὐτῶν λόγος, ὡς ἐν τινι φρουρᾷ ἐσμεν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ οὐ δεῖ δὴ ἑαυτὸν ἐκ ταύτης λύειν οὐδ' ἀποδιδράσκειν, μέγας τέ τις μοι φαίνεται καὶ οὐ ῥάδιος διδεῖν. 'but perhaps there is some reason in it. Now the doctrine that is taught in secret about this matter, that we men are in a kind of prison and must not set ourselves free or run away, seems to me to be weighty and not easy to understand.' Trans. Fowler (1966) modified.

³⁸ Trans. Westerink (1976).

unitary life.’ In this respect, Damascius’ reading was already commonplace by the late sixth century and rather than invent a new myth as Edmonds suggests for Olympiodorus, Damascius appears to simply expound a well known myth and a well known interpretation. How many Platonists discuss this myth and interpretation is not clear. Damascius does not mention Proclus, whose commentary on the *Phaedo* is lost,³⁹ yet it would not be surprising if Proclus also discussed Plato’s myth in these terms and in his surviving texts he presents two versions of the Orphic anthropogony.⁴⁰ The idea of the myth as an allegory for the soul’s imprisonment in the body is also associated with Plotinus himself who makes a passing reference to Dionysus’ gaze in the mirror as an allegory for the descent of the soul (*Enneads* 4.3.12). The reference is concise to be sure, but like Damascius’ reference to ‘tearing apart the Dionysus in oneself’ it is one repeated and elaborated by his later students including Damascius and Olympiodorus.⁴¹ Indeed, that Plotinus can make such a reference in passing suggests that the link between Dionysus’ dismemberment and the fall of the soul was already well established by this period. Apart from the Platonists, another figure who associates the body as prison motif and the Titanic dismemberment is Plutarch. Whether we should call Plutarch a Platonist is debated, but at the very least we can say that he closely engaged with earlier Platonists such as Xenokrates and that his work shows a good deal of Platonist influence.⁴² In his treatise *On Eating Meat*, (996b-c) he discusses the Orphic myth alongside some unpreserved lines from Empedocles, in a broadly Platonic model:

ἀλληγορεῖ γὰρ ἐνταῦθα τὰς ψυχάς, ὅτι φόνων καὶ βρώσεως σαρκῶν καὶ ἀλληλοφαγίας δίκην τίνουσαι σώμασι θνητοῖς ἐνδέδεται. καίτοι δοκεῖ παλαιότερος οὗτος ὁ λόγος εἶναι· τὰ γὰρ δὴ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον μεμνημένα πάθη τοῦ διαμελισμοῦ καὶ τὰ Τιτάνων ἐπ’ αὐτὸν τολμήματα, κολάσεις τε τούτων καὶ κεραυνώσεις γευσσάμενων τοῦ φόνου, ἡνιγμένος ἐστὶ εἰς τὴν παλιγγενεσίαν· τὸ γὰρ ἐν ἡμῖν ἄλογον καὶ ἄτακτον καὶ βίαιον οὐ θεῖον ἀλλὰ δαιμονικὸν ὃν οἱ παλαιοὶ Τιτᾶνας ὠνόμασαν, καὶ τοῦτ’ ἐστὶ κολαζομένους καὶ δίκην δίδοντας.

By these lines he [Empedocles] means, though he does not say so directly, that human souls are imprisoned in mortal bodies as a punishment for murder, the eating of animal flesh, and cannibalism. This doctrine, however, seems to be even older, for the stories told about the sufferings and dismemberment of Dionysus and the outrageous assaults of the Titans upon him, and their punishment and blasting by thunderbolt after they had tasted his blood — all this is a myth which in its inner meaning has to do with rebirth. For that faculty in us which is unreasonable and disordered and violent, and does not come from the gods, but from evil spirits, the ancients gave the name Titans, that is to say, those that are punished and subjected to correction.⁴³

³⁹ For the Platonic commentaries on the *Phaedo* see Gertz (2011).

⁴⁰ Procl. in *Plat. Remp.* II, 338, lls. Kroll (T 3). Procl. in *Plat. Remp.* 11,74, 26 Kroll (T 4). See also Procl. in *Plat. Cratyl.* 77, 24 Pasquali (T 6). Discussed and listed in Bernabé (2002a) 407. One of Proclus’ accounts, casting the Orphic narrative in a Hesiodic mould, discusses it in terms of a succession of races. This is understandably at variance with the other tellings, though should not be reason to dismiss it outright. The important point is that man’s Titanic origins were known to Proclus.

⁴¹ Plotinus’ reference is not from a commentary on the *Phaedo*, however it may be drawn from one. Indeed the same detail appears in Damascius’ in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.129 (81 Westerink) (OF 309 II B = OF 209 K); See also Proclus in *Plat. Tim.* 2.80.19 Diehl (OF 309 IV B = OF 209 K). See Meisner (2015) 388-9.

⁴² Plutarch also discusses the myth in Heraclitean and Orphic terms.

⁴³ Trans. Cherniss and Helmbold (1957).

Although Plutarch does not specifically link his reading to the *Phaedo*, the language recalls the dialogue.⁴⁴ The passage also lists all of the key events of the Variant Two myth, including the murder, eating, punishment and anthropogony. Edmonds, however, argues that the anthropogony does not appear as a mythic detail, but rather as an allegorical explanation. While it is true that the myth is said only to enigmatically refer to rebirth and the soul's imprisonment in the body, two issues must be addressed. The first is that the reference to a punishment implicates mankind in these events.⁴⁵ Secondly, if the myth only allegorically refers to rebirth, as Edmonds argues, we still need to address what the myth itself actually says. Plutarch states, echoing the terminology of Olympiodorus and Damascius, that the ancients referred to the unreasonable aspect in us as the Titans. If, for Plutarch the Titans 'in us' (ἐν ἡμῖν) refers to an inner state, i.e. a psychological division like that described by the Platonists, does it follow that the ancients understand the Titans in us literally, i.e. that mankind has a literal part of the Titans in us? Alongside this passage we should also briefly mention Plutarch's lengthy study of the similar dismemberment myth of Osiris. Osiris for Plutarch and many other Greeks was the Egyptian Dionysus.⁴⁶ It is not possible to summarise Plutarch's wide ranging discussion but a key idea in the treatise is that Osiris' story is an allegorical tale about our inner selves. Osiris is the rational element and his murderer Set/Typhon is described as the irrational and revealingly the Titanic (τιτανικὸν) element in us (371b). In this respect Plutarch's discussions essentially repeats the Platonist view which understands the event as an allegory for the soul, where the Titanic stands for the disrupted and the Dionysian for the unified. It is impossible to state with any certainty the origins of Plutarch's interpretation but given his frequent citations elsewhere, it would not be surprising if the idea was in part taken from Xenokrates' musing on the *Phaedo*.⁴⁷

Before turning to Xenokrates himself, it is worth reflecting on another probably Platonic inspired account from a near contemporary of Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom (30.10):

⁴⁴ The terminology is slightly different but the idea of the imprisonment in terms of ἐνδέω appears elsewhere in the *Phaedo* in the context of the soul being bound to the body (81e; 92a). However, Plutarch's terminology is quite loose and also makes sense in relation to Pythagorean metempsychosis. See Diogenes Laertius (8.1.14). When we consider the interpretation of the myth alongside the longer tradition, the stress on paying a penalty, and indeed the similar and more clearly Platonic account Plutarch offers in *Isis and Osiris*, the model is likely drawn from Platonic sources.

⁴⁵ Parker (1995) 334-45; Bernabé (2002a).

⁴⁶ This may go back to Herodotus (2.8). Diodorus (1.96) also clearly states it. Plutarch (364e-5a) follows this tradition and specifically calls Dionysus and Osiris the same (ὁ αὐτός) (364 e) and further adds that the Bacchic rites agree with the Osiris myth in terms of dismemberment, resurrection and rebirth.

⁴⁷ What Dillon (2003) discusses in another context is also relevant here 'of course, there is no secure warrant for tracing this intriguing doctrine in Plutarch all the way back to Xenokrates, but, in view of the widely attested interest of Plutarch in various distinctive Xenokratean doctrines, and the tantalizing traces of such a doctrine in Xenokrates himself, it seems a pretty fair bet that some influence came to Plutarch in this instance from that source' (136).

Λέξω δὲ αὐτὸν ὑμῖν οὔτι που τερπνὸν ὄντα οὐδὲ χαρίεντα· οὐ γάρ, οἶμαι, πρὸς χάριν τὴν ἡμετέραν γέγονεν· ἔχοντα δέ τι θαυμαστὸν ἴσως· ὅτι τοῦ τῶν Τιτάνων αἵματός ἐσμεν ἡμεῖς ἅπαντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι. ὥς οὖν ἐκείνων ἐχθρῶν ὄντων τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ πολεμησάντων οὐδὲ ἡμεῖς φίλοι ἐσμέν, ἀλλὰ κολαζόμεθα τε ὑπ’ αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τιμωρία γεγόναμεν, ἐν φρουρᾷ δὴ ὄντες ἐν τῷ βίῳ τοσοῦτον χρόνον ὅσον ἕκαστοι ζῶμεν. τοὺς δὲ ἀποθνήσκοντας ἡμῶν κεκολασμένους ἤδη ἱκανῶς λύεσθαί τε καὶ ἀπαλλάττεσθαι.

This explanation I will now give to you, although it is very likely not at all cheering, nor pleasing — for I imagine it was not devised to please us — and it has something of the marvellous about it perhaps. It is to the effect that all we human beings are of the blood of the Titans. Then, because they were hateful to the gods and had waged war on them, we are not dear to them either, but are punished by them and have been born for chastisement, being, in truth, imprisoned in life for as long a time as we each live. And when any of us die, it means that we, having already been sufficiently chastised, are released and go our way.⁴⁸

This passage has been cited by Bernabé as an early reference to the Titanic dismemberment and anthropogony.⁴⁹ However, like so many other allusions the passage has its problems and shows yet another variant detail. Man is created neither from ashes, limbs nor fragments, but from blood. This is a minor variation. However, as Edmonds points out there is one glaring omission: Dionysus is not mentioned in the passage at all. Instead the Titanic punishment is a result of the Titans having ‘waged war on the gods.’⁵⁰ Edmonds uses this as evidence for an alternate tradition where mankind emerges not because of Dionysus but as a result of the Titanomachy (Hes. *Th.* 630-735). While this is possible, the Orphic reading could be saved by reading *πολεμέω* in the more general sense as an act of hostility against the gods, i.e. killing their king Dionysus.⁵¹ The dismemberment myth was well known and we should not exclude the possibility that out of piety Dio omitted a direct reference to the murder of a god. On the other hand, Edmonds may well be right and the source may simply not agree with the Platonist version of the myth. It does however clearly agree with the Platonist interpretation.⁵² The *Phaedo* was Dio’s favourite book (*Vit. Soph.* 8.1 f. K.) and throughout this meditation on death the repeated reference to the specific term *φρουρά* ‘prison/guardhouse’ is a clear indication that the myth is, as it was for Damascius, discussed in relation to *Phaedo* 62b.⁵³ Despite the lack of a clear reference to Dionysus, the myth as an allegorical explanation for Plato’s body as prison metaphor does strongly suggest that Dio was aware of a Platonic interpretation involving the Titans and the anthropogony. This could be a variant as Edmonds suggests, yet the only tradition we know of which combines these ideas involves Dionysus.

⁴⁸ Trans. Cohoon (1932).

⁴⁹ Bernabé (2002a) 410.

⁵⁰ Edmonds (2013) 370.

⁵¹ The term can more generally refer to ‘quarrel, wrangle.’ See Eur. (*Ion* 1386).

⁵² Bernabé (2002a) 411.

⁵³ See Trapp (2002).

The final link in the chain beginning with Damascius comes from Plato's pupil, Xenokrates, who argued that Plato's φρουρά 'is Titanic and culminates (ἀποκορυφώω) with Dionysus.'⁵⁴ The passage, as noted, comes directly from Damascius who situates Xenokrates among those who understands 62b as an allusion to the dismemberment myth in terms of an inner psychic drama of the soul.⁵⁵ Damascius is writing nearly a thousand years later but this reading is perfectly in tune with the standard Platonic interpretation traced so far. Before turning to the passage itself and Xenokrates' probable understanding of it, it is worth contextualising the statement within Xenokrates' surviving work. I mentioned earlier that the Platonic sources were useful not only for their intimate knowledge of Orphic poetry but because they treated events as part of wider theogonical successions. Xenokrates (*Aët*, *Plac.* I.7.30) in a confusing discussion regarding the partnership between Rhea and Zeus appears to do just this. The union between Zeus and his mother is not part of mainstream mythology. The event, however, is known from the Derveni papyrus, where the commentator found the detail so offensive he attempted to interpret it away as a misreading (col. 26). His efforts were in vain and the detail remained a staple feature of the Orphic theogonic tradition thereafter. Indeed the union is pivotal and leads to the birth of Persephone, the mother of Dionysus.⁵⁶ There is little certainty that Xenokrates' remarks on Dionysus and the Titans appear in the same discussion as the union between Rhea and Zeus. However, that he knew these details at all strongly suggests he was aware of an Orphic theogony involving both elements. When considering Xenokrates' enigmatic reference to the Titans and Dionysus, we need to remember that the context of the fragment is richer than it initially seems. Not only do we have Damascius' claim that his position agrees with Xenokrates, the interpretation is also part of an exegesis of Plato's secret doctrine in the *Phaedo* (62b):

ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐν ἀπορρήτοις λεγόμενος περὶ αὐτῶν λόγος, ὡς ἐν τινι φρουρᾷ ἔσμεν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ οὐ δεῖ δὴ ἑαυτὸν ἐκ ταύτης λύειν οὐδ' ἀποδιδράσκειν, μέγας τέ τις μοι φαίνεται καὶ οὐ ῥάδιος διδεῖν.

Now the doctrine that is taught in secret about this matter, that we men are in a kind of prison and must not set ourselves free or run away, seems to me to be weighty and not easy to understand.⁵⁷

Plato's text provides an important context for Xenokrates' position and from it we can assume that Xenokrates broadly understands the myth as allegorising the soul's entry into the body. This too implies an initial crime and element of guilt. Assuming that the crime was the dismemberment and sacrifice of Dionysus should not be controversial. Apart from the long

⁵⁴ See fr. 20 Heinze.

⁵⁵ Dillon (2003) interprets this as a 'relation between the World-Soul and the individual souls' (122). The term ἀποκορυφώω is revealing and Edmonds (2013) points out, 'Damascius nearly always uses the peculiar term ἀποκορυφώω to refer to the process of making (or returning to) a single, undivided one of many' (276).

⁵⁶ Dillon (2003) 104 concludes that he is relying on an Orphic tradition.

⁵⁷ Trans. Fowler (1966).

tradition of Platonist scholars who did just this, the dismemberment can be securely dated to the early Hellenistic period and is the most common detail in the surviving sources of the myth.⁵⁸ Even the sceptical Edmonds recognizes that ‘it seems likely that Xenokrates, like Plutarch, was explaining the myth as an allegory of the punishment of a human soul that eats meat.’⁵⁹ Edmonds, however, refuses to connect this with the anthropogony as later Platonists did. Proving this detail is perhaps impossible and we can only speak of likelihood. Parker stresses that the anthropogony is a necessary assumption and that ‘the Orphic doctrine that the body is a prison-house or place of punishment is incoherent unless a primal crime is identified, for which mankind is now being made to pay.’⁶⁰ This is not proof but remains a strong claim and it is somewhat puzzling why Xenokrates, or anyone else, would understand the entry of the soul into the body as an allegorical reading of a myth which says nothing about the creation of humanity. What we can say with confidence is that the anthropogony makes sense here and that the idea is consistent with the long enduring Platonist tradition which specifically associates it with Xenokrates.

So far I have traced the version of the dismemberment myth known to the Platonists from Damascius to Xenokrates in an attempt to reconstruct a continuous tradition of interpreting the death of Dionysus as part of a longer theogonical sequence. Before turning to the Orphic evidence itself, it is worth briefly concluding this section by considering what Plato had in mind by his mysterious reference to the body as a *φρουρά*.⁶¹ Plato as a source on his philosophical peers is somewhat Janus faced. For many figures such as Protagoras and Cratylus he is our richest source.⁶² At the same time, few would take his depictions as historical representations and at times his reports are blatantly anachronistic.⁶³ Plato’s Orpheus is similar. On one level, Plato is a rich source on early Orphism, on another with his seemingly deliberate fusion of Pythagorean, Eleusinian and Orphic myths and ideas, he is bound to mislead us. How much in Plato’s surviving work is Orphic will remain unclear.⁶⁴ However, even if we consider the few clear citations of Orphic wisdom we can conclude that Plato knew Orphic poetry well, including a six generation theogony (*Philib.* 66c) featuring

⁵⁸ See Henrichs (2011).

⁵⁹ Edmonds (1999) 46.

⁶⁰ Parker (1995) 495. Bernabé (2002) also notes that ‘certains éléments du mythe ou du rituel en impliquent nécessairement d’autres’ (404).

⁶¹ See Jacobs (2012).

⁶² See Nails (2002) for the importance of Plato as a source on intellectual life in Athens.

⁶³ On the other hand, his depiction of Cratylus as I argue in Appendix Four, has much in common with the position and method of the Derveni commentator.

⁶⁴ On Plato and Orpheus see Cornford (1903); Santamaría Álvarez (2016b); Bernabé (2013).

Zeus as beginning, middle and end (*Leg.* 715e-716a).⁶⁵ Orpheus then, if not everywhere (*in. Pl. Phd.* 7.10.10) as Olympiodorus put it, is at least in many places and it is also likely that he occupies an important presence in the *Phaedo* and the secret teachings about the body as a prison (62b). The dialogue is often assumed to contain Pythagorean rather than Orphic teachings.⁶⁶ There are undoubtedly Pythagorean ideas under discussion but the Orphic context of the allegorical readings is later stated by Socrates (69c-d) when he compares the true philosopher to a Bacchic priest and quotes the Orphic verse ‘For as they say in the mysteries, the thyrsus-bearers are many, but the Bacchoi few’ (ὥς φασιν οἱ περὶ τὰς τελετάς, νάρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δὲ τε παῦροι).⁶⁷ Apart from this signpost, the clearest reason for assuming the Orphic reading in 62b is its similarity with the body soul distinction discussed in the *Cratylus* (400c):

δοκοῦσι μέντοι μοι μάλιστα θέσθαι οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα, ὥς δίκην διδούσης τῆς ψυχῆς ὧν δὴ ἔνεκα δίδωσιν, τοῦτον δὲ περίβολον ἔχειν, ἵνα σφύζηται, δεσμοτηρίου εἰκόνα: εἶναι οὖν τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦτο ὥσπερ αὐτὸ ὀνομάζεται, ἕως ἂν ἐκτεῖσθαι τὰ ὀφειλόμενα, τὸ ‘σῶμα,’ καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖν παράγειν οὐδ’ ἔν γράμμα.

But I think it most likely that the Orphic poets gave this name, with the idea that the soul is undergoing punishment for something; they think it has the body as an enclosure to keep it safe, like a prison, and this is, as the name itself denotes, the safe for the soul, until the penalty is paid, and not even a letter needs to be changed.⁶⁸

Given the similar doctrines in the *Cratylus* and the *Phaedo*, the Orphic context of the dialogue, and the absence of a better alternative, a good guess is that Plato was, as his pupil Xenokrates stated, alluding to an Orphic myth involving the Titans and Dionysus. In addition to this a further reference has been discerned in Plato’s discussion of man’s Titanic nature (Τιτανικὴν φύσιν) in the *Laws* (3.701c). Cicero (*Leg.* 3.2.5), as Edmonds points out, did not connect this phrase to the Orphics, but saw it as a reference to the Titanomachy.⁶⁹ Cicero, however, appears to be wrong and the phrase Titanic as used by Olympiodorus (*Ph.* 7.10), Damascius (*Ph.* 1.9), Plutarch (*De Is. et Os.* 371a-b) suggests a specialised term connected with the Orphic myth. Secondly, Cicero’s reading is problematic in respect to the text itself and Dodds argues that it does not make sense of Plato’s (3.701c) reference to a *return* to this Titanic nature (ἐπὶ τὰ αὐτὰ πάλιν ἐκεῖνα ἀφικομένους), an idea which implies an initial Titanic condition rather than a vague allusion to an ancient war.⁷⁰ If the *Laws* and especially

⁶⁵ Santamaría Álvarez (2016b) 220.

⁶⁶ See Rowett (2017) 373-6 for a history of the debates and argument on the position of the Pythagorean and non-Pythagorean elements in the dialogue.

⁶⁷ Trans. Burnet (1903) modified.

⁶⁸ Trans. Fowler (1921). The terminology is not identical but interchangeable. δεσμοτήριον is a much more common word for prison than φρουρά and is used interchangeably in the *Phd.* (114c). It should also be stated that the dialogue as a whole is set in a prison (δεσμοτήριον).

⁶⁹ Edmonds (2013) 329.

⁷⁰ Parker (2014) argues that ‘Edmonds does not counter Dodds’ point (*The Greeks and the Irrational*, 176 n. 132) that in *Laws* 701b-c Plato speaks of men *reverting* to ‘the so-called old Titanic nature’, as if it were

the *Phaedo* suggest Plato's knowledge of the myth, it is his citation of Pindar in the *Meno* (81b-c) that provides the most convincing testimony that he knew about the Titans' ancient crime (Pind. *Fr.* 133 Bergk):

Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος
δέξεται, εἰς τὸν ὑπερθεὺν ἄλιονκείων ἐνάτω ἔτει
ἀντιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν,
ἐκ τῶν βασιλῆες ἀγαυοὶ
καὶ σθένει κραίπνοι σοφία τε μέγιστοι
ἄνδρες αὖξοντ'· ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἥρωες ἀγνοὶ
πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλεῦνται.

For from whomsoever Persephone shall accept requital for ancient wrong, the souls of these she restores in the ninth year to the upper sun again; from them arise glorious kings and men of splendid might and surpassing wisdom, and for all remaining time are they called holy heroes amongst mankind.⁷¹

This fragment, as noted earlier, was an essential component in Comparetti's effort to connect the idea of paying a penalty in the gold plates with the dismemberment myth. The passage may refer to the myth but it does not say anything directly. There is no mention of Dionysus and no Titans. However, that Pindar is alluding to Dionysus' dismemberment is suggested by the specificity of Persephone's reception of 'a requital for an ancient wrong.' In Orphic mythology, Dionysus was the son of Persephone and the idea of the deceased paying a penalty makes perfect sense in this context. Rose in an influential reading argued that *ποινή* and *πένθος* combine to make this particular reading very persuasive. *ποινή* in Homer often has the specific meaning of blood price,⁷² while *πένθος*, is more similar to mourning than grief.⁷³ The only known myth which makes sense of these terms is Persephone's mourning for her dead son and the blood price paid to her for this act. Rose's argument was a strong indication that the myth existed as early as the fifth century.⁷⁴ Edmonds, in one of his less successful arguments, attempts to downplay these connotations and suggests a special Pindaric sense of *ποινή* as a general reward and reinterprets the myth in terms of the rape of Persephone by Hades.⁷⁵ Edmonds' argument is at best partially convincing and even if Pindar sometimes uses the term *ποινή* in a more general way, this is not to say that he always does. In this case apart from the arguments advanced by Rose, Parker notes 'the verb 'accept' (*δέχεσθαι*) strongly suggests a relation between an offender and an offended party, who may or may not accept the proffered *ποινά*.'⁷⁶ Edmonds' argument becomes even more

originally theirs; Cicero's view (*Leg* 3.2.5) that the reference is to the Titanomachy, not to a myth of our descent from the Titans, cannot, pace p. 329, determine what Plato intended.'

⁷¹ Trans. Lamb (1967).

⁷² Rose (1936). It appears as such in *Il*.14.483 and based on this the LSJ defines the common meaning as 'bloodmoney, were-gild, fine paid by the slayer to the kinsmen of the slain.'

⁷³ This is the common usage in Homer. See *Od*.24.423. The LSJ thus cites 'esp. of grief for the dead, mourning.'

⁷⁴ See Lloyd-Jones (1989) 90.

⁷⁵ Edmonds (2013) 305.

⁷⁶ Parker (2014).

problematic when he assumes that his special Pindaric understanding of the term also applies to the gold plates, Plato and the Derveni papyrus.⁷⁷ That the Orphic reading for Pindar's fragment is the most convincing interpretation, is far from saying that it proves the early presence of the myth. The passage, however, is slightly more informative when it comes to Plato's knowledge of Orphism, particularly as it is developed in his middle dialogues and discussion of souls, payments and metempsychosis.⁷⁸ While Plato's dialogues arguably cannot be combined into a single coherent narrative, it is likely that he perceived some connection between his descriptions of Orphic souls paying penalties (*Cra.* 400c; *Phd.* 69b) and the almost identical ideas present in Pindar's fragment in the *Meno*.⁷⁹ In conclusion, although there is little direct proof, a great deal of circumstantial evidence suggests that Plato, like Xenokrates, was aware of the dismemberment myth.

Early Orphism and Circumstantial Evidence

When it comes to evaluating the place of the dismemberment myth in the early Orphic material there is a distinct shift in the kind of evidence available. So far I have attempted to trace direct references to the myth as they appear in the Platonic tradition including Plato and argued that here, at least, we can detect broadly similar mythic details within a theogonical framework. The early Orphic evidence, including the Derveni papyrus, the gold plates and the bone plaques, made no clear statement on the myth. In this respect, the sensational new discoveries have proven to be something of a disappointment. This is particularly true of the Derveni papyrus which says nothing about Dionysus, and among the ever increasing number of gold plates which certainly suggest the dismemberment myth, but do not mention the name Orpheus. In other words, despite a great deal of new evidence and over a century of scholarship, the case for the myth in early Orphism remains very much in terms set out by Comparetti, that is an assumed framework consisting of various pieces which may or may not cohere. Edmonds' demand for categorical proof and the continued use of inverted commas surrounding 'the so called Orphics' indicates that attitudes towards these kind of circumstantial claims remain somewhat suspicious. Hocart, however, in his classic *Kings and Councillors* (1936) argues for precisely the opposite case:

⁷⁷ Edmonds (2013) 312.

⁷⁸ Apart from the similar focus in both the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* on the immortality of the soul and learning as recollection, in both Plato speaks of priests, like the Derveni commentator, who interpret their myths philosophically. See *Men.* (81a) and the *Phd.* (69d).

⁷⁹ We should also compare this with the discussion of Orphic priests in the *Resp.* (364e–365a). As Jacobs (2012) notes 'we can see many of the same themes we have been looking at in this passage: the link to Orpheus, the importance of initiation, purification, punishment (ποινή), liberation and the absolution of guilt' (316).

There is a popular but natural delusion that direct evidence is necessarily better than circumstantial, in fact that it is the only satisfactory kind of evidence. A learned judge in summing up a famous murder trial rebutted this opinion. He pointed out that direct evidence might be the weaker of the two: the witness might be lying or biased; his memory might be at fault, or his imagination be playing tricks. Even two witnesses might mislead. There are countries where fifty eyewitnesses all telling the same story could not be trusted. On the other hand when a hundred little details which no man could have premeditated or arranged all point in one direction, and one direction only, the certainty is as great as is ever to be attained in human affairs. Probably no man has ever been hanged in the last hundred years on direct evidence unsupported by circumstantial. Many have been on circumstantial evidence alone⁸⁰

In the best case scenario we might like to have both direct and circumstantial evidence and I have so far attempted to meet Edmonds' criteria by tracing direct allusions as far as the evidence permits. When we come to the early Orphic material, the kind of evidence available changes. We have no summaries of the myth or allegorical explanations. Instead we have allusions, loose threads and possibilities. While this may be rejected *tout court* as merely circumstantial, the evidence is abundant, coheres in often surprising details and it is worth asking: if all this evidence points in the same direction, can we prosecute the Titans?

The most abundant early Orphic materials are the gold plates which are part of a continuing tradition, spanning the Greek world from Thurii, South Italy to Macedonia and dating from the fifth century BC to the third centuries AD. If these plates are considered to be Orphic this makes them one of the most powerful statements on the continuity of the Orphic tradition. The earliest plate is from Hipponium, South Italy, and dates to fifth century BC (L1 OF 474). The plate does not mention Orpheus or offer any hint regarding the dismemberment myth. It does, however, refer to the deceased tellingly as going the same way as the other Bacchoi (βάχχοι), a clear indication that the plates relate to the Bacchic mysteries. Apart from being the oldest plate, the Hipponium plate also boasts the longest text which in its details proves that the Cretan, Thessalian and Italian variants are part of a single lineage.⁸¹ It is not surprising that the oldest gold plate was discovered in South Italy, as the region is repeatedly associated with unusual eschatological claims. Plato reportedly travelled in South Italy and Sicily (Cic. *De Rep.* i. 16) and some of his Orphic myths are referred to specifically as by a Sicilian or an Italian (*Gorg.* 493a). Pindar's fragment from the *Meno*, whatever we make of it, may well have been from an Italian or Sicilian poem and shows similarities to his *Second Olympian Ode*. The ode was composed for Theron of Acragas and like the *Meno* fragment discusses rebirth and salvation.⁸² Given South Italy's rich and unusual mythic background, it is not surprising that Comparetti drew these sources together and in particular focusing on Pindar's reference to a blood price paid to Persephone for an ancient grief, claimed that the reference to unjust crimes in the Thurii plate (L 10b; OF 490) came from an

⁸⁰ Hocart (1987) 16.

⁸¹ See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008) 68-101.

⁸² See below (163-4) for commentary.

identical context. While the Orphic reading has not, and perhaps cannot be, definitively confirmed, the major alternatives such as those proposed by Zuntz have been rejected, whereas Comparetti's thesis has been repeatedly confirmed. Indeed the evidence from the Hipponion, Thurii and the direct message of the Pelinna (L7a-b; OF 485-6) plate stating 'tell Persephone that Bacchus (Dionysus) himself released you' would be striking coincidences if Comparetti was totally off the mark.⁸³

If the strongest interpretation of the gold plates remains the dismemberment myth, what of the Derveni papyrus? The Derveni papyrus clearly states that it is a commentary on a poem by Orpheus and has also been shown to be part of the same narrative tradition preserved in the *Rhapsodies*. While later Orphic theogonies gave a central role to the dismemberment myth, the extant passages of the Derveni papyrus say absolutely nothing about Dionysus. The gold plate discussing Persephone and a punishment and the *Derveni Theogony* in this respect do not neatly cohere. One is found in South Italy, the other in Northern Greece. One suggests the dismemberment myth and human guilt in a Bacchic context, the other provides the greater theogonical context in which this episode was later located. The problem is that although the two sources approach each other they fail to meet in the middle. Nevertheless, there is some strong circumstantial evidence for understanding the gold plates and the papyrus as part of a single tradition. While no gold plates were discovered in Derveni, many have been found in Northern Greece and both the gold plates and the papyrus were found in a funeral context.⁸⁴ Furthermore although the papyrus does not discuss the dismemberment myth, its abrupt ending describing Zeus' contemplation of divine incest is far from a coherent ending and West, among others, argues that the narrative must have continued on another roll.⁸⁵ Whether the papyrus continued or not is difficult to say, but from the context it is clear that the mythic world of the poem did not end at this point. Zeus' incest with Rhea, as mentioned earlier, is not a detail found in Hesiod. Rather it is an Orphic detail that leads to the birth of Persephone, who in turn, mating with Zeus, begets Dionysus. This unusual pairing, likely known by Xenokrates, in itself suggests that we can infer Dionysus' presence in the mythic world of the commentator. The circumstantial claims thus far may seem weak and would undoubtedly fail to convince Edmonds. The case, however, gains considerable traction when we consider the

⁸³ The conclusion of Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) are a nice example of Hocart's methodology: 'all these arguments form a mass of evidence which can neither be associated with any other known religious movement, nor be arbitrarily segmented. On the contrary, it agrees perfectly with the image that we have nowadays of Ophism. The evident conclusion which arises from all these considerations is that the gold leaves can only be Orphic' (101).

⁸⁴ On ritual context of the Derveni papyrus see Bernabé (2014). Apart from the rites described by the author, the book itself was probably burned as part of a ritual similar to that alluded to by Euripides (*Hipp.* 952-7).

⁸⁵ West (1983) 94.

theogonical context of the gold plates. The plates are frequently considered in terms of the dismemberment myth. They too, however, mention a pantheon of sorts. Apart from the goddess Persephone and Bacchus, the gold plates repeatedly discuss a group of unusual gods including Brimo, Eukles and Eubouleus.⁸⁶ While these are not exclusively Orphic gods, they frequently appear in Orphic and mystery settings. Brimo likely refers to Persephone.⁸⁷ Eukles, good fame, may refer to Hades.⁸⁸ Euboules in the (L 11) gold plates refers to the son of Zeus, and in the *Orphic Hymns* usually refers to Dionysus (29.6; 30.6; 52.4).⁸⁹ The most important link between the theogonical tradition of the Derveni papyrus and that of the gold plates appears in the Timpone Grande gold plate (L 12; OF 492).⁹⁰ The plate is anomalous even by Orphic standards and was found wrapped around a smaller standard gold plate (OF 488). The text of the Timpone grande is for the most part composed of random letters interspersed with Greek words. These may be part of a single hymn or ritual narrative, yet even if we take the clear words in isolation the plate is of pivotal importance. Some of the terms such as moira, air and fire suggest a similar obsession with the favourite cosmological elements mentioned in the Derveni papyrus.⁹¹ Nestis, the Sicilian name for Persephone, and the name favoured by Empedocles for the wife of Hades, is also present. One of the most important sequences for my argument appears in line 7:

ἀέρ πῦρ Μᾶτερ Νῆστι νόξ ἡμέρα.

Air, fire, Mother, Nestis, night, day.

Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal point out an interesting overlap with a later Orphic *Hymn to Zeus* recorded by Porphyry (OF 243):

ἐν δὲ δέμας βασίλειον, ἐν ᾧ τάδε πάντα κυκλεῖται,
πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ αἰθήρ νόξ τε καὶ ἡμαρ.

unique sovereign body, in which all things complete their cycle,
fire, water, earth and ether; night and day.⁹²

⁸⁶ See Bremmer (2013); Morand (2009).

⁸⁷ Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008) 156.

⁸⁸ Ibid. (102 n. 18).

⁸⁹ The Hellenistic Gurob papyrus for example, which also mentions the dismemberment myth, speaks of Eubolous (18). The name is not exclusively Orphic and Euboules is also associated with the Eleusinian mysteries where the name refers to Chthonic Zeus. See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008) 103-4.

⁹⁰ See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal's (2008) 137-50 reconstruction and interpretations; Betegh (2004) 325-48 also interprets the plate in Heraclitean terms. For the plate itself see Appendix One.

⁹¹ Betegh (2004) notes 'to conclude, the fact that most of the intelligible words of this gold tablet, found in the tomb of a cremated person, are indeed catch-words in the Derveni text (air, fire, sun, Zeus, Moira, Ge, mother, Demeter), makes it at least defensible to evoke the evidence of the gold plates in the interpretation of the papyrus. I would even venture to say that Tablet C might shed some dim light on a religious lore operating with a theory of elements that lays special stress on air and fire, and from which the cosmological theory developed in the Derveni papyrus may have emerged' (337).

⁹² OF 243= (I) Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* 3, 8, 2 (= Porph. *Περὶ ἀγαλμ.* fr. 354F Smith) Trans. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008) 146.

This reference has even more to tell us and not only does it point to a connection between a gold plate and an Orphic poem known in later antiquity, it points towards a connection with the *Derveni Theogony*. Indeed the Orphic *Hymn to Zeus* quoted above also describes in very similar terms to the Derveni poem⁹³ how Zeus eats the cosmos and becomes as Porphyry (OF 243) puts its:

Zeὺς πρῶτος γένετο, Zeὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέραυνος
Zeὺς κεφαλὴ, Zeὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται·

Zeus was the first, Zeus last, the lightning lord,
Zeus head, Zeus centre, all things are from Zeus.⁹⁴

In other words, Porphyry's hymn includes almost identical lines with the poem preserved in the Derveni Papyrus and closely approximates lines from the Timpone grande gold plate. This strongly suggests that both the plates and the papyrus draw either on a very similar *Hymn to Zeus* or even from one and the same poem. This striking coincidence is all the more relevant when we consider that the first and incontestable word in the Timpone gold plate is Protogonos.⁹⁵ The presence of Protogonos in a gold plate citing lines likely from a *Hymn to Zeus*, which moreover literally enveloped a smaller gold plate associated with the Bacchic mysteries, is the single clearest testament that the gold plates and the Derveni papyrus are part of a single theogonical tradition. This is, in other words, the proverbial smoking gun 'which no man' not even Comparetti 'could have premeditated.'⁹⁶ This does not prove that Comparetti's intuition was right. Nor does it directly say that the crime committed against Persephone refers to the dismemberment of Dionysus. It does, however, link these diverse elements into a complex web of associations which are very difficult to dismiss as purely coincidental. The gold plates are part of a Bacchic tradition linked to a theogonical narrative which features an impressive pantheistic Zeus and Protogonos. They also refer to crimes and payments made to Persephone which are somehow related to Dionysus. Later comparative evidence dating as early as Xenokrates in the fourth century BC suggests a context for reading these elements in tandem as part of a single theogonical narrative. This narrative, moreover, is the same as that seen in later theogonies such as the *Rhapsodies* from the same Orphic tradition. This may not convince Edmonds, yet this long list of improbable coincidences as

⁹³ col. 17.12.; 18.12: Zeὺς πρῶτος γένετο, [Zeὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέραυνος] / Zeὺς κεφαλὴ, Zeὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται. 'Zeus was born first, Zeus bearer of lightning is last. Zeus is the head, Zeus the middle, from Zeus are all things made.' Compare with Ps. Arist. *Mund.* 401a-b.

⁹⁴ Compare this with col. 17.12 and col. 18.12 of the Derveni papyrus. The *Hymn to Zeus* (OF 243) known to Porphyry is reproduced in the Appendix 1.

⁹⁵ See discussion in Chapter Three.

⁹⁶ Hocart (1987) 16.

Hocart puts it ‘is as great as is ever to be attained in human affairs’ or at the very least in Orphic ones.⁹⁷

Tearing Apart the Cosmos

Having established as far as possible the presence of the dismemberment myth and its theogonical context in early Orphism, it is now time to turn to the significance of describing humanity’s origins in terms of the sacrifice of a god. One of the most influential readings was given by Detienne who describes the myth as an anti-sacrifice myth and focuses in particular on the unusual procedure of the ritual butchering and cooking of the god.⁹⁸ While Detienne’s general idea that the Orphic Mekone is an anti-sacrifice myth and should be read in contrast with Hesiod’s is sound, given the scepticism which surrounds even the bare structure of the dismemberment narrative, Detienne’s detailed analysis, often based on a single late source, is problematic to say the least.⁹⁹ For this reason his study is often discarded as ahistoric and overly systematic.¹⁰⁰ Yet the fact that the evidence does not permit us such detail, does not mean that we should forgo analysis altogether. Nor does it mean that the core ideas of Detienne’s argument are wrong. Instead I argue we should shift our perspective from his specific detail-led analysis, to a more general study of the core ontological assumptions of the myth and how they differ from Hesiod’s narrative on early mankind.

Hesiod’s Mekone was presented in Chapter Two as a meditation on the status of humanity and their relation to animals and gods. The narrative described how gods and god-like men divided the first ox. The key word in this sentence is ‘god-like.’ Whereas gods are immortal and self sustaining, men can only aspire to resemblance. The men of the Golden Age do not grow old or feeble, but like those of today, they die. This kernel of minimal difference present from the very beginning was, I argued, at the core of Hesiod’s chaosology. Orpheus takes a very different route. From the beginning the cosmos is a development of a single underlying divine being, Protogonos. This god through a process of creative-destruction populates the known cosmos, until his great grandson, Zeus, envelops him and recreates the world. Zeus is a key god in the Orphic theogony, but as noted, he is not the culmination of the Orphic poem and, like Protogonos, Zeus has an irresistible need to create and develop. Following his

⁹⁷ Hocart (1987) 16.

⁹⁸ Detienne (1979) 73-84.

⁹⁹ The order of roasting and boiling is taken from Ps. Aristotle’s *Problems* 3.43 and the butchering procedure is adopted from Nonnus’ *Dionysiaca* 6.172-7. The emphasis on an ordered ritual procedure Detienne (1979) 73 admits goes against the majority of sources which describe the act in terms of a dismemberment.

¹⁰⁰ E.g. Rives (2011).

perfect identification with the cosmos, he goes on to create an ordered world. Zeus then mates with his mother, Rhea and gives birth to Persephone. In turn he impregnates his daughter and fathers the most complex god in the Orphic pantheon, Dionysus, his simultaneous son, nephew and grandson. Zeus then cedes his throne to Dionysus and sets the scene for the Orphic Mekone. In analysing this myth the most significant details of the Orphic Mekone are not the elaborate butchering and cooking procedure, which cannot be reconstructed with any certainty, but its participants. The cast of Hesiod's Promethean division involves men and gods who are already minimally differentiated. Nothing is said of the ox, which appears more as a thing than a participant. In other words, the sacrifice involves three distinct terms. In the Orphic Mekone on the other hand there are no divisions between human, animals and gods but a description of a single society of divine beings, Titans and Olympians.¹⁰¹ This act of destruction in turn leads to the creation of beings who are a further transformation of the underlying divinity and not entirely distinct from their source of origin. My argument is in short that whereas Hesiod posits minimal difference from start to finish, the Orphic sacrifice describes mankind as part of a monistic transformation retaining an underlying kinship throughout.

The early details of the Orphic myth are entirely circumstantial and Edmonds has repeatedly referred to it as a 'modern fabrication' of the 19th century.¹⁰² I have argued at length that this is not the case, yet it is difficult to analyse a myth that exists in theory only. It may therefore, be wise to frame my discussion of the hypothetical Orphic myth alongside some comparable but demonstrably early myths from the Classical and Archaic periods. Johnston and Graf point out that cannibalism in a divine feast occurs when Tantalus offers the gods his son, Pelops.¹⁰³ Pindar (*Ol.* 1. 48-51) describes how:

ὕδατος ὅτι σε πυρὶ ζέουσιν εἰς ἀκμὴν
μαχαίρᾳ τάμον κάτα μέλη,
τραπέζαισί τ', ἀμφὶ δεύτατα, κρεῶν
σέθεν διεδάσαντο καὶ φάγον.

they cut you limb from limb with a knife into the water's rolling boil over the fire, and among the tables at the last course they divided and ate your flesh.¹⁰⁴

While Graf and Johnston do an excellent job interrogating the traditional mythic parallels, they pay less attention to the more relevant myths discussed by the Pythagoreans and in

¹⁰¹ Graf and Johnston (2007) note 'the situation is analogous to that of human sacrifice, in which one human is slaughtered and consumed by others. This feature makes the Titans' sacrifice abnormal, perverse – corrupted' (81).

¹⁰² Edmonds (2013) 297.

¹⁰³ Graf and Johnston (2007) 66-93.

¹⁰⁴ Trans. Arnson Svarlien (1990).

particular Empedocles.¹⁰⁵ The Pythagoreans, for example, may have discussed rebirth in terms of crime and punishment through the sufferings of Apollo. The myth as recounted in Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* describes how Apollo, angered at the death of his son Asclepius, kills the Cyclopes and is punished by Hera by being forced to serve as a slave to the mortal Admetus.¹⁰⁶ This is potentially a fascinating parallel to the Orphic myth, but the central place of this narrative among the Pythagoreans is even more problematic than Dionysus' presence among the Orphics. There is, however, one key myth which combines sacrifice, punishment and anthropogony within a single coherent framework and at the very least proves that there is nothing anachronistic about the Orphic myth. I am referring to the poetry of Empedocles (c. 495- 435 BC) and given the absence of an explicit Orphic text, it is worthwhile starting our investigation from here (DK 31 B115):¹⁰⁷

ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,
αἰδίων, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὄρκοις·
εὐτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνῳ φίλα γυῖα μῆνηι,
ὃς καὶ ἐπίορκον ἁμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσει,
δαίμονες οἷτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο,
τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
φυομένους παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἶδεα θνητῶν
ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὐδας ἀπέπτυσσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς
ἡελίου φαέθοντος, ὃ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·
ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.
τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
νεῖκεϊ μαινομένῳ πίσυνος.

There is an oracle of necessity, an ancient decree of the gods
everlasting, sealed by broad oaths:
when one in his crimes stains his own limbs with innocent blood
or wrongfully forswears himself,
one of those deities who have gained long life,
thrice ten thousand seasons he is exiled from the blessed gods,
through time growing to be all kinds of creature,
going from one grievous path of life to another.
for mighty aether drives him into sea,

¹⁰⁵ Empedocles according to his later biography was expelled from the Pythagoreans for revealing their teachings. See Diog. Laert. 8.54-55.

¹⁰⁶ Ps. Hes. fr. 51–52 and 54 a–c Merkelbach/West; Primavassi (2008) concludes: ‘thus, Empedocles’ cycle of the guilty god’ shares with the Pythagorean legend the feature of an Olympian god who passes through a series of incarnations, and with the Hesiodic myth the feature of an Olympian who is sent into an earthly exile as a punishment for bloodshed. In both cases, the god in question is Apollo’ (262).

¹⁰⁷ These are as noted above (142 n. 21) are the four critical strands Edmonds (2013) 296 claims are required but absent in every version of the myth. Parker (2014) points out the importance of Empedocles in the discussion noting ‘a reconstruction based on three words of Pindar, five of Plato, one line of one Gold Leaf and a text written a millennium or so later is manifestly fragile. But an Orphic notion of a primal fall would not be as isolated as Edmonds implies: Empedocles tells in his own words how his journey through a cycle of incarnations was caused by a crime in his past life. The important parallel figure of Empedocles is strangely absent, except on points of detail, from Edmonds’ account.’ Edmonds is not alone in this omission and although Empedocles and Orpheus are frequently mentioned in relation to each other, detailed comparisons are rare. See Finkelberg (2017) esp. 126-45 who rightly discusses Empedocles, Heraclitus and the Orphics together; Riedweg (1997); Betegh (2004) 170-72.

sea spews him onto the surface of the earth, and earth to the rays of shining sun, who casts him
into the whirls of aether.
one takes him from another, but all abhor him.
of these I too am now one, a fugitive and a wanderer from the gods,
a devotee of raving Strife.¹⁰⁸

Empedocles in this passage describes an undifferentiated divine society of divinities or daimones and an act of murder. We are told that these daimones have sworn an oath and if they defile themselves with murder, they will be forced to take on various forms, animal, plant and human for 30,000 years until they can return to their blessed lives.¹⁰⁹ Many of the specific details in Empedocles' myth have no direct parallels and, as with much of his mythology, they appear to be his unique creation. Nonetheless, Empedocles did not write in a vacuum and there are clear echoes of earlier poets in his work. The oath sworn by the gods, for example, recalls Hesiod's description of the oath sworn on the river Styx and the punishment imposed on those who break it (*Th.* 782-806).¹¹⁰ The Hesiodic echoes, however, belie a significant change in contexts from temporary imprisonment, to mortal life as a punishment. This may be Pythagorean and indeed Empedocles is said in later sources to have been a Pythagorean expelled for publishing their wisdom.¹¹¹ If this is true, the Pythagorean story of Apollo may have proved influential, yet the description of a society of gods, defiled by murder which results in the creation of mortal beings is much closer to the mythology of Orpheus and there is a good deal of evidence that they were closely connected in some way. Empedocles was from Acragas, Sicily. The earliest gold plate was discovered in Hipponion, a nearby colony on the Italian mainland, and dates shortly after Empedocles' death.¹¹² Empedocles' knowledge of Orphic traditions can only be guessed, yet he was certainly familiar with the poetry of Pindar.¹¹³ In *Olympian Two* (65-70) Pindar describes a journey of metempsychosis in terms which are reminiscent both of the fragment from the *Meno* and the later poetry of Empedocles:

ἀλλὰ παρὰ μὲν τιμίῳις
θεῶν, οἵτινες ἔχαιρον εὐορκίαις, ἄδακρυν νέμονται
αἰῶνα: τοὶ δ' ἀπροσώρατον ὀκχέοντι πόνον
ὅσοι δ' ἐτόλμασαν ἐστρὶς
ἐκατέρωθι μείναντες ἀπὸ πάμπαν ἀδίκων ἔχειν
ψυχάν, ἔτειλαν Διὸς ὁδὸν παρὰ Κρόνου τύρσιν.

¹⁰⁸ Trans. Graham (2010). The passage appears in Hippol. *Haer.* 7.29.14-23; Plut. *De Exil* 607c-d.

¹⁰⁹ There is a debate on whether the text should read φόβος or φόνος. Picot (2007) 55 argues φόβος is the correct reading but I am sceptical for two reasons. First, while Plutarch's text may have been corrupted it is clear that he associates the crime with meat eating in *De Esu.* and associates this with unspecified lines from Empedocles: 'ἀλληγορεῖ γὰρ ἐνταῦθα τὰς ψυχάς, ὅτι φόνων καὶ βρώσεως σαρκῶν καὶ ἀλληλοφαγίας δίκην τίνουσαι σώμασι θνητοῖς ἐνδέδενται' (1.7.) The idea of a meat eating daimon is also clear from DK 31 B 139.

¹¹⁰ Hershbell (1970).

¹¹¹ Diog. Laert. 8.54.

¹¹² On dating of the plate see Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008) 3.

¹¹³ Lloyd Jones (1980).

But in the presence of the honored gods, those who gladly kept their oaths enjoy a life without tears, while the others undergo a toil that is unbearable to look at. Those who have persevered three times, on either side, to keep their souls free from all wrongdoing, follow Zeus' road to the end, to the tower of Cronus.¹¹⁴

Apart from the similar eschatological scheme, the reference to gods who kept their oaths and the mention of three lives are very reminiscent of Empedocles' poetry.¹¹⁵ While these lines may or may not reflect Pindar's Orphism, we can be almost certain that the ode composed for Theron of Acragas, was known to the twenty year old aspiring god and poet Empedocles.¹¹⁶ In the strongest case, Empedocles, confirming Plutarch's view (*De Esu* 1.7), simply rewrote the Orphic myth which is alluded to by Pindar and incorporated it into his own model. In the weakest, he relied on a lost model, referred to by Pindar which went on to influence both the Orphics and Empedocles. In either case we are dealing with a shared tradition.

Empedocles is a useful point of comparison with the Orphics not only for the surface similarities between their myths, and their shared historical context, but for his interpretations. I have argued that both Empedocles' and Orpheus' myth, rather than differentiating groups of men, gods and animals, describe a homogenous society based on absolute identity. This may not seem entirely transparent in the Orphic myth. Although there is a clear case of perfect identity with Zeus' swallowing of the cosmos, afterwards Zeus goes on to create not only many gods but the sun and moon. By the time of Dionysus' murder, the world consists of at least the Titans, Olympians and these celestial objects. A similar situation may be argued for Empedocles and if the daimones are at the very least numerically differentiated, why insist that they represent a perfect unity? For the Orphics this remains an interpretation, for Empedocles, however, we know this because he offers an exegesis of his mythology. At times he discusses the early cosmos as a society of divine beings, at others as a homogenous and divine Sphere which alternately unites and separates under the powers of Love and Strife (DK 31 B 28):

ἀλλ' ὃ γε πάντοθεν ἴσος <έοι> καὶ πάμπαν ἀπείρων
Σφαῖρος κυκλοτερὴς μονίῃ περιηγέι γαίῳ.

Equal to itself in all directions and completely boundless
a rounded Sphere rejoicing in circular solitude.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Trans. Arnson Svarlien (1990).

¹¹⁵ The passage should also be considered in light of Plato's play on these figures in *Phdr.* 249a, which discusses three periods of a thousand years and combines elements found in Empedocles and Pindar. There are further nods to Empedocles in the use of the term daimones (246e) and rephrasing of Empedocles oracle of necessity as θεσμός τε Ἀδρασθείας ὅδε (248c). See Ryan (2012) 196. This kind of blurring of details is typical of Plato and there is also a good deal of Orphism in the myth including the idea of the soul being 'fettered' δεσμεύω in the body (250d), the description of the followers of Zeus as 'like Bacchae' (ὥσπερ αἱ βάκχαι) (253a), and the destination of the soul as a banquet (ὅταν δὲ δὴ πρὸς δαῖτα καὶ ἐπὶ θοίνην ἴωσιν, 247a).

¹¹⁶ Lloyd Jones (1980).

¹¹⁷ Trans. Graham (2010).

The precise relation between Empedocles' myth and exegesis or what is more commonly referred to as his 'two poems' (or two narratives within a single poem) is fiercely debated. A popular interpretation argues that Empedocles describes two distinct kinds of narrative, one describing the mixing and separation of the four elements and the other discussing a divine murder and cycle of rebirths.¹¹⁸ At times these two poems have been treated as independent and unrelated discussions, but more recently scholarship has focused on how the two narratives are treated as elaborating similar themes. Primavasi has recently studied the correspondences and proposed 'interpreting the Empedoclean account of the transmigratory daimones as a mythological mirror' noting:

We may say, then, that the rule of the Sphairos corresponds to the happy state of the god within the community of the blessed ones, the destruction of the Sphairos to his crime and departure, the movement toward complete separation to his punishment, and the movement toward complete unity to his return.¹¹⁹

In other words, Empedocles, somewhat like the Derveni commentator, offers a myth and physical exegesis where in place of the murder of a god, we are presented with the dissolution of a Sphere. Indeed, the language in some respects recalls details of a sacrificial scene and before the Sphere separates, Empedocles (DK 33 B 35) describes how 'For all the limbs of the god shuddered in turn' (πάντα γὰρ ἐξείης πελεμίζετο γυῖα θεοῖο).¹²⁰ This is reminiscent of DK 33 B 134 where Empedocles speaks of sacrifice in terms of eating limbs using the close synonym γυῖον. The verb πελεμίζω in turn is also reminiscent of the shuddering of the animal before sacrifice.¹²¹ For Empedocles this is not an ordered creation but a tearing apart from unity to plurality (DK 31 B 21.9-14):

ἐκ τούτων γὰρ πάνθ' ὅσα τ' ἦν ὅσα τ' ἔστι καὶ ἔσται,
δένδρεά τ' ἐβλάστησε καὶ ἄνδρες ἢ δὲ γυναῖκες,
θῆρέσθ' οἰωνοὶ τε καὶ ὕδατοθρέμμοι ἰχθύς,
καὶ τε θεοὶ δολιχαῖες τιμῇσι φέριστοι.
αὐτὰ γὰρ ἔστιν ταῦτα, δι' ἀλλήλων δὲ θέοντα
γίγνεται ἀλλοιωπά· τόσον διὰ κρήσις ἀμείβει.

¹¹⁸ This reading, as noted, is debated. On the relation between the two poems see Kahn (1974). This paper was written before the discovery of the Strasbourg papyrus but remains relevant. For a more updated discussion of the two poems see Kingsley (1996) and Primavasi (2008). Osborne (1987) and Sedley (2007) 32, however, attempt to align the fragments into a single narrative. Although the one poem reading presents a more complex narrative, it does not affect my broader argument concerning the intimate relation between Strife, separation and sacrifice.

¹¹⁹ Primavasi (2008) 263.

¹²⁰ Trans. Graham (2010).

¹²¹ See for example Plut. *De Defect.* 435c; Plut. *Quaes. Conv.* 729f. Finkelberg (2017) 137 n. 43 points out that Plutarch associates the onset of Strife with the myth of the Titans at *De. Fac.* 926d-e:

ὥσθ' ὅρα καὶ σκόπει, δαμόνιε, μὴ μεθιστὰς καὶ ἀπάγων ἕκαστον, ὅπου πέφυκεν εἶναι, διάλυσιν τινα. κόσμου φιλοσοφῆς καὶ τὸ νεῖκος ἐπάγης τὸ Ἐμπεδοκλέους τοῖς πράγμασι: μᾶλλον δὲ τοὺς παλαιούς κινήσας Τιτᾶνας ἐπὶ τὴν φύσιν καὶ Γίγαντας καὶ τὴν μυθικὴν ἐκείνην καὶ φοβερὰν ἀκοσμίαν καὶ πλημμέλειαν ἐπιθεῖν ποθῆς, χωρὶς τὸ βαρὺ πᾶν καὶ χωρὶς τιθεῖς τὸ κοῦφον.

'So look out and reflect, good sir, lest in rearranging and removing each thing to its 'natural' location you contrive a dissolution of the cosmos and bring upon things the 'Strife' of Empedocles — or rather lest you arouse against nature the ancient Titans and Giants and long to look upon that legendary and dreadful disorder and discord when you have separated all that is heavy and all that is light.' Trans. Cherniss (1957).

From them all things that were, that are and that will be
sprang – trees, men, women,
beats, fowls, water-nourished fish,
and long-lived gods foremost in honours.
for these are the very things that are, which running through other
become different; so much does blending change them.¹²²

The idea of mirror models allows us, to some degree, to reconstruct obscurities in the different narratives. For example, the sacrificial scene among the daimones is mythically only discussed in reference to incarnations of the daimones yet we are left wondering into what exactly the daimones get incarnated? Do animals and men already pre-exist ready for these divine beings to fall into or are they created simultaneously in this act? In the physical narrative, however, the answer is clear and all life is said to be created simultaneously. In other words, the murder of the god and the destruction of the Sphere are a kind of anthropogony.

Empedocles' poetry has a tendency towards repetition and he offers not one but two descriptions of the first sacrifice (DK 31 B 128):

οὐδέ τις ἦν κείνοισιν Ἄρης θεὸς οὐδὲ Κυδοιμός
οὐδὲ Ζεὺς βασιλεὺς οὐδὲ Κρόνος οὐδὲ Ποσειδῶν
ἀλλὰ Κύπρις βασίλεια...
τὴν οἱ γ' εὖσεβέεσσιν ἀγάλμασιν ἱλάσκοντο
γραπτοῖς τε ζώοισι μύροισι τε δαιδαλεόδοις
σμύρνης τ' ἀκρήτου θυσίαις λιβάνου τε θυάδους,
ξανθῶν τε σπονδὰς μελίτων ρίπτοντες ἐς οὔδας·

They had no Ares as their god, nor Tumult,
not Zeus the king, nor Cronus nor Posiedon,
but Cypris the queen...
whom they propitiated with reverent statues,
with painted pictures, delicate perfumes,
and offerings of undiluted myrrh and fragrant frankincense,
pouring to the ground libations of yellow honey.¹²³

In this scene Empedocles describes how the first men, animals and the goddess Cypris or Aphrodite live in harmony. Primavassi does not discuss this myth, but in many respects its potential as a mirror model of the physical account is even stronger than the daimones' myth. Indeed, while this version has received considerably less attention, Theophrastus (himself the author of an impressive account on the origin and history of sacrifice) refers to this myth as Empedocles' 'theogony and sacrifice.'¹²⁴ Like Empedocles' physical account, the Cypris drama starts with an original harmony and ends with a plurality of animals, men and gods.

¹²² Trans Graham (2010).

¹²³ Trans. Graham (2010).

¹²⁴ Theophrastus' reference to the event as part of Empedocles' *Theogony* suggests that sacrifice played an analogous role here to that discussed in Hesiod's myth. Theophrastus' text on the origins of sacrifice is paraphrased by Porphyry in *De Ab.* 2.5.

The most obvious parallel is Cypris herself who is elsewhere used as a poetic synonym for Aphrodite or the complete union of the elements under Love.¹²⁵ The presence of cosmic Strife on the other hand is indicated by the divisive gods, Battle Din and Ares. Kahn therefore describes this scene as ‘an obvious parallel to the supernatural harmony of the cosmic sphere’ and interprets the narrative in terms of the ‘complete fusion, realised in the sphere.’¹²⁶

The Cypris, physical and daimones myths all describe a similar event, yet their tellings stress aspects of the narrative absent or subdued in the parallel versions. One of the most striking features of the Cypris myth is the inclusion of animals as actors. Hesiod, as discussed in Chapter Two, describes the sacrificial ox in the Promethean narrative as more of an object than an agent. Empedocles’ myth on the other hand places animals side by side with humans and even gods. This addition, however, adds an interpretive problem. I have argued that the daimones represent a homogenous society. This myth, which supposedly parallels it, on the other hand presents a society comprised of gods, animals and men who, at least as far as their bodies are concerned, are sharply differentiated.¹²⁷ We should be careful, however, in assuming that these beings are conceived of as ontologically differentiated beings. For a start, if we take the parallels between the unity of the Sphere and the rule of Love seriously the emphasis is on unity and following what Viveiros de Castro notes of Amazonian mythology, these bodily differences may be closer to prefigurations of what is to come, rather than evidence of existing differences.¹²⁸ Secondly, despite their apparent differences, the close kinship and mutual recognition between humans, animals and gods is stressed throughout the narrative. Mortals worship Cypris peacefully through libations, honey and incense, a diet seemingly appropriate for all three species. Elsewhere it is said:

ἦσαν δὲ κτίλα πάντα καὶ ἀνθρώποισι προσήνη
Θῆρές τ’ οἰωνοὶ τε, φιλοφροσύνη τε δεδήει.

¹²⁵ Empedocles in his physical cosmology uses Love, Kupris and Aphrodite interchangeably to refer to the cosmic rule of attraction. See DK 33; B 95; B 73; B 75.

¹²⁶ Kahn (1974) 445. Apart from the evidence I discuss in this chapter, Garani (2013) draws attention to the Latin paratexts and makes a similar case based on shared allusions between Ovid’s *Fausti*, Lucretius and Empedocles noting ‘according to this allegorical reading, the sacrificed ox would correspond to the Empedoclean ‘one’, which is divided into many creatures (that is, the bees) under the increasing power of Strife (that is, the slaughter of a sacrificial bull)’ (251).

¹²⁷ Where to situate this passage in Empedocles’ model is unclear and to a large degree depends on whether we favour a one or two poems reading. Nevertheless, the majority of interpretations describe it in terms of the beginning of the rule of Strife. Kahn (1974) 445, as noted above, aligns it with the destruction of the Sphere. Kingsley (2003) 365-6 describes it as a double fault, i.e. a repetition of the daimones’ narrative taking place slightly later among humans. Sedley (2007) 34 n. 9; 70 locates it before the fall of the daimones and the beginning of the reign of Strife. Rangos (2012) pointing towards the existing differentiation between animals and men argues that ‘the fragment as a whole must, then, refer to a cosmic phase when Strife has not yet begun to gain, or has already lost, sufficient influence in the universe’ (320). Osborne (1987) 126 is an exception and locates it at the end of the cycle just before the Sphere comes together again. A problem with this reading is as she notes that the discussion is written in the past tense.

¹²⁸ Viveiros de Castro (1998) discusses how ‘the original common condition of both humans and animals is not animality but rather humanity’ (472).

They were all tame and gentle to men,
both beasts and fowl, and friendly feelings radiated.¹²⁹

The stress on peaceful interspecies relations described by the terms φιλόφρων ('kindly' 'disposed', 'friendly'), κτίλος, ('tame' or perhaps better 'cherished')¹³⁰ and προσηνής ('soft', 'gentle') was taken even further in Plato's retelling of Empedocles' prehistory. For Plato, animals are not only friendly,¹³¹ they also speak to each other (*Plt.* 272 b-c):

εἰ μὲν τοίνυν οἱ τρόφιμοι τοῦ Κρόνου, παρούσης αὐτοῖς οὕτω πολλῆς σχολῆς καὶ δυνάμεως
πρὸς τὸ μὴ μόνον ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ καὶ θηρίοις διὰ λόγων δύνασθαι συγγίγνεσθαι, κατεχρῶντο
τούτοις σύμπασιν ἐπιφιλοσοφίαν, μετὰ τε θηρίων καὶ μετ' ἀλλήλων ὁμιλοῦντες, καὶ
πυνθανόμενοι παρὰ πάσης φύσεως εἴ τινα τις ἰδίαν δύναμιν ἔχουσα ἤσθετό τι διάφορον τῶν
ἄλλων εἰς συναγυρμὸν φρονήσεως, εὐκριτον ὅτι τῶν νῦν οἱ τότε μυρία πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν
διέφερον.

Well, then, if the foster children of Cronus, having all this leisure and the ability to converse not only with human beings but also with beasts made full use of all these opportunities with a view to philosophy, talking with the animals and with one another and learning from every creature that, through possession of some peculiar power he may have had in any respect beyond his fellows perceptions tending towards an increase of wisdom, it would be easy to decide that the people of those old times were immeasurably happier than those of our epoch.¹³²

Whether this detail was present in Empedocles' Cypris myth is unclear. Nevertheless, the emphasis in Empedocles' myth, mirroring the unity of the Sphere and the homogenous society of daimones, is upon a society defined by kinship and mutual recognition.¹³³ And as with the daimones, division takes place through the sacrifice of one of their own (DK 31 B 128):

ταύρων δ' ἀκρήτοισι φόνους οὐ δεύετο βωμός,
ἀλλὰ μύσος τοῦτ' ἔσκεν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστον,
θυμὸν ἀπορραΐσαντας ἐέδμεναι ἡέα γυῖα.

the altar was not moistened with the pure blood of bulls,
but this was the greatest abomination to men,
to take away their life and devour their goodly limbs.¹³⁴

The structure and message of the myth is almost identical to that of the daimones. Man, by sacrificing a kindred bull and dining on its flesh, is separated from the rule of Cypris. Animals who were once peaceful become wild. Sacrifice, too, appears to create tensions among the gods and the act ushers in new kinds of divinities. Those mentioned are Kronos, Ares, Battle

¹²⁹ Trans. Graham (2010).

¹³⁰ Κτίλος is often translated as tame or docile though the term can also mean cherished as it does, for example, in Pind. *Pyth.* (2.17): ἱερέα κτίλον Ἀφροδίτας 'Aphrodite's cherished priest.'

¹³¹ *Plt.* 271e: ὥστε οὐτ' ἄγριον ἦνουδὲν οὔτε ἀλλήλων ἐδωδαί, πόλεμός τε οὐκ ἐνήνουδὲ στάσις τὸ παράπαν 'so that no creature was wild, nor did they eat one another, and there was no war among them, nor any strife whatsoever.' Trans. Fowler (1921).

¹³² Trans. Fowler (1921).

¹³³ See Gera (2003) 61-7.

¹³⁴ Trans. Graham (2010).

Din, Poseidon and Zeus.¹³⁵ In other words, all of Empedocles' variations focus on a common theme, the transition from unity to plurality through an act of sacrifice.

None of Empedocles' myths are identical to the Orphic narrative and it is difficult to specify a precise relation between them. Indeed, rather than posit a direct line of influence, the association between sacrifice and cosmology may have been more widespread and Finkelberg traces the idea of sacrifice as an analogy for the creation of the current world and interplay of the one and the many to Heraclitus.¹³⁶ The point is illustrated by a passage from Philo of Alexandria (*De spec. leg* 1.38):

ἡ δὲ εἰς μέλη τοῦ ζώου διανομὴ δηλοῖ, ἥτοι ὡς ἐν τὰ πάντα ἢ ὅτι ἐξ ἐνός τε καὶ εἰς ἓν, ὅπερ οἱ μὲν κόρον καὶ χρησιμοσύνην ἐκάλεσαν, οἱ δ' ἐκπύρωσιν καὶ διακόσμησιν.

the division of the animal into limbs shows indeed that the totality of things is one or that it (comes from one and (returns) into one, which some called 'satiety and need' (DK 22 B 65) and others [sc. the Stocis] conflagration and the world arrangement.¹³⁷

While the passage is certainly relevant to my argument, Philo's clear allusion to Heraclitus cannot be read as testimony of the idea's origins. Rather, Philo may be drawing on a much later exegetical tradition which applied Heraclitus to the interpretation of sacrifice.¹³⁸ At any rate, the association between cosmology and sacrifice is, as noted in Chapter One, very old and common in the Indo-European tradition.¹³⁹ It also, whether we posit direct influence or not, provides the key to interpreting the Orphic and Empedoclean myths. Both myths start with a complete unity, Zeus or the Sphere/Daimones/Cypris.¹⁴⁰ In the Orphic myth this unity gives way to Zeus' ordered creation, whereas in Empedocles creation is simultaneous with the division of the Sphere. There is also a difference in what emerges following the disruption of the original unity. Most Orphic versions of the myth focus on the creation of mankind alone, whereas Empedocles, in at least one mythic version and the physical account, gives a greater role to the creation of animals, gods and humans. Although the creation of animals is of

¹³⁵ Rangos (2012) argues that the 'names of traditional male gods seem to stand for aspects or particular manifestations of Strife' (320). However, this list defies any easy attempt to describe it in terms of a simple opposition between Love and Strife. In general see Picot (2012). Porphyry's (*De Abst* 2.22) summary, which may draw on Theophrastus, only discusses the event in relation to Ares and Battle Din: 'I think that when friendship and perception of kinship ruled everything, no one killed any creature because people thought that other animals were related to them. But when Ares and Battle-noise and all kinds of conflict and sources of war were in control, then for the first time no one spared any related creature at all.' Trans. Clark (2000). It is possible that for Empedocles, Kronos and perhaps Poseidon, represent sources of conflict. However, to classify Zeus as an agent of Strife verges on blasphemy. A more plausible interpretation is that these figures represent the birth of the 'long lived gods' described in the physical poem. These are neither representative of Love or Strife but include negative and positive gods.

¹³⁶ Finkelberg (2017) 166.

¹³⁷ Trans. Finkelberg (2017).

¹³⁸ The passage shows similarities with Plutarch's (*De E.* 389a) description of the dismemberment. Both refer to the passage in relation to Heraclitus (DK 22 B 65) and it is possible that they are drawing on a common source.

¹³⁹ Vedic *Purusa-Sutka* (10.90); *Vafþrúðnismál* poetic Edda. See Mc Clymond (2010) 141.

¹⁴⁰ Finkelberg (2017) 136-7.

marginal importance in Orphic theogonies, it is not entirely absent and appears in the anthropogony described in *Hymn 37*:

Τιτήνες, Γαίης τε καί Οὐρανοῦ ἀγλαά τέκνα,
ἡμετέρων πρόγονοι πατέρων, γαίης ὑπένερθεν
οἴκοις Ταρταρίοισι μυχῶι χθονός ἐνναίοντες,
ἀρχαί καί πηγαί πάντων θνητῶν πολυμόχθων,
εἰναλίων πτηνῶν τε καί οἱ χθόνα ναιετάουσιν:
ἔξ ὑμέων γάρ πάσα πέλει γενεά κατὰ κόσμον.

Titans, glorious children of Sky and Earth,
ancestors of our fathers you dwell down below
in Tartarean homes, in the bowels of the earth.
From you (i.e. the Titans) are descended all toiling mortals,
the brood of the sea and the birds, and those who live on the land.
From you all generations of the world are born.¹⁴¹

The Hymns are a late source,¹⁴² nonetheless the Orphics, as will be discussed shortly, expressed a great deal of interest in animal souls and animals if not always part of the myth, may have been included in Orphic interpretations from an early date.¹⁴³ The importance the Orphics granted to animals is also apparent from their views on metempsychosis.¹⁴⁴ As is often the case in early Orphism, the evidence is strong but circumstantial. Orpheus, a figure frequently described as talking to animals, attributed souls to animal life and, like Empedocles, abstained from their flesh.¹⁴⁵ These ideas do not necessarily entail metempsychosis but are frequently associated with it.¹⁴⁶ Herodotus (2.123) attributed metempsychosis to the Egyptians. As there is little evidence for this belief in Egyptian texts, it is likely that Herodotus has mistakenly inferred the view based on his assumption that the Pythagoreans and Orphics derived their doctrines from Egypt (2.81).¹⁴⁷ This idea is strengthened by the presence of a gold plate from Thurii (OF 488) (where Herodotus reportedly lived for some time), which describes the deceased escaping from a heavy and

¹⁴¹ Trans. Athanassakis and Wolkow (2013) modified.

¹⁴² Athanassakis and Wolkow (2013) x suggest the mid third century AD. The date is hypothetical and it should be noted, however, that an earlier collection of hymns is mentioned in the Derveni papyrus (col. 22.12).

¹⁴³ Plutarch (*De Esu* 1 996b) as discussed above understood it as such. As did Proc. in Res. 2.338.10-339.9; OF 338 B): οὐνεκ' ἀμειβομένη ψυχὴ κατὰ κύκλα χρόνοις/ἀνθρώπων ζώοις μετέρχεται ἄλλοθεν ἄλλοις/ἄλλοτε μὲν θ' ἵππος, τότε γίνεται/ἄλλοτε δὲ πρόβατον, τότε δ' ὄρνειον αἰνόν ιδέσθαι,/ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ κύνειον τε δέμας φωνὴ τε βαρεῖα,/καὶ ψυχρῶν ὀφίων ἔρπει γένος ἐν χθονὶ δίηι. 'on account of this a soul returning according to certain cycles of times goes into different animals from humans at different times. One time it becomes a horse, then [...]; another time a sheep, then a bird dreadful to behold; another time a canine body and growling voice, and the race of cold serpents creeps upon the divine earth.' Trans. Edmonds (2013).

¹⁴⁴ Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) 1 78-9 accept the presence of metempsychosis in early Orphism. Betegh (2014) 154-59 questions it. Edmonds (2013) 280-6 in a slightly more complex view argues that the idea is one of many potentially associated ideas compatible with the strangeness of Orpheus. Herrero de Jáuregui (2010) in his discussion of later Orphism notes that 'reincarnation seems to have been an open option that Orphism could develop or pass over, and the scarce Christian critiques treat it as such' (342).

¹⁴⁵ I discuss the sources for this in detail below 189-91.

¹⁴⁶ Betegh (2014) 156 points out that Xenokrates and Theophrastus, for example, advocated vegetarianism without metempsychosis.

¹⁴⁷ See Burkert (1972) 126-8; Edmonds (2013) 283.

difficult ‘circle’ or ‘cycle’ (κύκλος)¹⁴⁸ The term κύκλος, given the context, likely refers to a cycle of births and is understood as such by later Platonists.¹⁴⁹ The idea of metempsychosis would also help make sense of Aristotle’s (*De An.* 410b 27–11a 2) description of the Orphic soul as something inhaled by animals, plants and humans.¹⁵⁰ I will return to this passage in more detail shortly. A more indirect, but still relevant source appears in the Orphic details in Plato’s descriptions of metempsychosis.¹⁵¹ In the Myth of Er (621a), for example, Plato describes an underworld journey and springs of water associated with forgetfulness which closely echo the underworld topography of the gold plates.¹⁵² The myth furthermore features Orpheus himself who chooses to be reborn as a swan (620a).¹⁵³ As with Herodotus, it is likely that Plato understood metempsychosis to be an Orphic doctrine.

The above allusions alongside the clear later ascriptions of the doctrine by figures such as Proclus and Plutarch strongly suggest the early presence of metempsychosis among the Orphics. Still, it remains significant that animals were frequently not discussed in the dismemberment myth and here we may see a divergence from Empedocles. At any rate, despite these differences the overall shared orientation of Orpheus and Empedocles is clear and sacrifice in both is the pivotal act which creates divisions in the cosmos and offers an explanation of how mankind emerges as the result of a punishment for an original crime. A final similarity appears in Empedocles’ and the Orphics’ use of myth and interpretation. The Derveni commentator does not discuss the dismemberment myth in the extant papyrus. However, in conclusion to this section it is worthwhile speculating on how the Derveni commentator might have interpreted the myth. Zeus, as noted in Chapter Three, was seen as the perfect unity and dominance of Air/Mind/Intelligence. Despite this, Zeus remains a temporary name for a divinity which exists in different forms and configurations. As the Derveni commentator (col. 17.1-6) puts it:

π[ρ]ότερον ἦν πρ[ὶν ὄν]ομασθῆναι, ἔπ[ει]τα ὠνομάσθη
 ἦν γὰρ καὶ πρόσθεν [ἐ]ὼν’ ἢ τὰ νῦν ἔοντα συσταθῆναι
 ἀήρ καὶ ἔσται αἰεὶ· οὐ γὰρ ἐγένετο, ἀλλὰ ἦν. δι’ ὃ τι δὲ
 ἀήρ ἐκλήθη δεδήλωται ἐν τοῖς προτέροις. γενέσθαι δὲ
 ἐνομίσθη ἐπεὶτ’ ὠνομάσθη Ζεύς, ὥσπερ εἰ πρότερον
 μὴ ἔών.

¹⁴⁸ See Dousa (2011) 123.

¹⁴⁹ Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) 78-9 argue this case and point towards Proc. in *Ti* 3.296.7. The term κύκλος is used in reference to Orpheus, metempsychosis and cycles of time in Proc. in *Res.* 2.338.10-339.9 (OF 338). Edmonds (2013) 289-90 argues that κύκλος may have a more general meaning.

¹⁵⁰ Zhmud (2012) 225 consider the reference to life-death-life in the bone plaques to be a clear reference to metempsychosis.

¹⁵¹ Bernabé (2013).

¹⁵² See Edmonds (2004) 51.

¹⁵³ Orpheus chooses a swan according to the myth because he hated women. This may be a joke and Orpheus’ choice of reincarnation may be related to Plato’s description of the prophetic powers of swans and the beauty of their song when approaching death as described in the *Phaedo* (84e-85a).

it existed before it was named. Then it was named. For air existed even before the things that are now were set together and always will exist. For it was not born, but existed. And the reason why air received its name has been made clear above. But it was thought that it was born, because it got the name Zeus, just as if it did not exist previously.¹⁵⁴

Based on this kind of reading the dismemberment of Dionysus would likely have been seen as an act of differentiation and transformations. We can only speculate on the details but the general tenor of the interpretation may have been similar to that given by Plutarch in the first century AD (*De e.* 388f -389a):

Ἐὰν οὖν ἔρηται τις, τί ταῦτα πρὸς τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα, φήσομεν οὐχὶ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον, ὃ τῶν Δελφῶν οὐδὲν ἦττον ἢ τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι μέτεστιν. ἀκούομεν οὖν τῶν θεολόγων τὰ μὲν ἐν ποιήμασι τὰ δ' ἄνευ μέτρου λεγόντων καὶ ὑμνούντων ὡς ἄφθαρτος ὁ θεὸς καὶ αἰδῖος πεφυκώς, ὑπὸ δὲ τις εἰμαρμένης γνώμης καὶ λόγου μεταβολαῖς ἑαυτοῦ χρώμενος ἄλλοτε μὲν εἰς πῦρ ἀνῆψε τὴν φύσιν πᾶνθ' ὁμοιώσας πᾶσιν, ἄλλοτε δὲ παντοδαπὸς ἐν τε μορφαῖς καὶ ἐν πάθεσι καὶ δυνάμεσι διαφόροις γιγνόμενος, ὡς γίγνεται νῦν ὁ κόσμος, ὀνομάζεται δὲ τῷ γνωριμωτάτῳ τῶν ὀνομάτων. κρυπτόμενοι δὲ τοὺς πολλοὺς οἱ σοφώτεροι τὴν μὲν εἰς πῦρ μεταβολὴν Ἀπόλλωνά τε τῇ μονώσει Φοῖβόν τε τῷ καθαρῷ καὶ ἀμιάντῳ καλοῦσι. τῆς δ' εἰς πνεύματα καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γῆν καὶ ἄστρα καὶ φυτῶν ζώων τε γενέσεις τροπῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ διακοσμήσεως τὸ μὲν πάθημα καὶ τὴν μεταβολὴν διασπασμὸν τινα καὶ διαμελισμὸν αἰνίττονται· Διόνυσον δὲ καὶ Ζαγρέα καὶ Νυκτέλιον καὶ Ἰσοδαίτην αὐτὸν ὀνομάζουσι, καὶ φθοράς τινας καὶ ἀφανισμοὺς εἶτα δ' ἀναβιώσεις καὶ παλιγγενεσίας, οἰκεῖα ταῖς εἰρημέναις μεταβολαῖς αἰνίγματα καὶ μυθεύματα περαίνουσι·

If, then, anyone asks, ‘What has this to do with Apollo?’, we shall say that it concerns not only him, but also Dionysus, whose share in Delphi is no less than that of Apollo. Now we hear the theologians affirming and reciting, sometimes in verse and sometimes in prose, that the god is deathless and eternal in his nature, but, owing forsooth to some predestined design and reason, he undergoes transformations of his person, and at one time enkindles his nature into fire and makes it altogether like all else, and at another time he undergoes all sorts of changes in his form, his emotions and his powers, even as the universe does to-day; but he is called by the best known of his names. The more enlightened, however, concealing from the masses the transformation into fire, call him Apollo because of his solitary state, and Phoebus because of his purity and stainlessness. And as for his turning into winds and water, earth and stars, and into the generations of plants and animals, and his adoption of such guises, they speak in a deceptive way of what he undergoes in his transformation as a tearing apart, as it were, and a dismemberment. They give him the names of Dionysus, Zagreus, Nyctelius, and Isodaetes; they construct destructions and disappearances, followed by returns to life and regenerations—riddles and fabulous tales quite in keeping with the aforesaid transformations.¹⁵⁵

Plutarch’s key interest in *The E at Delphi* focuses on local customs and hence Apollo. In this passage, however, he wanders into Orphic territory and the exegetical methods of theologians who study the dismemberment myth of Dionysus. The philosophical methodology of these theologians, as is common in Orphic sources, appears to mix Stoic and Heraclitean influences.¹⁵⁶ Heraclitus is, however, brought to the fore and the entire passage is framed in relation to DK 22 B 90 and a pantheistic god. Plutarch notes (388d-e):

¹⁵⁴ Trans. Betegh (2004).

¹⁵⁵ Trans. Babbitt (1936).

¹⁵⁶ See Burkert (1987) 160 n. 119 who classifies it as a Stoic interpretation of an Orphic myth. See Finkelberg (2017) esp. 140-2 who argues the passage is more Heraclitean than Stoic. These are not, as discussed in Appendix Four mutually exclusive and Stoic views in fact have much in common with the Orphic methods of exegesis adhered to by the Derveni commentator and later Orphic poets.

ὥς γὰρ ἐκείνην ἀλλάττουσαν ἐκ μὲν ἑαυτῆς τὸν κόσμον ἐκ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου πάλιν αὖ ἑαυτὴν ἀποτελεῖν ‘πυρός τ’ ἀνταμείβεσθαι πάντα,’ φησὶν ὁ Ἡράκλειτος, ‘καὶ πῦρ ἀπάντων, ὅκωσπερ χρυσοῦ χρήματα καὶ χρημάτων χρυσός.’

For as that principle by changes creates a complete universe out of itself, and then in turn out of the universe creates itself again, as Heraclitus says, ‘and exchanges fire for all and all for fire, as gold for goods and goods for gold.’¹⁵⁷

The overall position in this respect has much in common with the Orphic methods of exegesis illustrated by the Derveni commentator and Orphic poetry in general.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the Orphic *Hymn to the Sun* (OF 539) as discussed in the previous chapter interprets the dynamism of the pantheistic cosmos in very similar terms:

ἀλλαχθεὶς δ’ ὄνομ’, ἔσχε προσωνομίας πρὸς ἐκάστων
παντοδαπὰς, κατὰ καιρὸν ἀμειβομένοιο χρόνιο.

But then he changed his name and took on forms of address of every sort
From every source, as suits the alternating seasons.¹⁵⁹

Plutarch’s reference to theologians, poems and plain prose, shows his awareness that these ideas were common coin among philosophers and mystery groups and there is no reason to assume that this interpretation does not come from an Orphic source. This is suggested by the particular names Zagreus, the Orphic Dionysus (see Eur. fr. 472) and Nyctelius who is mentioned elsewhere by Plutarch (*De Is. et Os.* 365a) in relation to the Bacchic rituals.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, apart from a similar physical system based on the transformations and destructions of a divine cosmos, the passage also makes use of the Derveni commentator’s beloved etymologies of divine names. Apollo is discussed in terms of purifying (ἀπολούω) and his unity from the play on α-πολλόν, i.e. not many. This refers either to a general period of total unity or perhaps plays upon Apollo’s role in reassembling and unifying the pieces of the dismembered god.¹⁶¹ Dionysus’ dismemberment is in turn described by Plutarch as the creation of the plurality of life, the elements, plants and animals. Plutarch’s position is, of course, not identical with that of that of the Derveni commentator.¹⁶² The tenor, however, is very much in tune with the commentator’s curious mix of a Heraclitean and proto-Stoic emphasis on a single enduring God through many forms.

¹⁵⁷ Trans. Babbitt (1936).

¹⁵⁸ See my Appendix Four.

¹⁵⁹ Trans. Herrero de Jáuregui (2015).

¹⁶⁰ Isodaïtes is more unusual. The name means equal divisions and seems in this context to refer to the divisions of the god into equal portions.

¹⁶¹ This is a popular idea in later commentaries. Olymp. (*Ph.* 7.10), for example, refers to Apollo’s assembly of Dionysus’ fragments as a transition from ‘the Titanic life to unitary life.’

¹⁶² Although Plutarch’s analysis is similar to the spirit of the Derveni commentator, some details are clearly inconsistent with his model. The commentator would not have been able to include the stars, earth and water as part of the dismemberment myth as these were already created by Zeus. The commentator also probably would have placed greater emphasis on elemental struggle between fire and air.

Although my focus is on Orpheus' dismemberment myth, it is worth asking how the idea of a cosmic god in changing forms relates to Empedocles' system. The Sphere may show similarities with Zeus yet it is generally maintained that once the Sphere dissolves it no longer exists in any sense.¹⁶³ This would illustrate an important difference between Orphic pantheism and Empedocles' model. There are, however, some suggestions that Empedocles, like Orpheus, did not consider the Sphere to be entirely destroyed. If we turn to the mythic mirror models it is clear that continuity remains despite the destruction of the Sphere. The daimones may be separated from the society of gods, but they retain their divine kinship throughout their wanderings until they eventually return to their starting point. This is the same cosmic kinship, as will be shortly explored in more detail, that is at the basis of Empedocles' refusal to sacrifice animals and, in this respect, transcends the two poems' division. Cosmic kinship is a way of life and whether we speak of the Sphere or the wandering daimones some form of continuity exists.¹⁶⁴ Following the emphasis on cosmic kinship, it is plausible that rather than a complete destruction, like the Orphic Zeus, the Sphere is a temporary form which 'existed both before the things that are now were set together and always will exist' (*P.Der* col. 17.2). The Sphere in this reading is simply the most perfect form of the god who continues to persist throughout the mixtures and separations until it eventually assumes his original form. As Empedocles (DK 31 B17.1-2) puts it:

Δίπλ' ἐρέω· τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἓν ηὐξήθη μόνον εἶναι
ἐκ πλεόνων, τοτὲ δ' αὖ διέφθυ πλέον' ἐξ ἑνὸς εἶναι.

I shall speak a double tale: at one time they grew to be one alone
from many, at another time it grew apart to be many from.¹⁶⁵

In this destructive creation many things appear to be born and to die. There is, however, one unity which Empedocles and the Orphics agree upon, a continuing cosmic kinship through god.

Mankind's Monistic Origins

If the sacrifice of Dionysus is part of a process of creative destruction and cosmic transformations, what precisely is man? Is he a part of the cosmic god like everything else? Is

¹⁶³ E.g. Primavasi (2008) argues he is only longlived 'he is not *eternal*, since he comes to be at the end of movement and passes away at the beginning of movement' (256). Rowett (2016) 'I think, that this god is alone, when he exists, and that he ceases to exist when plurality returns' (25). Rangos (2012) 'although in the extant fragments the Sphere is nowhere called 'long-lived', Empedocles clearly conceived him as a temporally finite god (B31)' (317).

¹⁶⁴ The 'holy mind' (φρὴν ἱερή) (DK 33 B134) might be of relevance here. The holy mind is described in almost identical terms with the Sphere bar the detail that it darts throughout the cosmos (κόσμον ἅπαντα κατὰΐσσουσα).

¹⁶⁵ Trans. Graham (2010).

he a split being, part divine, part mortal. Is he something else entirely? The fullest version of the myth describes how (OF 220):¹⁶⁶

εἶτα τὸν Δία διεδέξατο ὁ Διόνυσος, ὃν φασι κατ' ἐπιβουλὴν τῆς Ἥρας τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν
Τιτᾶνας σπαράττειν καὶ τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτοῦ ἀπογεύεσθαι. καὶ τούτους ὀργισθεὶς ὁ Ζεὺς
ἐκεραύνωσε, καὶ ἐκ τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν ἀτμῶν τῶν ἀναδοθέντων ἐξ αὐτῶν ὕλης γενομένης
γενέσθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

Dionysus succeeded Zeus. They say that through Hera's treachery, the Titans who were around Dionysus tore him to pieces and tasted his flesh. And Zeus, being angry at this, struck the Titans with thunderbolts, and from the soot of the vapours that arose from [the incinerated Titans] came the matter from which humanity came into existence.¹⁶⁷

This myth is not directly referred to until Xenokrates, but its presences as argued can be inferred through allusions in Plato, Pindar and the eschatology of the gold plates. What is more problematic is its interpretation. So far, I have described the Orphic cosmos as pantheistic. However, a widely held position is that man rather than part of unfolding cosmic god, emerges as a dualistic being where 'the soul, immortal, corresponds to the Dionysian element; the body, to the Titanic nature.'¹⁶⁸ In other words, humanity is not simply a product of one transforming god, but interpreted in terms reminiscent of Platonic dualism, a composite being, including an earthy Titanic body and a divine Dionysiac soul. There are many good reasons for reading the Orphic body/soul relation through the lens of such a dualism. Plato is one of our best sources on the Orphic self and his views on the body/prison doctrine discussed in the *Phaedo* (62b) and *Cratylus* (400c) are likely reflective of a genuine Orphic doctrine. Apart from Plato's direct references to an Orphic body and soul opposition, the gold plates show some striking similarities with the souls described in Plato's eschatological myths, which were probably in part inspired by Orphic accounts.¹⁶⁹ For both Plato and Orpheus the soul appears as a complete break from the shadowy wraiths of Homer. The Orphic soul, like Plato's, can speak and defend itself, navigate underworld pathways and

¹⁶⁶ OF 220: Olympiodorus *In Phaed.* I.3 = OF 220K = 227iv + 299vii + 304i + 313ii + 318iii + 320iB).

¹⁶⁷ Trans. Graf and Johnston (2007) modified.

¹⁶⁸ Casadesús Bordoy (2013) 174. This view has a long history. Nilsson (1935) argues 'if the soul is, as it must be, the good, divine principle of man, being the tomb of the soul, must represent the evil part of man' (205-6). Guthrie (1980) 83 also speaks of man's two fold nature as earthly titanic versus heavenly Dionysus. Alderink (1981) notes: 'the Orphics taught that humans bear a composite nature—partly Titanic (evil and bodily) and partly Dionysiac (good and of the soul) (66-7); Finkelberg (1986) notes 'according to this Dionysos was devoured by the earth-born Titans and recreated anew by Zeus; the Titans were blasted by Zeus' thunderbolt and from the ashes arose the race of human beings who therefore consist of both earthly Titanic and heavenly Dionysiac elements. The myth not only provides an anthropogony, but also expresses the eschatological idea of salvation by purifying the soul of the evil, earthly, Titanic element mingled with it' (326). Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008) write of man's 'dual essence, earthly and heavenly' (42). As one moves outside of specialised literature this dualism has a tendency to be further increased. Eliade (1982), for example, speaks of what he refers to as 'a dualism (spirit/body) very close to the Platonic dualism' and describes how 'according to this myth, man shared both in the Titanic nature and in divinity, since the ashes of the Titans also contained the body of the infant Dionysus' (189-90).

¹⁶⁹ See Bernabé (2013) for a survey of probable Platonic mythic borrowings.

drink or refrain from drinking water.¹⁷⁰ In short, Plato very likely borrowed elements from Orpheus. Orpheus, however, did not borrow from Plato and nowhere is this more evident than Platonic dualism. In this section, rejecting the traditional dualistic Titanic/Dionysiac view, I will interpret the Orphic soul as part of a monistic system in the process of becoming.¹⁷¹

The concept of dualism is often used in contradictory ways and almost all early Greek thinkers, including the Orphics, can be described as dualists of sorts. Hesiod is a dualist insofar as the gods are considered to be sharply differentiated from men. When it comes to body and soul, or bodies and souls, as discussed in the Introduction, the early evidence in Homer and Hesiod indicates that these interiorities and physicalities are opposed to each other and even separable. In this respect we can speak of a dualism of sorts. Even Heraclitus, despite proposing a single underlying monistic world view, also differentiates body and soul in terms that could rightly be called dualistic (DK 22 B 96). This is similar to Empedocles' body and soul language which discusses the fallen daimon entering the body as into an alien cloak (DK 31 B 126). While these ghost in the machine like descriptions could be described as dualistic, it is important to stress that this opposition is not the same as the dualism commonly attributed to Plato and read into the Orphic view which expresses an absolute opposition between the corporeal body and the incorporeal soul (80a-b):

σκόπει δὴ, ἔφη, ὦ Κέβης, εἰ ἐκ πάντων τῶν εἰρημένων τάδε ἡμῖν συμβαίνει, τῷ μὲν θεῷ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ νοητῷ καὶ μονοειδεῖ καὶ ἀδιαλύτῳ καὶ ἀεὶ ὡσαύτως κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχοντι ἑαυτῷ ὁμοιότατον εἶναι ψυχῇ, τῷ δὲ ἀνθρωπίνῳ καὶ θνητῷ καὶ πολυειδεῖ καὶ ἀνοήτῳ καὶ διαλυτῷ καὶ μηδέποτε κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχοντι ἑαυτῷ ὁμοιότατον αὐτὸ εἶναι σῶμα.

Then see, Cebes, if this is not the conclusion from all that we have said, that the soul is most like the divine and immortal and intellectual and uniform and indissoluble and ever unchanging, and the body, on the contrary, most like the human and mortal and multiform and unintellectual and dissoluble and ever changing.¹⁷²

If the Orphic soul prefigures aspects of the Platonic soul, it is equally indebted to earlier Presocratic views which focus on an essential continuity between body, soul and indeed the entire cosmos.¹⁷³ Indeed, the dominant focus among many Presocratic thinkers was not on the idea of soul as the true self but upon a view of the soul as something integrated into a wider

¹⁷⁰ Compare the descriptions of the underworld in (Pl. *Resp*10.614b -21) with those of the gold plates.

¹⁷¹ See Alderink (1981) 62-4; Parker (1995) 499; Finkelberg (2013) 156 n 19.

¹⁷² Trans. Fowler (1966). Although this view of Plato is typical, Plato discusses the soul in multiple and conflicting ways and it is problematic to make general statements on a philosopher who is claimed as the founder of Cartesian dualism and an advocate of process philosophy. The dualist interpretation, whatever Plato's true position was, has influenced modern interpretations of Orphism and I will thus use the ontological dualist Plato as a foil for my argument. For a critical discussion of Plato's dualism and Descartes see Broadie (2001).

¹⁷³ Renehan (1980) argues this in strong terms 'the attribution to sixth-century "Orphics" and Pythagoreans of a grasp of spiritual reality "in its full incorporeality" lacks foundation. The fallacy here consists in the unconscious assumption that a soul which is independent of, indeed opposed to, the body is therefore free from matter and incorporeal. Later Greeks were to think that way. But before such concepts had become familiar, the inference was by no means automatic. There is in fact no evidence to suggest that any Greek in the sixth century was in a position to define the soul as an immaterial being' (107).

cosmic kinship.¹⁷⁴ The Milesians, for example, say very little about the soul as self and instead focus on the soul as the means of connecting the cosmos. Thales, according to the testimonies, argued that the soul, or the divine, was the unifying force of the cosmos (DK 11 A 22).¹⁷⁵ Anaximenes discussed the soul as air and conceived of it as both an inner part of man and something which surrounds the whole cosmos (DK 13 B2). The idea of soul/breath as something which unifies the cosmos never really disappeared from Greek intellectual debates and was later adopted in a similar form by Diogenes of Apollonia (DK 64 A 20) and most famously by the Stoics.¹⁷⁶ With the Orphics and Pythagoreans this cosmic kinship helped facilitate their views on metempsychosis, where not only animals and plants possessed souls, but that these souls could exchange bodies. Metempsychosis arguably required a closer identification between the soul and the self, yet surprisingly Pythagoras may have continued to place a greater emphasis on the soul as something which connects man to the wider cosmos. Huffman argues that although Pythagoras used the term *ψυχή* (soul) and possessed a doctrine of metempsychosis, the soul was more a seat of emotions, than the core self.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, only with Heraclitus does the *ψυχή* clearly become something like the true centre of self.¹⁷⁸ Heraclitus, however, continued to view the soul as something related to a cosmic soul stuff or what is sometimes called the world soul.¹⁷⁹ Empedocles does not use the term *ψυχή* and he is not an obvious example of a monist. However, as Finkelberg correctly notes there exists a certain family resemblance between Empedocles, Heraclitus and the Orphics and it is appropriate to briefly discuss his views here.¹⁸⁰ Empedocles on the surface appears to propose a dualistic theory where the body and wandering daimon are separable and distinct. Kahn, in a view reminiscent of the common Orphic view, argues that the daimon is a spark of Love separate from the other physical elements.¹⁸¹ This view is persuasively challenged by Inwood who argues that Empedocles' daimon is better interpreted as a purer blend of the four elements or roots, which inhabits a less refined blend, the body.¹⁸² This emphasis on a basic continuity between self and cosmos is also apparent in Empedocles decision to call his inner self a daimon. As discussed in Chapter Two, for Hesiod (*Op.* 121-7), Plato (*Symp.* 202 e), and many others, daimones were defined as the intermediaries which connected the otherwise

¹⁷⁴ The narrative of Greek philosophy is often told in terms of the discovery of the self as a psychic whole and Laks (1999), for example, argues 'as the fifth century progresses, however, soul, sensation, and thought become more and more tightly associated. One can even say that the history of this triad, during this period, is the history of its constitution, which ultimately led to a unified theory of psychological life' (251).

¹⁷⁵ Drozdek (2007) 6-8.

¹⁷⁶ On the Stoic soul, see Long (1996).

¹⁷⁷ Huffman (2009) 40.

¹⁷⁸ See Nussbaum (1972); Kahn (1979) 127; and Schofield (1991).

¹⁷⁹ Betegh (2007). Finkelberg (2017) esp. 104-25 who points toward Aetius 4.3.12 = DK 22 A 15.

¹⁸⁰ Finkelberg (2017) 126-45.

¹⁸¹ Kahn (1974) 446.

¹⁸² Inwood (2001) 61.

separate realms of mortals and immortals.¹⁸³ Empedocles, however, by identifying the daimon as the inner self, internalises and dissolves this intermediary realm.¹⁸⁴ This is entirely in line with the common Presocratic stress on identifying the soul as something shared and divine and these figures, whether we are speaking of souls or daimones, by placing the god within collapse the barrier between mortal and immortal which defined Hesiod's worldview.

Body and Soul in the Orphic Fragments

Although interpretations of the Orphic self are frequently discussed in terms of Platonic dualism, the available evidence, including the Derveni papyrus and the gold plates, suggests a closer kinship with the Presocratic approach and that like Heraclitus' and Empedocles' souls, the Orphic self was considered to be both an independent entity and something indelibly linked with the cosmic whole. By Orphic standards the evidence for such a view is abundant. Indeed, the same Thurii gold plate which describes the soul's journey through the underworld was itself wrapped in a larger gold plate discussing elemental transformations including air and fire (L 12; *OF* 492). The precise physical view expressed in the Timpone Grande gold plate is unclear but given the repetition of terms such as fire, air, Protogonos, it shows a broad continuity with the kind of theorising present in the Derveni papyrus.¹⁸⁵ In Appendix Four, I outline the Derveni commentator's central obsession with Air/Mind/Zeus which forms the basis of a philosophical system based on a divine air which controls, unites and, at least at times, is identical with the cosmos. Like the gold plates, the Derveni commentator also writes extensively, albeit obscurely, on rituals concerning souls.¹⁸⁶ The discussion appears to form the basis of the early columns but can only be reliably reconstructed in column six which speaks of hindering souls which are also called daimones (col. 6.3-4). It is not clearly stated in

¹⁸³As Sfameni Gasparo (2015) notes 'in Hesiod's scheme the 'daimones-guardians' appear as a well-defined category of beings, midway between gods and men, and acting as intermediaries between them. There are many elements that lead us to conclude that this notion is not the poet's invention, but reflects popular belief that the daimones were subhuman beings related to, but distinct from, the gods, who acted as intermediaries between gods and men' (417).

¹⁸⁴ The internalisation of the daimon collapses this division entirely. This is not limited to Empedocles. Thales is reported to have said that 'the world is besouled and full of daimones' (Schol. *In Remp.* 600 A: apud Hesychios DK 11[1]A3. Cf. Aët., Plac. 1.7.11, Dox. 301, 20-2 = DK 11A23). The Pythagorean notebooks describe the whole air full of daimones and also referred to them as souls (Diog. Laert. 8.24-33). Heraclitus (DK 22 B119) calls 'man's ἦθος (character or perhaps even nature) his daimon.' The Orphics as early as Derveni papyrus call souls daimones (col 6). Algra (2009) makes a similar point regarding the Stoic usage of daimones and argues 'thus, the Platonic conception of demons as mediators would seem to be superfluous in the context of Stoic philosophy: given the latter's conception of an immanent god to which humans are closely connected in view of their own rationality, there was no real need for an intermediary between man and god. The Stoics also had no need for an intermediary to bridge the corporeal and the divine, for the Stoic god was himself corporeal' (364).

¹⁸⁵ Betegh (2004) 332-7 makes a convincing case for Heraclitean influence.

¹⁸⁶ On the daimonology of these passages see Bernabé (2014); Burkert (2014).

the papyrus, but it is likely that the commentator also indentifies these souls with Air and therefore, Zeus and Mind. This was a common idea and the Pythagoreans notebooks describe an upper air filled with souls which are also called daimones and heroes.¹⁸⁷ Diogenes of Apollonia (DK 64 B5) also describes Air as Mind, Soul and god. Diogenes may not be the author of the papyrus as Janko argues,¹⁸⁸ yet the idea that divine air and souls surround us is not only a common idea of the day, it is demonstrably Orphic and vouched for by Aristotle (*De An.* 410b 27–11a 2):

τοῦτο δὲ πέπονθε καὶ ὁ ἐν τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς καλουμένοις ἔπεσι λόγος· φησὶ γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκ τοῦ ὅλου εἰσιέναι ἀναπνεόντων, φερομένην ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνέμων, οὐχ οἷόν τε δὲ τοῖς φυτοῖς τοῦτο συμβαίνειν οὐδὲ τῶν ζώων ἐνίοις, εἴπερ μὴ πάντα ἀναπνεύουσιν· τοῦτο δὲ λέληθε τοὺς οὕτως ὑπειληφότας.

The doctrine contained within the poems called “Orphic” suffers from this very thing, for it says that the soul comes in from the universe when breathing takes place, borne in upon the winds. However, it is not possible for this to happen to plants, nor to certain animals, for not all of them breathe. But those who hold this view overlooked this fact.¹⁸⁹

Variant forms of the idea also appear in later Orphic fragments. Proclus quotes a fragment describing:

αἱ μὲν δὴ θηρῶν τε καὶ οἰωνῶν πτεροέντων
ψυχαὶ ὅτ’ αἰζῶσι, λίπη δέ μιν ἱερός αἰὼν
τῶν οὐ τις ψυχὴν παράγει δόμον εἰς Ἄϊδαο,
ἄλλ’ αὐτοῦ πεπότηται ἐτώσιον εἰς δ’ κεν αὐτὴν
ἄλλο ἀφαρπάξῃ μίγδην ἀνέμοιο πνοῆσιν
ὅππότε δ’ ἄνθρωπος προλίπη φάος ἡελίοιο,
ψυχὰς ἀθανάτας κατάνει Κυλλήνιος Ἑρμῆς
γαίης ἐς κευθμῶνα πελώριον.

when the souls of beasts or winged birds flit forth, and the sacred life leaves them, for them there is not one to lead the soul to the house of Hades, but rather it flutters vainly about itself until, mingled with the breath of the wind, another body snatches it in. But when a human being leaves the light of the sun, Kyllenian Hermes leads the immortal souls to the enormous depths of the earth.¹⁹⁰

And Vettius Valens describes how (OF 436):

ἀέρα δ’ ἔλκοντες ψυχὴν θεῖαν δρεπόμεσθα.

¹⁸⁷ Diog. Laert. 8.32: εἶναι τε πάντα τὸν ἀέρα ψυχῶν ἐμπλεων· καὶ ταύτας δαίμονας τε καὶ ἥρωας ὀνομάζεσθαι (the whole air is full of souls which are called daimones or heroes). See Burkert (2014) 111 for further similarities between the two.

¹⁸⁸ Janko (1997) 80-7.

¹⁸⁹ Trans. Megino (2011). For a more detailed study of this passage see Megino (2011) 23. Iamblichus (*De An.* 8) in his commentary on Aristotle’s passage adds some further detail:

ὥσπερ Ἀριστοτέλης μὲν ἐν τοῖς Φυσικοῖς ἔπεσι φησι λέγεσθαι τὴν ψυχὴν εἰσιέναι ἐκ τοῦ ὅλου ἀναπνεόντων ἡμῶν φερομένην ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνέμων· ‘ἔοικέ γε μὴν αὐτὸς ὁ Ὀρφεὺς χωρὶς ὑπολαμβάνειν εἶναι καὶ μίαν τὴν ψυχὴν, ἀφ’ ἧς πολλὰς μὲν εἶναι διαιρέσεις, πολλὰς δὲ καὶ ἀμέσους ἐπὶ πνοίας καθήκειν ἐπὶ τὰς μεριστὰς ψυχὰς ἀπὸ τῆς ὅλης ψυχῆς. ‘Aristotle, it is said in the *Physika* poem that the soul enters into us from the universe, borne by the winds, when we breathe; and it seems certainly that Orpheus himself considered that the soul was separate and one, and that out of it there spring many divisions, and that many intermediary “breaths” descended to the individual souls from the universal soul.’ Trans. Finamore and Dillon (2002). See Gagné (2007) for a longer treatment of this passage.

¹⁹⁰ Trans. Edmonds (2013). OF 339 = Proc. In Resp. 2.339.20-26

it is by drawing in the air that we acquire a divine soul.¹⁹¹

Although these sources may not form a single coherent doctrine, we can at least point to a set of repeated tropes which suggests that the Orphic soul is entirely in tune with its Presocratic counterparts.¹⁹² The soul is identified as divine air which both surrounds all beings and forms the inner self when inhaled by animals, plants and humans.

So much for the soul, what of the body? This is in fact a question already in part answered. If the soul is air and is a kind of body, then the body, too, is a kind of soul. This view was central to many Greek theories and difficult for many Christians such as Eusebius to take seriously:

σῶμα δὲ ὁ ἀήρ καὶ πολλὸν πρότερον ὁ αἰθήρ ... καὶ πῶς ἂν ταῦτόν ἐπινοηθεῖν
σῶμα καὶ νοῦς κατὰ διάμετρον ταῖς φύσεσι διεστῶτα;

The air is body and the aither a much more primitive kind of body ... but
how can body and mind be conceived the same, since in their natures they
are diametrically opposed?¹⁹³

Despite Eusebius' disbelief this was exactly what many Presocratics thought. Before turning to the Orphic evidence it will be helpful to examine the better preserved position of Heraclitus. Heraclitus, as noted had a lofty view of the soul (DK 22 B 45). Bodies, on the other hand, he calls worse than dung (DK 22 B 96). Despite his clear preference for the soul, he conceived that the body and soul mutually influence each other. Drinking too much alcohol, or other impious acts, for example makes the soul wet and binds it closer to the body (DK 22 B117). More than simply influencing each other, for Heraclitus the body and soul existed as a part of an elemental series of transformations (DK 22 B 36):

ψυχῇσιν θάνατος ὕδωρ γενέσθαι, ὕδατι δὲ θάνατος γῆν γενέσθαι, ἐκ γῆς δὲ ὕδωρ γίνεται ἐξ
ὑδατος δὲ ψυχῇ.

For souls it is to die to become water, for water it is to die to become earth, from earth water is
being born, from water Soul.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Trans. Edmonds (2013). Valens also adds ψυχῇ δ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἀπ' αἰθέρος ἐρρίζωται 'for humans, the soul derives its roots from the ether' (OF 422). See discussion in Edmonds (2013) 288. Megino (2012) argues that it 'seems clear that we may consider these two passages as the genuine expression of an Orphic conception of the soul preceding Aristotle's time, which is directly connected to pre-Socratic speculation, as Anaximenes, Diogenes of Apollonia and the Pythagoreans attest' (142).

¹⁹² Gagné (2007) 7-9 argues that the position from the gold plates, Aristotle and the Derveni papyrus may even derive from a fifth century Orphic book known as the *Physica*. He further notes that 'it is in the context of this natural philosophy that the implicit association of breath and soul was first transferred into a systematic equation of soul with air and wind, and many Presocratics of the later fifth century taught that the individual souls were reflections of a single cosmic whole grounded in one of the physical elements. This is exactly the context in which the *Physika* of Orpheus belongs' (13). Whether we accept the existence of the Orphic *Physica* or not, there is much in common between the Orphic evidence and Presocratic views and Aristotle's description of the Orphic soul has much in common with his account of Heraclitus. Aristotle notes (*De An.* 405a24): 'Heraclitus says that the principle is soul, if indeed soul is the exhalation of which everything else is composed.' Trans. Finkelberg (2013) 149. The correspondence, however, entails that we identify Heraclitus' soul with air/breath/exhalation instead of fire. This view has been supported by Kahn (1981), Betegh (2007) and Finkelberg (2017) but remains debated.

¹⁹³ Trans. Meisner (2015). Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* 3.11.3-4.

The process of transformations is described in terms of birth and death. Water dies and is transformed into earth, just as earth gives birth to water. However, rather than the expected element, air or perhaps fire, Heraclitus ends this process with soul. This entails as Kahn argues that ‘there can be no fundamental discontinuity between the realm of the psyche and the realm of elemental transformations.’¹⁹⁵ Body and soul, life and death, are part of a continuous series of transformations. So great is the emphasis on becoming in this passage that it has been argued that Heraclitus did not consider water, soul and earth as substances at all but as processes. Lloyd, for example, has compared Heraclitus’ view with the phases of becoming in Chinese thought and in particular *qi* the underlying and ever becoming ‘substance.’¹⁹⁶ In relation to *qi* Matthews describes how body and soul exist within a pantheistic system:

predicated on a single substance (or energy-substance), of which all phenomena, including physicality and interiority, are specific configurations, with a single origin. This extends to separable components of a person. This substance is self-generating and continually transforming.¹⁹⁷

This monistic emphasis does not, however, eliminate the body and soul distinction, nor eradicate the idea of an independent existence of the soul after it has separated from the body. Rather *qi* is able to exist in two different states to form a single person. As Matthews puts it ‘while the person is separable into “body” and “soul” this separation is not ontological in character, as both constitute alternate configurations of *qi*.’¹⁹⁸ A similar idea has been applied by Maffie to Aztec dualism who, again referring to *qi*, likens the configuration of the Aztec body and soul to ice with water inside.¹⁹⁹ This is also the key to understanding Orphic dualism.

Although the Orphic evidence for body soul relations is slim, we can infer some basic points. If the soul is a fine kind of material substance i.e. air, the body is likely to be, as with almost all the Presocratics, a heavier material form.²⁰⁰ Alongside the possible fifth century BC work *Physica*, the Suda reports that the Orphics referred to the body as a net which West argues suggests a close relationship where the ‘the soul is air occupying the interstices of a material

¹⁹⁴ Trans. Betegh (2007).

¹⁹⁵ Kahn (1981) 238. My discussion also is indebted to Betegh (2007) and Finkelberg (2017).

¹⁹⁶ Lloyd (1990) 117.

¹⁹⁷ Matthews (2017) 282.

¹⁹⁸ Matthews (2017) 276.

¹⁹⁹ Maffie (2014) 49. The view he notes is similar to what is known as ‘neutral monism’ and again making comparisons with *qi* describes something similar in his description of Aztec pantheism: ‘Aztec constitutional monism affirms that reality consists of a tertium quid, a *third kind* of stuff that is *neither* mind *nor* matter (as customarily conceived by dualists). This third kind of stuff is electricity-like energy or power’ (48).

²⁰⁰ Renehan (1980) notes ‘there is in fact no evidence to suggest that any Greek in the sixth century was in a position to define the soul as an immaterial being’ (107).

body.’²⁰¹ Like the majority of Orphic books this work does not survive. Ancient authors, however, were impressed by the Orphic position and according to Clement of Alexandria, Heraclitus even plagiarised his model from Orpheus himself. Clement presents the original Orphic idea as (DK 22 B 36; Clem. Strom. 6.2.17):

ἔστιν ὕδωρ ψυχῇ θάνατος, χυδάτεσσι δὲ γαῖα·
ἐκ δ’ ὕδατος <πέλε> γαῖα, τὸ δ’ ἐκ γαίης πάλιν ὕδωρ,
ἐκ τοῦ δὴ ψυχῇ ὅλον αἰθέρα ἀλλάσσοιςα.

Water is death for the soul; for the waters, earth.
From water the earth is born and from earth, in turn, water,
and from the latter, the soul, that becomes universal ether.

The common consensus is that this passage is post-Heraclitean and a further example of the Orphic appropriation of Heraclitus along stoicising lines.²⁰² However, in light of the discovery of the Derveni papyrus, the idea of Orphic stoicising needs to be reevaluated.²⁰³ The Orphics undoubtedly drew on a number of philosophers, including Heraclitus, however, they adopted particular ideas because they were compatible with their existing orientation.²⁰⁴ At the very least then, I argue that the Orphic adaptation of a Heraclitean position indicates a broad compatibility with their existing views. Moreover, if we cannot say with any certainty when the Orphics adopted a Heraclitean position *vis-à-vis* body-soul transformations, we can posit the presence of a similar processual view in their early discussions of mortal and immortal becomings. The gold plates repeatedly speak of the death of the body as the birth of the soul. Two plates from fourth century BC Pelinna (L7 a-b; OF 485-6) describe ‘now you have died and now you have been born.’²⁰⁵ A similar transition appears in the fifth century BC bone plaques from Olbia which describe a triple movement between ‘life-death-life.’²⁰⁶ The phrasing is particularly reminiscent of Heraclitus’ enigmatic phrase (DK 22 B 62):

Ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων
βίον τεθνεῶτες.

²⁰¹ West (1983) 10 argues that this poem was probably known by Aristotle (fr. 26 Kern).

²⁰² On this passage see Kahle (2012); Betegh (2013) notes that ‘there is of course no guarantee that the Orphic rephrasing of B 36 and the Orphic doctrine reported by Aristotle ever formed parts of a coherent and explicit “Orphic theory of the soul.” Yet I find it remarkable that they correspond perfectly to the respective parts of the Heraclitean theory as I have tried to reconstruct it’ (260).

²⁰³ See Appendix Four.

²⁰⁴ Betegh (2013) notes ‘some relatively early Orphics were impressed directly by the Heraclitean theory of the soul, both that the ψυχή can be identified with the element that extends from the atmospheric air to the heavenly fire and that we receive shares of it by breathing it in’ (260).

²⁰⁵ Seaford (2012) stresses that ‘the parallelism together with the repeated ‘now’ implies the simultaneity – even the unity- of the opposites of death and rebirth’ (235).

²⁰⁶ West (1982) 18 notes that Plato speaks of a very similar process of life changing into death and vice versa in the *Phaedo* (72a): ὁμολογεῖται ἄρα ἡμῖν καὶ ταύτη τοὺς ζῶντας ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων γεγονέναι οὐδὲν ἥττον ἢ τοὺς τεθνεῶτας ἐκ τῶν ζώντων, τούτου δὲ ὄντος ἱκανόν που ἐδόκει τεκμήριον εἶναι ὅτι ἀναγκαῖον τὰς τῶν τεθνεώτων ψυχὰς εἶναι που, ὅθεν δὴ πάλιν γίγνεσθαι. (So by this method also we reach the conclusion that the living are generated from the dead, just as much as the dead from the living; and since this is the case, it seems to me to be a sufficient proof that the souls of the dead exist somewhere, whence they come back to life) trans. Burnet (1903). West does not comment on these similarities at any length but it is possible that Plato is elaborating an Orphic idea in this passage.

Immortals mortals, mortals immortals, living the others' death, dying the others' life.

The discussion of births and deaths in this passage recalls the birth and death of the soul in DK 22 B 36 and suggests that gods and men, like earth, water and soul, are not antitypes so much as phases within a process of exchange.²⁰⁷ That mortals can become immortal and immortals mortal shows a total disregard for Homeric separation and was as Kahn notes an 'extraordinarily shocking' idea.²⁰⁸ The idea was, however, no more shocking than the Orphic claim in the gold plates (Thurii 3; OF 488) that the soul will be a god instead of a mortal (θεὸς δ' ἔσῃ ἀντὶ βροτοῖο) or the myth of a dying and reviving god. These ideas are rare in Greek thought but they are early and appear in three key thinkers from this period, Orpheus, Heraclitus and Empedocles who describes mortals and immortals in very organic terms as learning to grow mortal and immortal (DK 31 B 35.14):

αἶψα δέ θνήτ' ἐφύοντο, τὰ πρὶν μάθον ἀθάνατ' εἶναι.

And suddenly those things grew mortal which before learned to be immortal.²⁰⁹

Conversely those that are mortal can, as Empedocles himself aspires, learn to grow into gods (DK 31 B 112).²¹⁰ What emerges from this discussion is a view where life and death, immortality and mortality are not absolute oppositions but perpetual becomings: a world which continuously breaks down rigid dichotomies between gods and men, bodies and souls.

Body and Soul in the Dismemberment Myth

It is one thing to speculate that fifth century Orphics discussed body soul relations and wrote books on the subject, it is quite another to propose these ideas are at the basis of a sixth century myth based on murder and cannibalism. However, I wish to conclude this section by arguing that the pantheistic interpretation offers a more convincing reading not only of the philosophical fragments and the plates but of the anthropogony myth itself. Although the myth has been repeatedly read in terms of man's dualistic origins, there are number of strong reasons for rejecting this claim. For a start, a dualist position would be exceptional at this stage in Greek thought and is not present in later Orphic discussions of the soul in the philosophical fragments. Nor is it clearly stated in the myth itself and although it might be

²⁰⁷ Kahn (1981) 217 argues that the most likely reading of this is that 'mortals live the death of immortals. Immortals are dead in the life of mortals' (217). Betegh (2013) argues that 'the fragment can be mapped seamlessly on the subjects of B 36' (253). For more detail see the discussion of Heraclitus and Derveni commentator in Appendix Four.

²⁰⁸ Kahn (1981) 216-220.

²⁰⁹ Trans. Graham (2010) modified.

²¹⁰ Heraclitus' and Empedocles' views on mortality and immortality are also compared by Kahn (1981) and Betegh (2013) 254.

argued that mankind has a dual origin from the Titans and Dionysus, whom they eat (or, more accurately, taste (γεύω)),²¹¹ the position as West notes is problematic:

The Dionysus who now exists grew from what the Titans did not eat. What they did eat cannot easily be imagined to have affected the quality of the puff of smoke that stayed hanging in the air when they were smashed into Tartarus. Nor is there anything to show that poet had any such notion in his head.²¹²

This is true of all the surviving versions of the myth. In some versions men are composed from the ashes of the Titans, in others the limbs or blood, but in all Dionysus is revived after the act.²¹³ Even if it is insisted that a small Dionysian element is present in these remains, the significance of this component is unclear. After all as both the Titans and Dionysus are divine it seems arbitrary to imagine they would constitute separate mortal and immortal parts. What then of the famous epitaph of the gold plates ‘I am a child of Earth and Starry Heaven?’²¹⁴ This phrase could be read in terms of dualism but most likely follows its common Hesiodic usage and refers to the lineage of the Titans themselves, i.e. the divine children of Gaia and Ouranos.²¹⁵ Rejecting that a piece of Dionysus is present in the soul of man should not be considered as a rejection of man’s divine origins. On the contrary, this is a more radical claim. Humanity, as the descendants of the Titans, are gods and in both body and soul part of the same divine lineage as everything else.

This description of man’s monistic origins may set alarms bells ringing. Indeed if dualism was not intended what did the Orphics mean by saying that the body was a prison (*Crat.* 400c)? This claim could be read in terms of Platonic dualism, but it certainly does not mean that the body is Titanic. Xenokrates, it is true, refers to the φρουρά as Titanic (fr. 20 Heinze), yet whatever his precise meaning is, it is unlikely that he considers the body as Titanic and the soul as Dionysiac. Indeed the majority of Platonists, many of whom develop upon Xenokrates’ position, see the soul as moving between Titanic and Dionysiac states.²¹⁶ It is not surprising that they do this as the idea that the body is Titanic leads to the rather absurd consequence that the soul is innocent and the prison itself, i.e. the Titanic element, guilty. The major sources, however, stress the opposite. Plato in the *Cratylus* 400c describes how the soul

²¹¹ The myth is often discussed in terms of the Titans eating Dionysus but this is the phrase used by Plut. (*De Esu.* 1 1) and Olymp. (*In Phd.* 1.3). Clement (*Prot.* 2.12.2) more generally speaks of ὠμοφαγία (the eating of raw flesh).

²¹² West (1983) 165.

²¹³ Ol. 304 I; Proc *Plat. Resp.* II, 338; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 30.10.

²¹⁴ E.g. OF 474, L1; OF 476, L 3; OF 477, L 4.

²¹⁵ Edmonds (2010) 108. The phrase is repeatedly used by Hesiod as such. See *Theog.* 105-106.; 45; 154; 421.

²¹⁶ Xenokrates perhaps meant more generally that the imprisonment was due to the Titanic crime. At any rate, the idea of a Dionysiac element is said only by Olympiodorus who proposes this view as part of his secret reading. Olympiodorus, however, argues that man’s body, not his soul was part Dionysiac (OF 304 I = (I) Olympiod. in *Plat. Phaed* 1.3). The majority of Platonists as discussed above do not follow this position and argue instead that the soul moves between Dionysiac and Titanic states. The Titans represented disunity and Dionysus the possibility of unity.

is guilty and the body, rather than intrinsically evil in nature, is what holds the soul. A very similar image emerges from Empedocles' parallel anthropogony. Again rather than the body as criminal, it is the daimon or soul which is punished for his crimes. This moreover is precisely what we see in the Orphic gold plates (OF 488-9 L 10a-b) where the soul, rather than the body, claims to 'have paid a penalty for unjust deeds.' In all of these examples, the soul, far from being a pure Dionysiac element, is the Titanic criminal serving his time in a bodily prison. What then is this body composed of? Empedocles' myth does not explain what the body is but if we turn to his physical account, it is described as a less perfect mixture of the same basic stuff as the soul.²¹⁷ There is a great deal of innovation in Empedocles' poetry, but by viewing the body and the soul as emerging together, he was simply following his predecessors, Homer and Hesiod. The closest parallel for the Orphic anthropogony is Hesiod's (*Theog.* 184) description of the Erinyes and Giants who are born from the blood of Ouranos' severed phallus. These beings emerge in a single act as composites of body and soul and there is no reason to doubt that the Orphic creation myth imagined mankind's birth any differently. In short, the most likely reading for a myth from this period is that man emerges from the remains of the Titans in both body and soul. This does not make humanity earthy and evil. Rather it is precisely because of his Titanic origins that humanity is divine. This kind of divinity is not, however, like that proposed by Hesiod. Orphic gods, as represented by Dionysus, are mortal immortals, gods who die and are reborn. This in fact is true, not only of the gods, but of everything else and insofar as everything is an aspect of a single transforming divinity, the contrast between Dionysian and Titanic, mortal and immortal is somewhat misplaced. When it comes to what an Orphic man is, perhaps it is better to state as Viveiros de Castro does of the Araweté soul, man is 'having been, going to be, it is not, properly speaking anything: it becomes.'²¹⁸

Rewriting Sacrifice

The Orphics are famous for two radical claims. The first is for positing the presence of an immortal soul in man. The second is for rejecting animal sacrifice. On one level, the reason for this rejection is understandable. The sacrifice of Dionysus is the root cause of mankind's suffering. The same, however, could be said of the Promethean divide and Hesiod was perfectly content to put up with a bad world. More than feelings of horror and guilt associated with the Titan's primordial crime, I argue that sacrifice was rejected by the Orphics because it

²¹⁷ See Inwood (2001) 61.

²¹⁸ Viveiros de Castro (1992) 253.

is deeply problematic within a pantheist ontology. Augustine brings this issue to the fore in *City of God* (4.12):

si mundi animus Deus est eique animo mundus ut corpus est, ut sit unum animal constans ex animo et corpore, atque iste Deus est sinu quodam naturae in se ipso continens omnia, ut ex ipsius anima, qua uiuificatur tota ista moles, uitae atque animae cunctorum uiuentium pro cuiusque nascendi sorte sumantur, nihil omnino remanere, quod non sit pars Dei. Quod si ita est, quis non uideat quanta impietas et inreligiositas consequantur, ut, quod calcauerit quisque, partem Dei calcet, in omni animante occidendo pars Dei trucidetur? Nolo omnia dicere, quae possunt occurrere cogitantibus, dici autem sine uerecundia non possunt.

if God is the soul of the world, and the world is as a body to Him, who is the soul, He must be one living being consisting of soul and body, and that this same God is a kind of womb of nature containing all things in Himself, so that the lives and souls of all living things are taken, according to the manner of each one's birth, out of His soul which vivifies that whole mass, and therefore nothing at all remains which is not a part of God. And if this is so, who cannot see what impious and irreligious consequences follow, such as that whatever one may trample, he must trample a part of God, and in slaying any living creature, a part of God must be slaughtered? But I am unwilling to utter all that may occur to those who think of it, yet cannot be spoken without irreverence.²¹⁹

In other words, Augustine argues that sacrifice in a pantheist world kills part of God. This is a claim which is true for the original Titanic crime and true for all subsequent murders. To sacrifice is to kill and eat god or the divine kinship which unites all beings. Empedocles expresses a similar concern in more dramatic terms (DK 31 B 137):

μορφήν δ' ἀλλάξαντα πατήρ φίλον υἱὸν αἰείρας
σφάζει ἐπευχόμενος μέγα νήπιος· οἱ δ' ἀπορεῦνται
λίσσόμενον θύοντες, ὁ δ' αὖ νήκουστος ὁμοκλέων
σφάξας ἐν μεγάροισι κακὴν ἀλεγύνετο δαῖτα.
ὥς δ' αὖτως πατέρ' υἱὸς ἐλὼν καὶ μητέρα παῖδες
θυμὸν ἀπορραΐσαντε φίλας κατὰ σάρκας ἔδουσιν.

The father lifting up his own son in a changed form
slaughters him with a prayer in his great folly, and they are lost
as they sacrifice the suppliant. But he, not heedful of their rebukes,
having made slaughter has prepared in his halls a ghastly banquet.
Just so the son laying hold of the father and the children of the mother
After depriving them of life devour their own kindred flesh.²²⁰

Empedocles develops upon what I noted in Chapter Two as the dangers always inherent in eating and sharing food. In Chapter Two I argued that sacrificial meat was used as a means of relating with ontologically separate beings through an intermediary animal victim. In Empedocles' case, however, meat is replaced with a substance which is absolutely identical and the act becomes a ghastly feast where men eat their own kin and offer it to kindred gods. In this respect, sacrifice in a pantheist world is not only an act of self destruction, it is a redundant one at that. To understand this point it will be useful to reiterate my position on Hesiodic sacrifice. Hesiod's view, I argued, was based on a fundamental ontological dualism, where men and gods were in no way alike. Sacrifice was the central means of communication and an expression of an ambiguous affinal tie with gods who may or may not reciprocate. I

²¹⁹ Trans. Dods (2009).

²²⁰ Trans. Graham (2010).

illustrated the basic logic of sacrifice with a passage from Plato's *Symposium* which speaks of a daimonic realm which acts as an intermediary connecting ontologically distinct mortals and immortals (202e-203a):

ἐρμηνεύον καὶ διαπορθμεύον θεοὶς τὰ παρ' ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀνθρώποις τὰ παρὰ θεῶν, τῶν μὲν τὰς δεήσεις καὶ θυσίας, τῶν δὲ τὰς ἐπιτάξεις τε καὶ ἀμοιβὰς τῶν θυσιῶν, ἐν μέσῳ δὲ ὄν ἀμφοτέρων συμπληροῖ, ὥστε τὸ πᾶν αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συνδεδέσθαι. διὰ τούτου καὶ ἡ μαντικὴ πᾶσα χωρεῖ καὶ ἡ τῶν ἱερέων τέχνη τῶν τε περὶ τὰς θυσίας καὶ τελετὰς καὶ τὰς ἐπωδὰς καὶ τὴν μαντείαν πᾶσαν καὶ γοητείαν. θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπου μείγνυται, ἀλλὰ διὰ τούτου πᾶσά ἐστιν ἡ ὁμιλία καὶ ἡ διάλεκτος θεοῖς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους, καὶ ἐγρηγορόσι καὶ καθεύδουσι.

Interpreting and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to men; entreaties and sacrifices from below, and ordinances and requitals from above: being midway between, it makes each to supplement the other, so that the whole is combined in one. Through it are conveyed all divination and priestcraft concerning sacrifice and ritual and incantations, and all soothsaying and sorcery. God with man does not mingle: but the daimon is the means of all society and converse of men with gods and of gods with men, whether waking or asleep.²²¹

This passage encapsulates a sacrificial logic involving three components, humans, animal victim and gods, where the animal acts as an intermediary between two ontologically separated categories and allows gods and men to communicate without threatening their ontological status. As Descola puts it 'the characteristic feature of sacrifice is precisely the fact that it establishes a link between two terms initially unconnected.'²²² This idea makes perfect sense if the world is based on difference. If, however, the cosmos is already connected there is no need for an intermediary, and consequently, no need for sacrifice itself. Sextus Empiricus in *Against the Physicists* (1.126-129) stresses a similar point:

οἱ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὸν Πυθαγόραν καὶ τὸν Ἐμπεδοκλέα καὶ τῶν Ἰταλῶν πλῆθος φασὶ μὴ μόνον ἡμῖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς εἶναι τινα κοινωνίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἄλογα τῶν ζώων. ἐν γὰρ ὑπάρχειν πνεῦμα τὸ διὰ παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου διήκον ψυχῆς τρόπον, τὸ καὶ ἐνοῦν ἡμᾶς πρὸς ἐκεῖνα. διόπερ καὶ κτείνοντες αὐτὰ καὶ ταῖς σαρκὶν αὐτῶν τρεφόμενοι ἀδικήσομεν τε καὶ ἀσεβήσομεν ὥς συγγενεῖς ἀναιροῦντες. ἐνθεν καὶ παρήνουν οὗτοι οἱ φιλόσοφοι ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἐμψύχων.

So then, according to Pythagoreas and Empedocles, and the rest of the Italian crowd, not only do we have a certain communion with the gods but also with the irrational animals. For there is one breath that pervades everything in the universe, in the manner of a soul, and this unites us with them. Because of this, to kill them and eat their flesh is a sacrilege as it is a destruction of our own kindred. From this reasoning the philosophers recommended abstaining from living things.²²³

Sextus does not mention Orpheus here, though given the specification of Empedocles and Pythagoras, it is possible that the Orphics are meant by 'the Italian crowd' (τῶν Ἰταλῶν πλῆθος). Indeed, the idea of the soul as a shared breath has more in common with Orphism than Empedocles. At any rate the point applies, logically at least, to all pantheists: in a world

²²¹ Trans. Fowler (1925).

²²² Descola (2013a) 239.

²²³ Trans. Harden (2013).

based on connection sacrifice is not only self destructive it is, as Descola notes, ‘pointless and incongruous.’²²⁴

The early Orphics do not formulate their position as neatly as Sextus or Descola but the testimonies support this basic idea. Moreover, unlike the somewhat confusing Pythagorean evidence, the Orphic sources are for the most part consistent throughout.²²⁵ The earliest reference may appear in Herodotus’ discussion of the Orphic ban on wool and an enigmatic reference to an ἱρὸς λόγος (‘sacred story’).²²⁶ Whether this ἱρὸς λόγος is the same as Plato’s secret logos and refers to the dismemberment myth remains a possible but elusive testimony.²²⁷ There are, however, three early sources for this rejection from the Classical period. Euripides makes a clear reference to the Orphic diet in the *Hippolytus* (948–54):

σὺ δὲ θεοῖσιν ὥς περισσὸς ὦν ἀνὴρ
ξύνει; σὺ σῶφρων καὶ κακῶν ἀκήρατος;
οὐκ ἂν πιθοίμην τοῖσι σοῖς κόμπους ἐγὼ
θεοῖσι προσθεῖς ἀμαθίαν φρονεῖν κακῶς.
ἤδη νυν αὖχει καὶ δι’ ἀψύχου βορᾶς
σίτοις κατήλευ’ Ὀρφέα τ’ ἄνακτ’ ἔχων
βάκχευε πολλῶν γραμμάτων τιμῶν καπνούς.

Are you, then, the companion of the gods, as a man beyond the common? Are you the chaste one, untouched by evil? I will never be persuaded by your vauntings, never be so unintelligent as to impute folly to the gods. Continue then your confident boasting, take up soulless foods and play the showman with your food, make Orpheus your lord and enter a Bacchic state (βάκχευε), holding the smoke of many books in honour.²²⁸

²²⁴ Descola (2013a) 229–30. Descola is referring to animism and his argument therefore only considers continuity in terms of interiorities. However, in systems based on a double continuity the result would be identical and it is probably not coincidental that the Greek rejection of sacrifice resembles in many respects the similar criticisms which developed in India. The coherence of the position, should not be mistaken as an argument that no pantheists sacrifice. Most Stoics, for example, do not reject sacrifice. Augustine, (4.12), however, argued that they should. Further Sextus’ (*Phys.* 1.126–129) reference to τὰ ἄλογα τῶν ζώων (‘the animals lacking logos’) and πνεῦμα (‘breath’) also suggests a Stoic presence in this argument. This is curious and may suggest that the place of sacrifice was debated among Stoics circles. See Conclusion.

²²⁵ On the more complicated and conflicting Pythagorean sources see Bernabé (2013); Rives (2011); Betegh (2014); Ullucci (2012) esp. 31–64. While the Pythagorean sources show a rather complex and selective attitude to animal food, there is a general agreement that the Orphic and Empedoclean evidence is more consistent. A possible exception, however, appears in Euripides’ *Cretans* (fr. 472), which may well use some Orphic material and appears to offer a contradictory attitude. On the one hand, it clearly mentions the avoidance of ensouled food ἐμψύχων βρῶσιν. Equally it points towards feasts of raw flesh. Bernabé (2015) argues the passage should be understood in terms of a transition from meat to pure life and that ‘the aorists γενόμεν (line 10), τελέσας (line 12), ἀνασχών (line 113), ἐκλήθην, and ὀσιωθεῖς (line 15) refer to a specific action in the past, the initiation ritual, the only time when it would be permissible to eat meat, but only then. Thereafter, the initiate is totally forbidden to eat meat for the rest of his life (except perhaps during a repetition of the ritual)’ (198).

²²⁶ Herodotus (2.81): οὐ μέντοι ἔξ γε τὰ ἱρὰ ἐσφέρεται εἰρίνεα οὐδὲ συγκαταθάπτεται σφι: οὐ γὰρ ὄσιον. ὁμολογεῖν δὲ ταῦτα τοῖσι Ὀρφικοῖσι καλεομένοισι καὶ Βακχικοῖσι, εὐοῖσι δὲ Αἰγυπτίοισι καὶ Πυθαγορείοισι: οὐδὲ γὰρ τούτων τῶν ὀργίων μετέχοντα ὄσιον ἐστὶ ἐν εἰρινέοισι εἴμασι θαφθῆναι. ἐστὶ δὲ περὶ αὐτῶν ἱρὸς λόγος λεγόμενος. ‘But nothing woolen is brought into temples, or buried with them: that is impious. They agree in this with practices called Orphic and Bacchic, but in fact Egyptian and Pythagorean: for it is impious, too, for one partaking of these rites to be buried in woolen wrappings. There is a sacred legend about this.’ Trans. Godley (1920). The passage is debated and one family of manuscripts reduces the phrase from ‘Orphic and Bacchic, but in fact Egyptian and Pythagorean’ to ‘practices called Orphic and Pythagorean.’ This is probably due to a scribal error and the reading I have quoted is generally accepted. See Parker (1995) 502.

²²⁷ See Edmonds (2013) 348.

²²⁸ Trans. Kovacs (1995). For a more detailed study of this passage see Bernabé (2015).

This passage presents a condensed summary of early Orphism and alludes to a diet of ‘food lacking souls’ (ἀψύχου βορᾶς), Bacchic rites involving the burning of books, and the idea that a particular lifestyle, pure from evil, makes its practitioners companions of the gods. In particular, the stress on a kind of communion with the gods and the insistence on eating soulless food, echoes Sextus’ point about an existing divine kinship and the rejection of meat in *Against the Physicists* (1.126-129).

Plato’s description of the Orphic life gives their unusual diet an even more central role (*Leg.* 782c-d):

τὸ δὲ μὴν θύειν ἀνθρώπους ἀλλήλους ἔτι καὶ νῦν παραμένον ὁρῶμεν πολλοῖς καὶ τοῦναντίον ἅ κούουμένεν ἄλλοις, ὅτε οὐδὲ βοδὴς ἐτόλμων μὲν γεύεσθαι, θύματά τε οὐκ ἦν τοῖς θεοῖσι ζῆα, πέλανοι δὲ καὶ μέλιτι καρποὶ δεδευμένοι καίτοι αὐτὰ ἄλλα ἀγνὰ θύματα, σαρκῶν δ’ ἀπείχοντο ὥς οὐχ ὅσιον ὄν ἐσθίειν οὐδὲ τοὺς τῶν θεῶν βομοὺς αἵματι μиаίνειν, ἀλλὰ Ὀρφικοὶ τινες λεγόμενοι βίοι ἐγίνοντο ἡμῶν τοῖς τότε, ἀψύχων μὲν ἐχόμενοι πάντων, ἐμψύχων δὲ τοῦναντίον πάντων ἀπεχόμενοι.

The custom of men sacrificing one another is, in fact, one that survives even now among many peoples; whereas amongst others we hear of how the opposite custom existed, when they were forbidden so much as to taste an ox, and their offerings to the gods consisted, not of animals, but of cakes of meal and grain steeped in honey, and other pure offerings, and from flesh they abstained as though it were unholy to eat it or to stain with blood the altars of the gods; instead of that, those of us men who then existed lived what is called an “Orphic life,” keeping wholly to soulless food and, contrariwise, abstaining wholly from ensouled beings.²²⁹

Plato in this passage is discussing the contrasting poles of sacrifice among different societies. At one end we see human sacrifice, at the other a total abstinence from blood rites and replacement with pure offerings. The latter he calls an Orphic life (ὀρφικός βίος) and, confirming Euripides’ view, adds that a major prerequisite is abstinence from ensouled beings. Another possible reference is found in Aristophanes *Frogs* (1032):

Ὀρφεὺς μὲν γὰρ τελετάς θ’ ἡμῖν κατέδειξε φόνων τ’ ἀπέχεσθαι.

Orpheus showed us rites to refrain from murder.

The passage does not explicitly mention the killing of animals but a more general refrain from murder. The parallel evidence from Empedocles, however, suggests that murder and sacrifice are synonyms (DK 31 B 134) and it is unlikely that Orpheus is being credited with introducing a prohibition on murdering humans. Even if we exclude Aristophanes, Plato’s and Euripides’ testimonies are clear indications that the Orphic rejection of ensouled beings was well known.

The position that emerges from both the early and later evidence is that humans, animals and gods share a common soul. Because of this sacrifice, as it was practised by most Greeks, becomes both horrifying and pointless. If mortals wish to associate with gods they should not turn to an intermediary, but cultivate the god within through eating pure offerings. In this

²²⁹ Trans. Bury (1967-8) modified.

respect, my argument agrees with Detienne's proposal that 'to change one's diet is to throw into doubt the relationship between gods, men and beasts upon which the whole politicoreligious system of the city rests.'²³⁰ As my position also suffers from similar weaknesses, it is worthwhile pausing to discuss some of Detienne's critics at this point. One of the most cogent and influential criticisms has been posed by Rives who argues that no new theology was entailed in the Orphic rejection of sacrifice.²³¹ For Rives the basic relationship between men and gods remained intact and sacrifice continued to be offered in an almost identical fashion. What did change, he argues, was the kind of offerings that were deemed appropriate to the gods. Animals were considered unsuitable because of the doctrine of metempsychosis, but Empedocles, the Pythagoreans and the Orphics simply offered substitute offerings in their place. As Rives points out, sacrifice by no means stopped with the rejection of meat and the sources continue to speak of the sacrifice of cakes, libations of milk and honey and all are referred to by the traditional Greek verb for sacrifice, *θύω*. In other words, despite rejecting meat, there was a general continuity in sacrificing to the gods.²³² This is in some respects a persuasive argument. If Hesiod and the Orphics can both refer to an offering made to a god involving similar ritual actions with the verb *θύω*, what reason do we have for translating the word as sacrifice in only one of these contexts? Indeed that a vegetable sacrifice could be part of the same theological view as animal sacrifice would hardly be surprising. The Nuer, for example, famously sacrifice cucumbers which they assured Evans-Pritchard were really oxen²³³ and Empedocles' (D.L.8.53) apocryphal sacrifice of an ox made of spices requires even less imagination. Although this may seem like a serious obstacle to my argument, Rives' position is based on a problematic premise which necessitates that we view religious practices as piecemeal accretions outside of any meaningful structures. Such structures or what Rives calls systematic theologies of sacrifice only occur in the Imperial period.²³⁴ This allows Rives to claim that the rejection of animal sacrifice was not based on a new theology but emerged because of the introduction of metempsychosis which was simply a new idea added to the existing messy reality of Greek rituals. This, especially when dealing with an idea such as metempsychosis, is a very problematic view. The presence of metempsychosis is itself a new theology which requires very different relations between men, animals and gods than those imagined by Hesiod. Indeed, the introduction of the idea

²³⁰ Detienne (1979) 70.

²³¹ Rives (2011).

²³² Rives (2011) 'there is no good evidence that any of these earlier figures developed a theology of sacrifice; in my view, none of them did so because none of them was actually much interested in sacrifice as a ritual meant to establish a connection between the human and divine spheres' (189). Rives position has been adopted by Ullicci (2012) 60 and Naiden (2013) 281.

²³³ See Evans-Pritchard (1956) 146.

²³⁴ Rives (2011) 187.

potentially changes how we understand a wide range of terms including god, human, animal, soul and indeed θύω. In no case can we simply assume continuity with what went before but must, as far as possible, look to how the term is used in an Orphic sacrificial context.

Rives' argument, as noted above, is based on the continuity of the word, θύω. The word θύω is etymologically linked with making smoke and has no intrinsic relation to animal slaughter.²³⁵ Indeed, as the verb is frequently applied to both meat and plant offerings in Greek texts, number of scholars have criticised the meatcentric bias in the literature on sacrifice.²³⁶ That the Greeks described plant sacrifices does not, however, change the fact that in Greek, as in English, the dominant meaning of θύω was related to killing animals. This understanding is apparent from poems such as the *Iliad* and myths like the Promethean division. Moreover, the word's intimate association with meat is clear from Theophrastus' attempt to redefine θύω towards non-meat offerings where he not only has to remind his Greek readers of the etymology, he even chastises us that 'we do not hear these aright when, thinking they refer to the later error, we call *thusia* the supposed worship which uses animals' (Porph. *Abst.* 2.5).²³⁷ Theophrastus' attempt to redefine θύω is nothing unusual and terms such as ψυχή, κόσμος and θεοί were constantly being redefined. Very few scholars assume that the Zeus of Homer is the same as Heraclitus' and that no theological shift is evident because they use the same name. To understand the meaning of Zeus or sacrifice we need to look to the wider contexts in which these words were used. In Chapter Two I discussed how Hesiodic sacrifice was based on a series of complex hierarchal subdivisions including special shares for gods, aristocrats, commoners and priests. If Rives is correct, this emphasis on hierarchy and division should also apply to the Orphic sacrifices of cakes and spices. The available evidence, although slim, suggests they neither divided their offerings, nor worshipped their gods in this way. The best known example is Dionysus. In some cases he is divided into seven shares,²³⁸ in others he is torn apart. In no version of the myth is there anything like the ordered and hierarchal apportionment we see in Homer and Hesiod.²³⁹ Empedocles' Cyprian myth, though not strictly Orphic, presents a more detailed description of how these shares are divided and contrasts pure offerings of incense, reverent statues,

²³⁵ Mikalson (2010) 24.

²³⁶ See survey in Stowers (2011). More generally McClymond (2010) 65-92.

²³⁷ Trans. Clark (2000).

²³⁸ OF 311 = Proc. in *Plat. Tim. II* 146, 9.

²³⁹ Graf and Johnston (2007) note 'its crude means of dividing up its victims prevents the careful apportioning of sacrificial meat into shares for the mortals and shares for the gods – much less into a special share for a particular god or priest' (81). The Derveni papyrus too briefly describes offerings of many knobbed cakes, water and milk made to daimones or hindering souls (6.5-8). Very little is said about how the participants and the daimones to which they are offered share these cakes but one detail that is stressed is the plurality of both the cakes and the recipients, in other words their lack of divisions.

painted pictures and libations of honey against blood offerings (DK 31 B 134). These were made in a spirit of unity where even wild beasts were friendly (DK 31 B 136). The myth in this respect describes an ideal offering which is based on shared kinship between beings who are like or even identical to each other. Another important aspect of Empedocles' ideal sacrifice is the offering of incense.²⁴⁰ Incense was also notably of pivotal importance in Orphic rites and the *Hymns* frequently begin by allocating a particular perfume appropriate to each god. Protogonos (OH 6), for example, receives myrrh and Zeus (OH 15) storax. The poems have received little attention but recent studies stress they are not mere literary works but ritual evocations and that the incenses mentioned alongside the hymns may constitute the core offering.²⁴¹ Indeed in many cases incense appears as a direct substitute for meat. Theophrastus, in his moralising narrative on the history of animal sacrifice, locates incense as the original offering made to the gods before animal meat was wrongly introduced (Porph. *Abst.* 2.5.3). The idea of incense as a meat substitute also appears, as mentioned, in the spice ox supposedly offered by Empedocles (D.L 8.53). Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* not only discusses a very similar bull made of spices, it offers an interpretation of why such an offering is appropriate:

Ἀνελθόντι δὲ αὐτῷ ἐς τὸ ἱερὸν ὁ μὲν κόσμος ὁ περὶ αὐτὸ καὶ ὁ ἐφ' ἐκάστῳ λόγος θεῖός τε ἐφαίνετο καὶ κατὰ σοφίαν ζυντεθείς, τὸ δὲ τῶν ταύρων αἷμα καὶ οἱ χῆνες καὶ ὅποσα ἐθύετο, οὐκ ἐπῆναι τὰ τοιάδε, οὐδὲ ἐς δαΐτας θεῶν ἵγεν' ἐρομένου δ' αὐτὸν τοῦ ἱερέως, τί μαθὼν οὐχ οὕτω θύοι, “σὺ μὲν οὖν” εἶπεν “ἀπόκριναί μοι μᾶλλον, τί μαθὼν οὕτω θύεις;” εἰπόντος δὲ τοῦ ἱερέως “καὶ τίς οὕτω δεινός, ὥς διορθοῦσθαι τὰ Αἰγυπτίων;” “πᾶς” ἔφη “σοφός, ἦν ἅπ' Ἰνδῶν ἥκη. καὶ βοῦν” ἔφη “ἅπανθρακιῷ τήμερον καὶ κοινώνει τοῦ καπνοῦ ἡμῖν, οὐ γὰρ ἀχθέσθαι περὶ τῆς μοίρας, εἰ κάκειναι οἱ θεοὶ δαΐσσονται.”

When Apollonius had climbed to the sanctuary, its decoration and the lore attached to every part he considered inspired and arranged with wisdom, but he did not approve of the bull's blood, the geese, and all the things offered for sacrifice, nor did he consider them feasts for the gods. The priest asked him on what ground he did not practice this kind of sacrifice, and he replied, “Rather you should answer me on what ground you practice it.” The priest replied, “Who is so clever as to correct the customs of Egypt?” “Any wise man,” said Apollonius, “if he comes from India. I will roast a bull today,” he continued, “and you can join with us in tasting the smoke. You will not complain about your portion, since that is what the gods devour too.”²⁴²

It is notable that the bull does not appear in this passage simply as alternative to meat. Rather its function, despite its form, is very different. Apollonius remarks that the spice bull is superior to the real thing precisely because it cannot be divided and men and gods enjoy equal communion in the indivisible smoke portions (μοίρας). This equal division among men and gods in other words is a true equal feast that Homer could never have dreamt of. Of course this act is still referred to as sacrifice (θύω) and in this respect we might for consistency's sake wish to retain the same word in our translation. This can be done, provided that we

²⁴⁰ For a discussion on the importance of the use of incense, smells and conceptualising divinity in Greek offerings see Clements (2015).

²⁴¹ Graf (2011) 207.

²⁴² Trans. Prestige Jones (2005).

understand that the term shifts from hierarchy to equality and ontologically distinct shares to identical shares. In other words, if we understand that $\theta\acute{\upsilon}\omega$ has been entirely transformed within a new theological system.

Conclusion: Sacrifice as the Pivot of the World

This chapter has attempted to reconstruct the Orphic anthropogony as a part of a pantheistic narrative. In the previous chapter I described this pantheism in terms of a destructive and creative dynamic. There is no better illustration of this than the dismemberment myth where a homogenous society of gods kills one of their own. From this destructive act, mankind, and in some versions, animals and plants are born. While man is differentiated from the gods, this difference is not absolute but one of degree. Divine kinship exemplified in the perfect union of the all with Zeus, continued even after the divisions of Dionysus. The Orphics, for this reason, rejected animal sacrifice and attempted as far as possible to purify their souls and return to their divine origins. In this respect, they turned away from sacrifice and the destructive creativity which constitutes the world. I earlier described sacrifice, using Descola's terms, as 'pointless and incongruous.'²⁴³ The pointlessness of sacrifice, however, is apparent only if considered in Hesiodic terms as a means of connecting opposites. For pantheists, sacrifice does not accomplish this and for those, like the Orphics, wishing to turn back the clock and revert to their divine origins, it makes a good deal of sense to reject it. However, whether the Orphics like it or not, destructive creation and sacrifice retains a central role in how the cosmos develops and expands and I would like to end this chapter with a hypothetical sketch on how the wider Orphic cosmos turned on the pivot of sacrifice.

The fact that the Orphic cosmos suffers from a lack of detailed descriptions, should not lead us to assume it was an impoverished world. On the contrary, from what little the sources do say, it is clear that the Orphics envisioned a rich pantheon engaged in a process of destructive creation. Kronos wars against his father, Ouranos, and Zeus against Kronos. The most important act of destructive creation, at least from a human point of view, is the dismemberment of Dionysus. His death marked the creation not simply of human beings but, in some versions of the myth, of animals and plants. Empedocles' (DK 31 B 128) narrative even adds the creation of particular kinds of gods. These include both negative and positive gods and in the myth of Cypris he mentions Ares, Battle Din, and Kronos alongside the more benevolent Poseidon and Zeus. The Orphic cosmos, it should be noted, was equally rich

²⁴³ Descola (2013) 229-30.

consisting of benevolent and malicious forces and the *Orphic Hymns*, for example, consist of 87 poems dedicated to almost as many gods and goddesses. We can only glimpse these figures and their place in the Orphic world through a glass darkly. Some, like Protogonos and Zeus are spoken of at length, others such as the hindering daimones mentioned in the Derveni Papyrus (col. 6.3), remain obscure. All of these gods are in some respects refractions of a single divine reality, but they are also actors within a world as dynamic as that of Homer and Hesiod where man, gods, daimones and animals exist in an active exchange of forms in a world pivoting on sacrifice. A vivid depiction of how this cosmos might have operated is provided in Plato's *Phaedrus* and his rich description of the rise and fall of daimones within a 10,000 year cycle.²⁴⁴ Plato (248a-b) memorably describes this cycle as a kind of divine carousel where some souls ascend and:

αἱ δὲ δὴ ἄλλαι γλιχόμεναι μὲν ἅπασαι τοῦ ἄνω ἔπονται, ἀδυνατοῦσαι δέ, ὑποβρύχια συμπεριφέρονται, πατοῦσαι ἀλλήλας καὶ ἐπιβάλλουσαι, ἑτέρα πρὸ τῆς ἑτέρας πειρωμένη γενέσθαι. θόρυβος οὖν καὶ ἰδρὼς ἔσχατος γίγνεται, οὗ δὴ κακία ἡνιόχων πολλαὶ μὲν χωλεύονται, πολλὰ δὲ πολλὰ πτερὰ θραύονται.

the other souls follow after, all yearning for the upper region but unable to reach it, and are carried round beneath, trampling upon and colliding with one another, each striving to pass its neighbour. So there is the greatest confusion and sweat of rivalry, wherein many are lamed, and many wings are broken through the incompetence of the drivers.²⁴⁵

How much of Plato's dialogue is Orphic is uncertain, but the animism of its description nicely captures the Orphic cycle of life and death, rising and falling, depending on their choices in life. The Orphic life was no doubt based on a number of prescriptions and appropriate actions but none of these were more potent than the power of sacrifice. There were two key kinds of sacrifice. The Orphics offered pure offerings which benefit all involved and help foster kinship and purity of the soul and raise it towards the divine. This act of sharing was not restricted to mortals, but also benefited the gods, daimones and all who participated in these rites. It even helped (albeit indirectly) the animals who were not killed. The other kind of offering was traditional animal sacrifice. The fact that this was rejected by the Orphics is in no way to say that it had no effect. The cosmic consequences of Dionysus' death strongly speak against this. Sacrifice thereafter certainly had milder effects yet in all cases it appears as a violent act which tears the cosmos apart. This kind of animal sacrifice, however, is not to be understood in Hesiodic terms. For the Orphics it did not connect opposites, but separated an existing connection and fastened the soul more tightly to the body. This was not only true of the men who participated in the rites but the divine beings who accept sacrificial meat. These gods are not like Hesiod's Olympians who are ontologically separated from the world. Rather

²⁴⁴ The myth is attributed to Stesikhoros although Ryan (2012) 171 notes this may be more a play on his alleged birthplace, Himera (i.e. desire) than a serious designation.

²⁴⁵ Trans. Fowler (1925).

they are, much like the soul, finer beings made of the same essential stuff. In this respect pantheism makes divinity more concrete than Hesiod's supposedly anthropomorphic beings ever were. A possible parallel for these gods may emerge in the malevolent daimones discussed by Porphyry (*Abst.* 2.42) whose 'pneumatic part grows fat' from the rising smoke of sacrifice. This is a late source but the imagery of a physical daimon greedily eating animal flesh, or vapours, is no more unusual than the myth described by Empedocles, and certainly no more horrifying than the image of the Titans gathering together, killing and eating the flesh of Dionysus. Animal sacrifice, in this respect, was rejected not because it did nothing but because it did too much. It was an act which both destroyed and created the world as we know it.

Conclusion

God started realizing that he could only sit down in a very smokey place, very dark. He sat down. As he wanted light (qaumajuq), there was light.¹

Inuit Storyteller, Baffin Island.

These words are taken from a version of *Genesis* told by an Inuit storyteller from Baffin Island. Despite the informal language, the narrative is for the most part a faithful rendition of the original. The basic outline is the same and no significant details have been added. There is however, as anthropologist Frederic Laugrand points out, an important omission. The narrator leaves out an important detail concerning humanity's relation with animals. In the King James' version (1.26) we are told:

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Laugrand argues this is no casual slip. For the Inuit of Baffin Island, animals are not the servants of man. They are agents who even when killed for food must be approached with respect. Indeed, in Inuit mythology, and many other societies often labelled animist, men and animals are not antitypes but kin. As Laugrand argues, the omission of this line therefore involves a 'complete transformation of the ontological and cosmological systems' of the biblical narrative.² While the omission of verse 1.26 is certainly a significant transformation, in many respects the new narrative remains somewhat Janus faced and even as it transforms a world based on the dominion of animal Others into one based on shared habitation and kinship, it retains a surprising fidelity to the details of the biblical account. The tale is, in this respect, both traditional and innovative at once. It incorporates elements of a new Christian narrative into a traditional cosmological view. Thus rather than represent a 'complete ontological transformation' and break from all that went before, the narrative is more akin to a variation which exploits latent possibilities and takes them in a new and unexpected directions.³ This is also the way I conceive of the three myths discussed in this thesis. Starting with the ambiguous god Chaos, Hesiod's *Theogony* was described as an analogistic cosmology based on difference. I argued that Hesiod's starting point was a primordial

¹ Laugrand (1999).

² Laugrand (1999) 98 cited in Vilaça (2016) 130.

³ Levi-Strauss (1977) 'We know that myths transform themselves. These transformations ... bear sometimes on the framework, sometimes on the code, sometimes on the message of the myth, but without ceasing to exist as such. Thus these transformations respect a sort of principle of conservation of mythic material, by which any myth could always come from another myth' (256).

chaosmos where gods, men and hybrids were at war. Zeus' innovation was to impose a hierarchical order upon this mess and create a cosmos based on ordered difference where men communicate with affinal Others, the Olympian tribe, through sacrifice. Sacrifice was a ritual which was neither based on full separation, nor full communion, but upon connecting difference through an intermediary substance, meat. Chaos, however, was an ambiguous concept blurring the boundaries between pantheism and analogism, order and disorder. Orpheus, exploiting this latent potential, focused on cosmic order not as something imposed on the world but as the foundational assumption present from the first god, Protogonos. Although Orpheus' ideas developed in tandem with contemporary Presocratic thought, his poetry was first and foremost a variation on Hesiod's *Theogony*. Hesiod was not simply viewed as raw mythic material used to transpose new philosophical assumptions, rather he was the source of continuous inspiration and elements like the war between the gods and Zeus' ingestion of Metis were transformed in a way which was both new and traditional simultaneously. Even when it came to radical innovations such as immortalisation, the Orphics did not need to look much further than Hesiod's shared feast at Mekone and Plato describes the Orphic reunion with the gods in just these terms (*Resp.* 363c-d):

εἰς Ἅιδου γὰρ ἀγαγόντες τῷ λόγῳ καὶ κατακλίναντες καὶ συμπόσιον τῶν ὁσίων
κατασκευάσαντες ἐστεφανωμένους ποιῶσιν τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον ἤδη διάγειν μεθύοντας,
ἡγησάμενοι κάλλιστον ἀρετῆς μισθὸν μέθην αἰώνιον.

they conduct them to the house of Hades in their tale and arrange a symposium of the holy
where, reclined on couches crowned with wreaths, they entertain the time henceforth with
wine, as if the fairest meed of virtue were an everlasting drunkenness.⁴

In this respect, and many others, Orpheus' poetry should not be viewed as a complete break with the past, but as an exploitation of ambiguities always inherent in Greek mythological narratives.

Protagoras' myth is probably the most unusual of the three narratives discussed in this thesis. Rather than describing the world through mythic material, his myth was more of a vehicle used to express philosophical views and the idea that man was a dualistic compromise of νόμος (custom) and φύσις (nature). I have argued that the Protagorean narrative occupied a pivotal role in the history of the West and became a kind of master narrative through which all other societies and cosmologies were interpreted. Although I have attempted to distance the

⁴ Trans. Shorey (1969) modified. (*Phaedr.* 247a). Empedocles also described the realisation of immortality in terms of a return to the original feast (DK 31 B 147):

ἀθανάτοις ἄλλοισιν ὁμέστιοι, αὐτοτράπεζοι
ἀνδρείων ἀχέων ἀποκληροὶ ἐόντες ἀτειρεῖς.

‘dwelling at the same hearth and table as the other immortals,

without a share of human woes, being tireless.’ Trans. Graham (2010). Empedocles even uses the two kinship terms ὁμέστιοι (‘shares of the hearth’) and αὐτοτράπεζοι (a variation on ὁμοτράπεζοι or ‘sharers of the same table’).

Hesiodic and Orphic myths from ideas such as culture, nature and supernature, even Protagoras' myth was far from a clean break from the past. Indeed, Protagoras chose to express his vision of man and the gods through traditional Hesiodic material and even some of his most radical ideas have genuine Hesiodic precedents. A key example appears in Hesiod's contrast between Chaos and Zeus' hierarchal rule. There are many important differences between Protagoras' state of nature and Hesiod's Golden race, yet the image of Zeus imposing justice upon a chaotic world is not entirely distinct from Protagoras' view of νόμος imposing itself on the destructive φύσις of man. Indeed Scully, as noted in Chapter One, even describes Hesiod's narrative in just these terms noting 'the *Theogony* celebrates νόμος for harnessing φύσις to the social good.'⁵ In this respect, Protagoras, just as we have seen with Orpheus, is transforming and exploiting inherent possibilities in Greek myth, just as much as he is creating new ones.

Extremists and Exceptions

The idea of transformation is crucial to how we understand philosophical debate and wider questions of Greek rationality. Although I have approached the three myths in this thesis through their historical developments, the approach should not be confused with a developmental history. Hesiod, of course, did not have the same notions regarding νόμος and φύσις and could not have written a myth identical to those proposed by Protagoras or Orpheus. In this respect, each myth can be viewed as a particular child of its time, developing from particular ideas, language and themes of the period. This historical specificity, however, should not be equated with a teleological narrative where one superior narrative replaces what went before. Our historical knowledge of mythic diversity is limited in the archaic period,⁶ but

⁵ Scully (2015) 94. See also Caldwell (1989). This comparison is somewhat misleading. Men in Hesiod appear as fully formed cultural beings. Secondly, φύσις for Protagoras and the Sophists is far from chaotic but providential. This comes to the fore not only in Sophists who wish to live according to Nature (Pl. *Prt.* 337e-d but in Protagoras' stress on the planning with which the natural world was formed (320e). Nature, in other words, is not disorderly but in human terms can appear cruel and antisocial.

⁶ Although the evidence is limited there are at least suggestions that as early as the Archaic period Greek poets were debating ontological issues such as the border between divinity and humanity. A case in point is Herakles. In the *Iliad*, Homer refers to Herakles as a mortal (18.117), in the *Odyssey* as a god dining with the immortals in Olympus (11.601-603). The passage's authenticity has been debated. See Burkert (1985) 210. However, the immortality of Herakles also appears in Hesiod (*Th.* 950-5). Therefore, Currie (2005) argues that even at this early date there were two versions of the Herakles myth and that the author of the *Iliad* chose 'to emphasize one strand of belief, while pointedly suppressing others' (40). The centrality of mortal immortal difference in the *Iliad* is contrasted by a more ambiguous position in the *Odyssey*. Here, while an overall emphasis on distinction continues, at least some individuals are granted privileged positions. Achilles rules over the dead (11.485) and Menelaos, the son in law of Zeus, avoids death altogether (4.569). See Currie (2005) 43. Zeus' 'translocation' of Menelaos to the Elysian plain, as Albinus (2000) notes, 'is in effect a kind of immortalisation' (86). Even Odysseus himself, though at the cost of a loss of renown, *kleos*, is offered immortality by Calypso (5.205-210). This tendency also appears in near contemporary literary works such as the *Cypria* (EGF: 31), *Aethiopis*

by the fifth century BC all three myths coexist as part of an ongoing debate which continued throughout antiquity. Lloyd has stressed that for the Presocratics ‘there is no such thing as *the* cosmological model, *the* cosmological theory, of the Greeks.’⁷ This is as true of philosophy as it is of mythology and despite the prominence of a Protagorean-like narrative today, we should not lose sight of this diversity when considering the past. Diversity and debate, however, also introduce some theoretical problems which I have only touched upon until now. Descola, as discussed in the Introduction, elaborates four possible ontological schemas and argues that:

According to circumstances, each human is capable of making any of the four inferences, but will most likely pass a judgment of identity according to the ontological context – that is, the systematization for a group of humans of one of the inferences only – where he or she was socialized.⁸

In other words, although all options are theoretically open, an individual will for the most part adhere to one of these ontologies. This is generally true of Archaic and Classical Greece but even daily life included a good deal of ontological plurality.⁹ A fifth-century Greek, for example, may leave a house divided into male and female space (Lys. 1.9-10) on a particular day designated as good or bad (Hes. *Op.* 765-828) on his way to sacrifice to affinal gods, i.e. he might carry on a good part of his day in an analogical world. On the other hand, depending on the day, the same man might initiate himself and his family with the local Orphic priest (Theophr. *Char.* 16.11) or view pantheistic, analogistic and naturalist ideas fight it out on the stage in a tragedy by Euripides. If he had kin amongst the war dead of Potidea (432 BC), he would have the honour of watching a probably analogist relative being defied in pantheistic terms where (IG I2 945):

αἰθὲρ μὲν φσυχὰς ὑπεδέχσατο, σόμ[ατα δὲ χθόν].

the aether received their souls and the earth their bodies.¹⁰

(EGF:47) and *Thebais* (*Thebais* F5, EGF; see Currie 2005: 43) and suggests the presence of a debate in early myth.

⁷ Lloyd (1975) 205.

⁸ Descola (2013b) 38.

⁹ Lloyd (2012) 22-3 argues that although Descola’s analogism is useful for understanding ancient Greece generally, it cannot accommodate for the presence of ontological diversity. In particular Lloyd points towards the Atomists and Heraclitus. Taylor (2012) 202-4 has questioned the relevance of these examples and criticised Lloyd for not distinguishing between the explicit and elaborated views of philosophers and the implicitly held ontologies of the majority. I agree that philosophical debates should not be equated with more general ontological disagreements. However, these philosophical views came from somewhere and often they emerge in close contact with religious and mythic ideas. In this respect, I argue that ontological plurality is as relevant for the philosophers as it is for the public at large.

¹⁰ See Eur. *Supp.* 531-4. These examples complicate rather than challenge the dominant analogistic prevalence and I use them as indications of the kind of ontological competition present in Classical Greece. Indeed, although the Greek evidence predominantly points towards an analogistic society there are hints that certain areas, outside of Athens, may have shown considerably greater diversity. Plato (364e-5a), for examples, speaks of Orphic priests who manage to persuade not simply a few individuals but entire states. This might seem like hyperbole

Ontological diversity did not simply entail mixing different positions, in daily life, it also involved adopting mixed or hybrid positions which do not always fit the neat ontological classifications outlined in this thesis. Indeed in many respects the Orphics, Hesiod and Protagoras are extreme positions which push particular categories such as analogism and pantheism to their logical limits. Many other Greeks, however, adopted a range of more ambiguous positions on issues like sacrifice, animal sentience and the nature of the gods. Even among the Orphics themselves we would expect a good deal of diversity and Theophrastus' satirical superstitious man, for example, not only attended Orphic rites but almost every other cult in the ancient world (*Char.*16.12). There are many examples of positions which exhibit complex positions but I will focus on two key groups, the Pythagoreans and Stoics, and their attitudes towards animals and sacrifice. I noted in Chapter Three that the Pythagoreans were, in terms of their shared doctrines of metempsychosis and the immortality of the soul, very close to the Orphics. However, their views on sacrifice show a good deal less consistency.¹¹ Some sources such as Eudoxus, Alexis and Strabo suggest that Pythagoras, like the Orphics, shunned eating ensouled beings altogether.¹² The testimonies, however, even from identical sources often conflict and point towards more complex attitudes where meat eating is restricted to certain animals or particular parts.¹³ Some scholars even doubt whether the Pythagoreans should be considered to have rejected sacrifice at all.¹⁴ A similar issue might be noted for the Stoics. Like the Orphics, the Stoics were pantheists and considered souls to be shared amongst animals, gods and humans. We might then expect that sacrifice would also be rejected. The position, however, is far from clear. Zeno of Citium, in his *Republic*, reportedly speaks of getting rid of temples and it has been suggested that this might entail the rejection of sacrifice.¹⁵ In any case, later Stoics show conflicting positions.

but Redfield (2003) has argued that 'the Locrians (at least on the elite level) conceived the meaning of their society in terms of the reversibility of life and death, that (ideally at least) they lived their social lives at least in large part in anticipation of a better life, and that in this limited sense they approximated a community of Orphics' (405-6). In other words he proposes the Locrians were a society of pantheists. Whether or not the evidence permits us to speak of the existence of pantheist states, these ideas appear to have had a considerably greater impact in areas like Thurii and Acragas, and here, at least, we can see the seeds of potential and dynamic for change similar to those from which Buddhist kingdoms flourished in India.

¹¹ See Rives (2011) 190. Betegh (2014). Betegh (2014) differentiates the Orphics from the Pythagoreans in terms of Orphism's 'hardcore' attitude and 'complete avoidance of bloodshed' (155-6) compared with the more selective attitude of the Pythagoreans.

¹² For the sources for strict avoidance see Porphyry, *Vit. Pyth.* 7 = Eudoxus F 325 Lasserre; Mnesimachus F 1 Kassel-Austin = Diog. Laert. 8.37; Antiphanes F 133 Kassel-Austin = Ath. 4.161a; Alexis F 223 Kassel-Austin = Ath. 4.161b.; *FGrHist* 134 F 17 = Strabo, *Geog.* 15.1.63-65, C 715-16. See Rives (2011) 200 notes 14-16.

¹³ On a more selective attitude see Diog. Laert. (8.19), who cites the authority of Aristotle. See also Aristox. fr. 29a Wehrli (Diog. Laert. 8.20) Porph. *VP* 42-5; *Abst.* 1.26; Iambl. *VP* 85. See Gemelli Marciano (2014); 140-1; Rives (2011) 190.

¹⁴ See Rives (2011); Betegh (2014) 154- 159; Ullucci (2012) 58-61.

¹⁵ See Ullucci (2012) 38-41. See Diog. Laert. 7.1.32-32; Clement, *Strom.* 5. 12. 76; SVF 1. 264.

Epictetus (*Manual* 31.5) states very clearly that sacrifice is a pious act. Seneca (*Ben.* 1.6.3), on the other hand, is more critical:

Non est beneficium ipsum, quod numeratur aut traditur, sicut ne in victimis quidem, licet opimae sint auroque praefulgeant, deorum est honor sed recta ac pia voluntate venerantium. Itaque boni etiam farre ac fitilla religiosi sunt ; mali rursus non effugiunt impietatem, quamvis aras sanguine multo cruentaverint.

The benefit itself is not something that is counted out and handed over, just as, likewise, the honour that is paid to the gods lies, not in the victims for sacrifice, though they be fat and glitter with gold, but in the upright and holy desire of the worshippers. Good men, therefore, are pleasing to the gods with an offering of meal and gruel; the bad, on the other hand, do not escape impiety although they dye the altars with streams of blood.¹⁶

Although this could be read as a rejection of sacrifice, Seneca's view is arguably more about the attitude of the person offering sacrifice than a rejection of the institution itself.¹⁷ The slight and confusing evidence appears then to suggest that the Pythagoreans and Stoics do not conform to the neat systems I have proposed for the Orphics. Betegh even argues that 'this is exactly where problems erupt; indeed, it is highly doubtful whether one can justifiably speak about "systems" to describe either Orphism or Pythagoreanism.'¹⁸ 'Systems,' as Betegh understands them, refer to an explicitly held sets of ideas, i.e. a kind of theology which locates vegetarianism as part of a more coherent set of practices. The alternative is to understand these groups as part of a piecemeal history where certain ideas are adopted and others are rejected in a more chaotic fashion. There is some wisdom in this position and whether we are speaking of Hesiod, the Orphics or even Aristotle, practices and precepts emerge gradually from complex histories and contested positions. However, it must be stressed that piecemeal histories and meaningful systems are not mutually incompatible and in many cases contested positions are possible precisely because of some shared ideas. As Sahlins puts it:

In order for the categories to be contested at all, there must be a common system of intelligibility, extending to the grounds, means, modes and issues of disagreement. The differences at issue, moreover, entail some relationship. All the more so if they are subversive and thus express the positional values and interests of speakers in a certain social-political order.¹⁹

In other words, although the Pythagoreans, Stoics, and Orphics may disagree on many things, their disagreement itself forms parts of a broader systematic agreement. In this case, we can point to their more general shared ideas on the presence of souls in animals, humans and the cosmos at large from which their debated positions on the role and purpose of sacrifice arose. These groups may reach very different answers but the very terms of the debate would have been largely meaningless for Homer and Hesiod, for whom animals were simply objects used

¹⁶ Trans. Basore (1975).

¹⁷ On this distinction see Ullucci (2012) 41.

¹⁸ Betegh (2014) 152. This view is very common and Burkert (1972) also claims that Pythagorean doctrines 'developed from living custom, with all its complexity and paradox, rather than from clearly articulated doctrine.' (182). See Rives (2011) for a related position.

¹⁹ Sahlins (2002) 28.

towards particular ends. Seeing animals as kindred beings radically changes this and demands that issues like sacrifice and animal intelligence at least be reconsidered. The issue, however, was extremely complicated and sacrifice was one of the most important social institutions in the Greek world and its rejection was tantamount to social ostracism.²⁰ The Orphics adopted a logically coherent but politically radical position. Others, understandably, attempted to cohere politics and religious views in a more moderate way. This often took place through the introduction of sacrificial loopholes and many of the Pythagorean strictures, rather than irrational taboos might be interpreted as efforts to accommodate radical ideas to city life.²¹ The Stoic evidence is slight but suggests that most Stoics sacrificed not out of any wish to communicate with gods but out of traditionalism.²² There is also some evidence that the Stoics were criticised for this accommodation and Augustine's reflections on the Stoic, Varro, strike at the very heart of the matter (*De civ. D.* 4.12):

Quod si ita est, quis non uideat quanta impietas et inreligiositas consequantur, ut, quod calcauerit quisque, partem Dei calcet, in omni animante occidendo pars Dei trucidetur?

And if this is so, who cannot see what impious and irreligious consequences follow, such as that whatever one may trample, he must trample a part of God, and in slaying any living creature, a part of God must be slaughtered?²³

In other words, for Augustine, the Stoics did something which was by their own standards deeply problematic. We may even consider that the complex efforts made by many Stoics to separate animals from men in terms of *logos* reflect, in some respects, their awareness of this problem.²⁴ I have only touched upon the surface of the complexities of Greek society and the plurality of views on these issues. Nevertheless, these examples are sufficient to illustrate my point, namely, whether we are discussing groups like the Orphics who take issues to their logical extremes, or accommodationists like the Stoics, in both cases we are dealing with expressions and debates emerging from more basic ontological assumptions on the continuity or separation between animals, men and gods. Ontologies are orientations. They tell us that a given society is likely to have particular kinds of debates. They do not tell us how to answer

²⁰ Detienne (1979). Burkert (1972) notes the rejection of sacrifice would 'have meant a complete overturn of traditional ways' (182). Betegh recognizes this as a factor for the Pythagoreans describing how 'the very discrepancy among the sources indicates that there was a serious interest in relaxing vegetarianism in such a way that it did not block participation in public rituals involving animal sacrifice and feasting on the ritually slaughtered animals' (155).

²¹ See Diog. Laert., 8.19, who cites the authority of Aristotle. See also Aristox. fr. 29a Wehrli (Diog. Laert. 8.20) Porph. *VP* 42–5; *Abst.* 1.26; Iambl. *VP* 85. Loopholes are common the world over. For example, a Buddhist monk when accused by Jain of being inconsistent in his views on eating meat, reportedly said 'the donor denies this, and the Buddha explains that a monk may eat meat provided it is 'pure in three respects': if the monk has not seen, heard or suspected that the animal had been killed specifically for him (*Vin.* IV.237–38).' See Harvey (2000) 39.

²² See Ullucci (2012) 40.

²³ Trans. Dods (2009).

²⁴ See Newmyer (2017) 54–60 for an outline of the Stoic view on animals, souls and logos.

these questions. And in both the ancient and the modern world there are many who simply cannot decide.

Pindar and Ontological Uncertainty

It is appropriate to end this discussion of competing Greek theogonical poetry with one of the shortest and most ambiguous theogonies of all, the opening lines of Pindar's *Nemean Six* (1-4):

ἐν ἀνδρῶν, ἐν θεῶν γένος· ἐκ μιᾶς δὲ πνέομεν
ματρὸς ἀμφοτέρω· διείργει δὲ πᾶσα κεκριμένα
δύναμις, ὥς τὸ μὲν οὐδέν, ὃ δὲ χάλκεος ἀσφαλὲς αἰὲν ἔδος
μένει οὐρανός· ἀλλὰ τι προσφέρομεν ἔμπαν ἢ μέγαν
νόον ἥτοι φύσιν ἀθανάτοισι,
καίπερ ἐφαμερίαν οὐκ εἰδότες οὐδὲ μετὰ νύκτας ἄμμε πότμος
οἶαν τιν' ἔγραψε δραμεῖν ποτὶ στάθμαν.

There is one race of men, one race of gods; and from a single
mother we both draw our breath. But all allotted power divides us:
man is nothing, but for the gods the bronze sky endures as a secure home forever
Nevertheless, we bear some resemblance to the immortals,
either in greatness of mind or in nature,
although we do not know, by day or by night,
towards what goal fortune has written that we should run.²⁵

These lines are as striking as they are unclear. The first problem appears in the opening line which has been variously translated to stress difference, 'there is one race of men and another race of gods' or similarity, 'there is one race of gods and men.'²⁶ The issue is then temporarily resolved when Pindar describes that gods and men have one single divine mother. This closure does not last long and we are quickly transported from proximity to extreme distance:

But all allotted power divides us:
man is nothing, but for the gods the bronze sky endures as a secure home forever.

διείργει δὲ πᾶσα κεκριμένα
δύναμις, ὥς τὸ μὲν οὐδέν, ὃ δὲ χάλκεος ἀσφαλὲς αἰὲν ἔδος
μένει οὐρανός.

This is both the longest and most definite statement in Pindar's mini theogony and the act of separation is enforced by two verbs *διείργω* ('kept asunder') and the perfective participle and very Hesiodic *κρίνω* ('having been separated'). This, to use Vernant's famous phrase, is an 'uncrossable gulf' if ever there was one. Yet Pindar wavers again:

Nevertheless, we bear some resemblance to the immortals,
either in greatness of mind or in φύσις.

²⁵ Trans. Svarlien (1990).

²⁶ Gerber (1999) 43.

ἀλλὰ τι προσφέρομεν ἔμπαν ἢ μέγαν
νόον ἥτοι φύσιν ἀθανάτοις.

If man is sharply opposed to the gods, this is an opposition which admits a degree of likeness in respect of νόος and φύσις.²⁷ Νόος may be roughly translated as ‘mind.’ Φύσις, however, is very obscure and probably does not mean ‘nature.’ Pindar uses φύσις on only one other occasion. In *Isthmian Four* (49-50), the athlete, Mellissus, is contrasted with Orion in terms of his φύσις.²⁸ Pindar explains:

οὐ γὰρ φύσιν Ὠαριωνεῖαν ἔλαχεν:
Mellissus did not have the φύσις of Orion.

And elaborates:

ἀλλ’ ὄνοτὸς μὲν ἰδέσθαι.
He looks awful.

Φύσις in this case appears to refer to Mellissus’ physical appearance.²⁹ This makes sense from what follows and Mellissus’ φύσις is contrasted with his exceptional θυμός (‘spirit’) and μῆτις (‘intelligence’) (46-7). The contrast is then repeated immediately afterwards in relation to Mellissus’ βραχύς μορφή (short stature) but ἄκαμπτος ψυχὴ (sturdy soul) (53). In other words, in *Isthmian Four* φύσις means something like physicality and is used in contrast to interiorities such as ψυχὴ, θυμός and μῆτις. If we assume that *Nemean Six*’s usage of φύσις is similar, Pindar appears to offer a key instance of describing mortal/immortal relations in terms of their physicality and interiority.³⁰ This makes the sentence of pivotal importance for understanding Pindar’s ontological assumptions but, as usual, how Pindar contrasts these terms is anything but clear.

ἀλλὰ τι προσφέρομεν ἔμπαν ἢ μέγαν
νόον ἥτοι φύσιν ἀθανάτοις.

Nevertheless, we bear some resemblance to the immortals,
either in greatness of mind or physicality.

²⁷ Gerber (1999) 46.

²⁸ See Gerber (1999) 47; Lourenço (2011) 67.

²⁹ This usage is comparable with that of Herodotus (2.71) when he describes the physical characteristics of the hippopotamus:

οἱ δὲ ἵπποι οἱ ποτάμιοι νομῶ μὲν τῷ Παπρημίτῃ ἱροὶ εἰσι, τοῖσι δὲ ἄλλοισι Αἰγυπτίοισι οὐκ ἱροί. φύσιν δὲ παρέχονται ἰδέης τοιήνδε: τετράπουν ἐστί, δίχληρον, ὅπλαι βοός, σιμόν, λοφιὴν ἔχον ἵππου, χαυλιόδοντα φαῖνον, οὐρήν ἵππου καὶ φωνήν, μέγαθος ὅσον τε βοῦς ὁ μέγιστος: τὸ δέρμα δ’ αὐτοῦ οὕτω δῆτι παχύ ἐστί ὥστε αὐοῦ γενομένου ξυστὰ ποιέεσθαι ἀκόντια ἐξ αὐτοῦ.

‘Hippopotamuses are sacred in the district of Papremis, but not elsewhere in Egypt. They present the following appearance: four-footed, with cloven hooves like cattle; blunt-nosed; with a horse’s mane, visible tusks, a horse’s tail and voice; big as the biggest bull. Their hide is so thick that, when it is dried, spearshafts are made of it.’ Trans. Godley (1920).

³⁰ Gerber (1999) notes ‘it refers to bodily form and this would provide an appropriate antithesis here to νόος’ (47).

Is the relation considered to be in terms of both physicality and interiority and based on continuity (pantheism) or in terms of interiority but not physicality (animism), or physicality and not interiority (naturalism)?³¹ Alternatively should we consider the presence of the insurmountable power which separates humans from gods and consider their resemblance as part of an analogical similarity (analogism)? I am inclined towards the analogical reading and indeed as the poem develops, Pindar indeed expresses the human/divine relationship in such terms.³² However, this does not mean that we should ignore the ambiguity these opening lines present.³³ Arguably, this is the kind of ontological hesitation we might expect from a poet as familiar with mainland Greece as he was with Sicily and Italy. On the one hand we see the Hesiodic Pindar (*Isthm.* 5.14-16):

μὴ μάτευσε Ζεὺς γενέσθαι: πάντ' ἔχεις,
εἴ σε τούτων μοῖρ' ἐφίκοιτο καλῶν.
θνατὰ θνατοῖσι πρέπει.

Do not seek to become Zeus; you have everything,
if a share of these fine things comes to you.
Mortal aims befit mortal men.³⁴

A similar idea appears again in *Pythian Three* (59-60):

χρὴ τὰ ἐοικότα παρ δαιμόνων μαστευμέν θναταῖς φρασίν,
γνόντα τὸ παρ ποδός, οἷας εἰμὲν αἴσας.

We must seek from the gods what is appropriate for mortal minds,
knowing what lies before our feet, and what kind of destiny we have.³⁵

These warnings are as Hesiodic as they come. Pindar even discusses the difference between men and gods in terms of μοῖρα and the related term αἴσα, i.e. shares or destinies. Yet the same Pindar is also essential to the early Orphic debate, discussing cycles of souls in *Olympian Two* (65-70) and a cryptic payment to Persephone (*Fr. 133 Bergk*):

Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος
δέξεται, εἰς τὸν ὕπερθεν ἄλιον κείνων ἐνάτῳ ἔτει
ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν,
ἐκ τῶν βασιλῆες ἀγαυοὶ
καὶ σθένει κραίπνοι σοφία τε μέγιστοι
ἄνδρες αὔξοντ': ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἥρωες ἀγνοὶ
πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλεῦνται

For from whomsoever Persephone shall accept requital for ancient wrong, the souls of these she restores in the ninth year to the upper sun again; from them arise glorious kings and men of splendid

³¹ The problem is further exacerbated by a textual variant where the order is reversed. See scholium on Eur. *Med.* 1224 (ii.207) Schwartz. See Gerber (1999) 46.

³² In lines 8-10 Pindar explains how Alcimides' kinship (συγγενής) with mother earth continues to exert itself through a microcosm/macrocasm relation where just as the fields yield crops in abundance one year, but are barren the next, athletic prowess, bypassing Alcimidas' father, is handed from grandfather to grandson.

³³ Lourenço (2011) sees it within what I call a pantheist framework noting 'what Pindar is telling us about the similarity between gods and men is the following: (1) we belong to the same race and descend from the same mother; (2) we resemble each other with regard to νόος and φύσις' (71).

³⁴ Trans. Arnson Svarlien (1990).

³⁵ Ibid.

might and surpassing wisdom, and for all remaining time are they called holy heroes amongst mankind.³⁶

We do not know whether Pindar was personally more inclined towards the Hesiodic or the Orphic position, but he certainly knew about both. All of this comes to the fore in the opening lines of *Nemean Six* and his audience and we along with them are left wondering: one race or two? Continuity or discontinuity? Analogism or pantheism? Which is it?

³⁶ Trans. Lamb (1967).

APPENDIX ONE

Some Key Orphic Texts

In this Appendix I list some of the key texts which I refer to in my reconstructions of the early Orphic theogonies:

1. The Preserved fragments from the sixth century BC Derveni Theogony¹:

Here I list the longest surviving lines from the poem. I have not attempted to order the fragments but list them as they appear in the commentary.

The poem starts with an oath of secrecy and outlines that the poem will glorify the rule of Zeus and those born from him:

[φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί: θ]ύρας δ' ἐπίθε[σθε βέβηλοι]
I shall proclaim to those for whom it is proper; close the doors, profane ones (col. 7.)

[ο]ἱ Διὸς ἐξεγένοντο [ὑπερμεν]έος βασιλῆος.
who were born from Zeus the mighty king (8.2).

Ζεὺς μὲν ἐπεὶ δὴ πα[τρὸς ἐο]ῦ πάρα θέ[σ]φατον ἀρχὴν
[] [ἀ]λκὴν τ' ἐν χεῖρεσσι ἔ[λ]αβ[εν κ]α[ὶ] δαίμον[α] κυδρόν.
and when Zeus took from his father the prophesied rule
and the strength in his hands and the glorious daimon (8.4-5).

Columns 11-13 discuss oracles Zeus receives from Night and Kronos advising him on how to secure his rule:

[ἡ δὲ] ἔχρησεν ἅπαντα τά οἱ θε[μ]ις ἦν ἀνύσασ[θ]αι.
she (Night) proclaimed an oracle about all that was right for him to hear (11.10).

ὥς ἄν ἔ[χοι κά]τα καλὸν ἔδος νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου.
so that he may rule on the lovely abode of snowcapped Olympus (12.2).

Ζεὺς μὲν ἐπεὶ δὴ πατρὸς ἐοῦ πάρα [θ]έσφατ' ἀκούσα[ς].
Zeus when he heard the prophecies from his father (13.1).

The passage quoted in Col.13.4 is confusing from the point of view of the narrative and seems to anticipate the action in Col.16.3-6.

αἰδοῖον κατέπινεν, ὃς αἰθέρα ἔκθορε πρῶτος.
he swallowed the reverend one, who sprang from the aither first (13.4).

Columns 14- 15 describe Zeus' succession of Kronos and offers some background information on previous rulers:

ὃς μέγ' ἔρεξεν.
(he) (Kronos?) who did a great deed (14.5).

Οὐρανὸς Εὐφρονίδης, ὃς πρώτιστος βασιλεύσεν.
Ouranos son of Night, who first of all ruled (14.6).

ἐκ τοῦ δὴ Κρόνος αὖτις, ἔπειτα δὲ μητίετα Ζεύς.

¹ The text and reconstruction follows Betegh (2004) with alterations.

from him in turn Kronos, and then wise Zeus (15.6).

μητιν κα[ί μακάρων κατέχ]εν βασιλῆϊδα τιμ[ήν].
(Zeus?) Holding wisdom and royal honour over the blessed gods (15.13).

Column 16 presents the longest passage preserved from the poem and describes the swallowing of Protogonos:

Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου· τῷ δ' ἄρα πάντες
ἀθάνατοι προσέφυν μάκαρες θεοὶ ἡδὲ θεάιναι
καὶ ποταμοὶ καὶ κρήναι ἐπήρατοι ἄλλα τε πάντα,
_____ ἄσσα τότε ἦν γεγαῶτ', αὐτὸς δ' ἄρα μούνος ἔγεντο.

[with?] reverend king Protogonos, onto which all
the immortals grew (or: clung fast), blessed gods and goddesses
and rivers and lovely springs and everything else
that had been born then; and he himself became solitary (16.3-6).

Columns 16-19 describe the glory of Zeus as first, middle and last:

[νῦν δ' ἐστὶ]ν βασιλεὺς πάντ[ων καὶ τ' ἔσσετ' ἔπ]ειτα.
Now he is king of all and will always be (16.14).

Ζεὺς κεφα[λή, Ζεὺς μέσ]σα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ [π]άντα τέτ[υκται].
Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things have their being (17.13).

Ζεὺς βασιλεύς, Ζεὺς δ' ἀρχὸς ἀπάντων ἀργικέραυνος.
Zeus the king, Zeus who rules all with the bright bolt (19.10).

Columns 23-24 describes how Zeus recreates the cosmos including goddesses, rivers and the moon:

Ἀφροδίτη Οὐρανία, Πειθῶ, Ἀρμονία
Aphrodite Ourania, Persuasion, Harmony (21.5-7).

ἵνας δ' ἐγκατ[έλε]ξ' Ἀχελωῖου ἀργυ[ρ]οδίνε[ω].
he placed in it the sinews of the silver-eddying Achelous (23.11).

ἡ πολλοῖς φαίνει μερόπεσσι ἐπ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν.
(the moon) which shines for many articulate-speaking humans on the boundless earth (24.3).

Column 25 and 26 describes how Zeus plans to mate with Rhea and anticipates the birth of Persephone:

[αὐτ]ὰρ [ἐ]πεὶ δ[ὲ] πᾶν]τα Διὸς φρήν μή]σατ[ο ἔ]ργα.
But once [? the heart] of Zeus devised all deeds (25.14).

μητρὸς ἑᾶς ἤθελεν μιχθῆμεναι ἐν φιλότῃτι
He wished to lie in love with his own mother (col. 26)

The *Derveni Theogony* shows similarities with both later Orphic Theogonies such as the *Rhapsodies* and Orphic hymns to Zeus. I offer the Orphic *Hymn to Zeus* (OF 243)² known to Porphyry as an example of the latter genre:

² OF 243 =(I) Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* 3.8. 2 (= Porphyry. *Περὶ ἀγαλμ.* fr. 354 F).

Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένετο, Ζεὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέραυνος
 Ζεὺς κεφαλὴ, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται·
 Ζεὺς ἄρσιν γένετο, Ζεὺς ἄφθιτος ἔπλετο νύμφη·
 Ζεὺς πυθμὶν ἢ γαίης τε καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος
 Ζεὺς βασιλεὺς, Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἀπάντων ἀρχιγένεθλος.
 ἔν κρᾶτος, εἷς δαίμων, γενέτης μέγας, ἀρχὸς ἀπάντων,
 ἔν δὲ δέμας βασιλείον, ἐν ᾧ τάδε πάντα κυκλεῖται,
 πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ αἰθήρ νύξ τε καὶ ἡμαρ.
 καὶ Μῆτις πρῶτος γενέτωρ καὶ Ἔρως πολυτερπῆς
 πάντα γὰρ ἐν μεγάλῳ Ζηνὸς τάδε σώματι κείται.
 τοῦ δὴ τοι κεφαλὴ μὲν ἰδεῖν καὶ καλὰ πρόσωπα
 οὐρανὸς αἰγλήεις, ὃν χρύσεια ἀμφὶς ἔθιραι
 ἄστρον μαρμαρέων περικαλλέες ἠερέθονται,
 ταύρεα δ' ἀμφοτέρωθε δύο χρύσεια κέρατα,
 ἀντολίῃ τε δύσιν τε, θεῶν ὁδοὶ οὐραניῶνων,
 ὄμματα δ' ἥελιός τε καὶ ἀντιόωσα σελήνη·
 νοῦς δὲ οἱ ἀψευδὴς βασιλῆος ἄφθιτος αἰθήρ,
 ᾧ δὴ πάντα κλύει καὶ φράζεται· οὐδὲ τις ἐστὶν
 αὐδὴ οὐδ' ἐνοπὴ οὐδὲ κτύπος οὐδέ μὲν ὄσσα,
 ἣ λήθει Διὸς οὐκ ὑπερμενέος Κρονίωνος·
 ὧδε μὲν ἀθανάτην κεφαλὴν ἔχει ἡδὲ νόημα.
 σῶμα δὲ οἱ περιφεγγές, ἀπείριτον, ἀστυφέλικτον,
 ἄτρομον, ὀβριμόγυνον, ὑπερμενὲς ὧδε τέτυκται·
 ὧμοι μὲν καὶ στέρνα καὶ εὐρέα νῶτα θεοῖο
 ἀήρ εὐρυβίης, πτέρυγες δὲ οἱ ἐξεφύοντο,
 τῆς ἐπὶ πάντα ποτᾶθ', ἱερὴ δὲ οἱ ἔπλετο νηδὺς
 γαῖα τε παμμήτωρ ὀρέων τ' αἰπεινὰ κάρηνα
 μέσση δὲ ζώνη βαρυηχέος οἶδμα θαλάσσης
 καὶ πόντου πυμάτη δὲ βάσις, χθονὸς ἐνδοθὶ ρίζαι,
 Τάρταρά τ' εὐρώεντα καὶ ἔσχατα πείρατα γαίης.
 πάντα δ' ἀποκρύψας αὐθις φάος ἐς πολυγηθὲς
 μέλλεν ἀπὸ κραδῆς προφέρειν πάλι, θέσκελα ρέζων.

Zeus was the first, Zeus last, the lightning lord,
 Zeus head, Zeus centre, all things are from Zeus.
 Zeus born a male, Zeus virgin undefiled;
 Zeus the firm base of earth and starry heaven;
 Zeus sovereign, Zeus alone first cause of all:
 One power divine, great ruler of the world,
 One kingly form, encircling all things here,
 Fire, water, earth, and ether, night and day;
 Metis, first parent, and delightful Eros:³
 For in Zeus' mighty body these all lie.
 His head and beauteous face the radiant heaven
 Reveals and round him float in shining waves
 The golden tresses of the twinkling stars.
 On either side bulls' horns of gold are seen,
 Sunrise and sunset, footpaths of the gods.
 His eyes the Sun, the Moon's responsive light;
 His mind immortal ether, sovereign truth,
 Hears and considers all; nor any speech,
 Nor cry, nor noise, nor ominous voice escapes
 The ear of Zeus, great Kronos' mightier son:
 Such his immortal head, and such his thought.
 His radiant body, boundless, undisturbed
 In strength of mighty limbs was formed thus:
 The god's broad-spreading shoulders, breast and back
 Air's wide expanse displays; on either side
 Grow wings, wherewith throughout all space he flies.
 Earth the all-mother, with her lofty hills,
 His sacred belly forms; the swelling flood

³ Both Eros and Metis are common names for Protogonos. See Procl. *In Tim II*, 102; Macro. *Sat.* 1.23.21.

Of hoarse resounding Ocean girds his waist.
His feet the deeply rooted ground upholds,
And dismal Tartarus, and earth's utmost bounds.
All things he hides, then from his heart again
In godlike action brings to gladsome light. ⁴

2. Some Key Gold Plates.

Here I reproduce the first and longest plate from Hipponion, the Thurii plate referring to paying a penalty, the Pelinna plate mentioning Bacchus and Persephone and the fragment of Pindar on which Comparetti based much of his argument.

Fifth-century BC Hipponion gold plate (L1 OF 474).

Μναμοσύνας τόδε ἴεριον· ἐπεὶ ἄμ μέλλῃσι θανεῖσθαι
εἰς Αἴδαιο δόμους εὐηρέας, ἔστ' ἐπὶ δεξιᾷ κρήνα,
παρ δ' αὐτὰν ἑστακῦα λευκὰ κυπάρισσος·
ἐνθα κατερχόμεναι ψυχαὶ νεκύων ψύχονται.
ταύτας τὰς κράνας μηδὲ σχεδὸν ἐγγύθεν ἔλθῃς.
πρόσθεν δὲ εὐρήσεις τὰς Μναμοσύνας ἀπὸ λίμνης
ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ προρέον· φύλακες δ' ἐπύπερθεν ἔασι.
οἱ δέ σε εἰρήσονται ἐνὶ φρασὶ πευκαλίμαισι
ὅτ' αὖτις δὴ ἐξερέεις Ἀΐδος σκότος ὀρφανήεντος
εἴπων· Γῆς παῖς ἡμὶ καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος.
δίψαι δ' εἴμ' αὖτος καὶ ἀπόλλυμαι· ἀλλὰ δότ' ὦκα
ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ πίνειν τῆς Μνημοσύνης ἀπὸ λίμνης.
καὶ δὴ τοὶ ἐρέουσιν ὑποχθονίῳ βασιλῇ·
καὶ {δὴ τοι} δώσουσι πῖν τὰς Μναμοσύνας ἀπ[ὸ] λίμνας,
καὶ δὴ καὶ σὺ πῶν ὁδὸν ἔρχεαι· ἂν τε καὶ ἄλλοι
μύσται καὶ βάρχοι ἱερὰν στείχουσι κλεινοί.

This is the work of Memory, when you are about to die
down to the well- built house of Hades. There is a spring at the right side,
and standing by it a white cypress.
Descending to it, the souls of the dead refresh themselves.
Do not even go near this spring!
Ahead you will find from the Lake of Memory,
cold water pouring forth; there are guards before it.
They will ask you, with astute wisdom,
what you are seeking in the darkness of murky Hades.
Say, "I am a son of Earth and starry Sky,
I am parched with thirst and am dying; but quickly grant me
cold water from the Lake of Memory to drink."
And they will announce you to the Chthonian King,
and they will grant you to drink from the Lake of Memory.
And you, too, having drunk, will go along the sacred road on
which other glorious initiates and Bacchoi travel.⁵

Fourth-century BC Thurii plate (L 10b; OF 490)

Ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρόν· καθ' ἀρά, χθονίων βασιλεια,
Εὐκλεῖα καὶ Εὐβοῦλεῦ καὶ θεοὶ καὶ {ὅσοι} δαύμονες ἄλλοι·
καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὕμνων γένος εὐχομαι ὀλβιον· εἰναι {ὀλβιο}
ποινὰν {δ'} ἀνταπέτασ' ἔργων ἐνεκ' οὐ τι δικαίων.
εἴτε με Μοῖρα ἐδάμασσε· εἴτε ἀστεροπῆτα {κη} κεραυνῶν.
νῦν δὲ ἐκείτις ἤκω {ικω} παρὰ ἀγνήν· Φερσεφόνηαν,

⁴ Trans. Gifford (1903).

⁵ Trans. Graf and Johnston (2007).

ὥς {λ} με <π>ρόφ<ρων> πέ[μ]ψ<η> {μ} ἔδρας ἐς εὐ<α>γ<έων>.

I come pure from the pure, Queen of the Chthonian Ones,
Eucles and Euboleus and other gods – as many daimones (as do
exist).

For I also claim to be of your happy race.

I have paid the penalty for unrighteous deeds.

Either Moira overcame me or the star-flinger with lightning.

Now I come, come as a suppliant (feminine) to Persephone,

So that she may kindly send me to the seats of the pure.⁶

Fourth-century BC ivy shaped plate from Pelinna Thessaly (L 7a,b OF 485-6):

νῦν ἔθανες καὶ νῦν ἐγένου, τρισόλβιε, ἄματι τῶιδε.

εἶπεῖν Φερσεφόναί σ' ὅτι Βάκχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε.

τα{ι}ῦρος εἰς γάλα ἔθορες.

αἶψα εἰς γάλα ἔθορες.

κρίδς εἰς γάλα ἔπεσ<ες>.

οἶνον ἔχεις εὐδ<α>ίμονα τιμῆ<ν>

καὶ σὺ μὲν εἷς ὑπὸ γῆν τελέσας ἄπερ ὀλβιοὶ ἄλλοι.

Now you have died and now you have come into being, O thrice

happy one, on this same day.

Tell Persephone that Bacchus himself released you.

Bull, you jumped into milk.

Quickly, you jumped into milk.

Ram, you fell into milk.

You have wine as your fortunate honor.

And below the earth there are ready for you the same prizes [or rites] as the other blessed ones.⁷

The Pindar fragment (Fr. 133 Bergk):

Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος

δέξεται, εἰς τὸν ὕπερθεν ἄλιον κείνων ἐνάτῳ ἔτει

ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν,

ἐκ τῶν βασιλῆες ἀγαοὶ

καὶ σθένει κραίηνοι σοφία τε μέγιστοι

ἄνδρες αὖξοντ'· ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἥρωες ἀγνοὶ

πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλεῦνται

For from whomsoever Persephone shall accept requital for ancient wrong, the souls of these she restores in the ninth year to the upper sun again; from them arise glorious kings and men of splendid might and surpassing wisdom, and for all remaining time are they called holy heroes amongst mankind.⁸

The fourth-century BC Timpona Grande gold plate (C1) and Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal's (2008) interpretation and translation:

ΠΡΩΤΟΓΟΝΟΤΗΜΑΙΤΙΕΤΗΓΑΜΜΑΤΡΙΕΠΑΚΥΒΕΛΕΙΑΚΟΡΡΑΟΣ ΕΝΤΑΙΗΔΗΜΗΤΡΟΣΗΤ
ΤΑΤΑΙΤΤΑΤΑΠΤΑΖΕΥΙΑΤΗΤΥΑΕΡΣΑΠΤΑΗΛΙΕΠΥΡΔΗΠΙΑΝΤΑΣΤΗΝΤΑΣΤΗΝΙΣΑΤΟΠΕΝΙΚΑΙΜ
ΣΗΔΕΤΥΧΑΙΤΕΦΑΝΗΣΠΑΜΜΗΣΤΟΙΜΟΙΡΑΙΣΣΤΗΤΟΙΓΑΝΝΥΑΠΙΑΝΤΗΣΥΚΛΗΤΕΔΑΡΜΟΝΔΕΥΧΙ
ΣΠΑΤΕΡΑΤΙΚΠΑΝΤΑΔΑΜΑΣΤΑΠΑΝΤΗΡΝΥΝΥΝΤΑΙΣΕΛΑΒΔΟΝΤΑΔΕΠΑΝΤΕΜΟΙΒΤΗΣΛΗΤΕΑΣΩ
ΤΗΜΗΑΕΡΠΥΡΜΕΜΜΑΤΕΡΛΥΕΣΤΙΣΟΙΣΛ·ΕΝΤΑΤΟΝΗΣΣΙΝΝΥΞΙΝΗΜΕΦΗΜΕΡΑΝΕΓΛΧΥΕΣ
ΕΠΠΗΜΑΡΤΙΝΗΣΤΙΑΣΤΑΝΖΕΕΥΕΝΟΡΘΤΤΙΕΚΑΙΠΑΝΟΠΤΑΙΕΝΑΙΜΙΘ·ΜΑΤΕΡΜΑΣΕΠ

⁶ Trans. Graf and Johnston (2007).

⁷ Trans. Graf and Johnston (2007) modified.

⁸ Trans. Lamb (1967).

ΩΥΣΟΝΕΘΕΥΧΑΣΤΑΚΤΑΠΥΑΡΣΥΟΛΚΑΠΕΔΙΩΧΑΜΑΤΕΜΑΝΚΑΛ ΗΑΔΙΕΡΑΔΑΜΝΕΥΔΑΜΝΟΙ
ΩΤΑΚΤΗΡΙΕΡΑΜΑΡΔΗΜΗΤΕΡΠΥΡΖΕΥΚΑΡΗΧΦΟΝΙΑΤΡΑΒΔΑΗΤΡΟΣΗΝΙΣΤΗΟΙΣΤΝ
ΗΡΩΣΝΗΓΑΥΝΗΓΑΟΣΕΣΦΡΕΝΑΜΑΤΑΙΜΗΤΝΝΤΗΣΝΥΣΧΑΜΕΣΤΩΡΕΙΛΕΚΟΙΡΗΝ
ΑΙΑΦΗΡΤΟΝΟΝΣΣΜΜΟΕΣΤΟΝΑΕΡΤΑΙΠΑΝΙΑΛΛΥΕΣΦΡΕΝΑΜΑΡ· ΤΩΣ.

As interpreted by Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008) with nonsense letters in capitals:

Πρωτογόνω(ι) ΤΗΜΑΙΤΙΕΤΗ Γᾱι ματρί ΕΠΑ Κυβελεία(ι) Κόρρα(ι) ΟΣΕΝΤΑΙΗ Δήμητρος ΗΤ
ΤΑΤΑΙΤΤΑΤΑΠΤΑ Ζεῦ ΙΑΤΗΤΥ ἄερ ΣΑΠΤΑ Ἥλιε, πῦρ δὴ πάνταΣΤΗΙΝΤΑΣΤΗΝΙΣΑΤΟΠΕ νικᾱι Μ
ΣΗΔΕ Τύχα ΙΤΕ Φάνης, πάμνηστοι Μοῖραι ΣΣΤΗΤΟΙΓΑΝΝΥΑΠΙΑΝΤΗ σὺ κλυτὲ δαῖμονΔΕΥΧΙ
Σ πάτερ ΑΤΙΚ παντοδαμάστα ΠΑΝΤΗΡΝΥΝΤΑΙΣΕΛΑΒΔΟΝΤΑΔΕΠ ἀνταμοιβή ΣΤΛΗΤΕΑΣΤΛ
ΤΗΜΗ ἄερ ι πῦρ ΜΕΜ Μᾱτερ ΛΥΕΣΤΙΣΟΙΛ-ΕΝΤΑΤΟ Νῆστι Ν νύξ ΙΝΗΜΕΦ ἡμέραΜΕΡΑΝΕΓΛΧΥΕΣ
ἐπτῆμαρ Τιν ἥστιας ΤΑΝ Ζεῦ ἐνορύττει(?) καὶ πανόπτα. αἰέν ΑΙΜΙΥ*μᾱτερ, ἐμᾱς ἐπ-
ᾱκουσον ΕΟ εὐχᾱς ΤΑΚΤΑΠΥΑΡΣΥΟΛΚΑΠΕΔΙΩΧΑΜΑΤΕΜΑΝ καλ{η} ᾱ Δ ιερά ΔΑΜΝΕΥΔΑΜΝΟΙ
ΩΤΑΚΤΗΡ ιερά ΜΑΡ Δημῆτερ, πῦρ, Ζεῦ, Κόρη Χθονία ΤΡΑΒΔΑΗΤΡΟΣΗΝΙΣΤΗΟΙΣΤΝ
ῆρως ΝΗΓΑΥΝΗ φάος ἐς φρένα ΜΑΤΑΙΜΗΤΝΝΤΗΣΝΥΣΧΑ μήστωρ εἴλε Κούρην
αἴα ΦΗΡΤΟΝΟΣΣΜΜΟ-ΕΣΤΟΝ ἄερ ΤΑΙΠΑΝΙΑΛΛΥ ἐς φρένα ΜΑΡ*ΤΩΣ

To the First-Born, to Mother Earth, to Cybelea, daughter of Demeter.
Zeus, Air, Sun. Fire conquers all.
Avatars of fortune and Phanes.Moirai that remember all. You, O
illustrious demon.
Father who subdues all.Compensation.
Air, fire, Mother, Nestis, night, day
Fasting for seven days. Zeus who sees all.Always. Mother, hear my
prayer. Fine sacrifices.
Sacrifices. Demeter. Fire. Zeus, the Underground Girl.
Hero.Light to the intelligence. The adviser seized the Girl.
Earth. Air. To the intelligence.⁹

⁹ Trans. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal's (2008)

APPENDIX TWO

The origins of 'Nomos' and 'Phusis'

I discussed in the Introduction that although the nature/culture dichotomy is rare outside the modern West, Protagoras' myth indicates that at least some Greeks argued for a similar position and it is possible that analogous ideas were adopted by other societies as well. In Greece, however, not only was the view of marginal significance, it has a history and Lloyd has argued that in Homer and Hesiod there was 'no overarching concept or category that picks out the domain of nature as such-as opposed either to 'culture' or to the 'supernatural.''¹ This is a rather striking claim and it might be argued in this case, as well as in some of the examples discussed in the Introduction, that even if a society does not have the vocabulary to express a nature/culture distinction, they may still have divided the world in sophistic terms. This is possible and one commonly used example is found in Homer's (*Od.* 9.112-5) description of the Cyclopes:²

τοῖσιν δ' οὔτ' ἀγοραὶ βουλευφόροι οὔτε θέμιστες,
ἀλλ' οἳ γ' ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων ναίουσι κάρηνα
ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι, θεμιστεύει δὲ ἕκαστος
παιδῶν ἢ δ' ἀλόχων, οὐδ' ἀλλήλων ἀλέγουσιν

They have no meeting place for council, no laws either,
no, up on the mountain peaks they live in arching caverns —
each a law to himself, ruling his wives and children,
not a care in the world for any neighbour.³

There are clear similarities between the Cyclopes' and Protagoras' pre-cultural humans. They have no laws, they live in caves and lack society. At one point the Cyclops, Polyphemus, is even called an ἄγριον, οὔτε δίκας ἐν εἰδότα οὔτε θέμιστας (a savage man that neither knew justice nor law (9. 215)).⁴ Homer formed the basis of a good Greek education and it is certainly possible that the sophistic myth originated here. Νόμος/φύσις, however, did not and while the oppositions presented in this description initially seem promising, under scrutiny they collapse. Polyphemus may live in a cave yet he also cultivates cheese and herds livestock which are meticulously ordered and categorised in pens (9.220-2). Despite numerous scholarly efforts to circumnavigate these issues and classify goat-herding under the category nature, the arguments often seem strained.⁵ Indeed, a contradiction appears in the very term ἄγριος itself. Murray translates this as savage, and the word certainly has these connotations,

¹ Lloyd (2000) 22.

² See Cook (1995). Kirk (1970) 162-72.

³ Trans. Fagles (1996) modified.

⁴ Ibid. modified.

⁵ Cook (1995) 102 is at pains to argue that goats and goat herding were distinguished by the Greeks from cattle and that these can therefore be classified as natural.

yet it is difficult to ignore that it literally means ‘of the fields.’⁶ In this respect, the goatherd Polyphemus appears more like a country bumpkin than man in his natural state.⁷ Despite this important difference, it could still be argued that this ἀγρός/πόλις (field/city), though not exact, is a close enough approximation of the culture/nature divide. However, unlike Protagoras’ myth, Homer in no way universalises this dichotomy into an overarching order. To understand this we need go no further than the Cyclopes’ former neighbours, the Phaeacians. The Phaeacians are relatives to the Cyclopes and like them they live at the ends of the earth and possess crops which grow of their own accord (7.117).⁸ Despite these similarities, where the Cyclopes lack justice and laws, the Phaeacians epitomise them. They live in splendid palaces, they are expert musicians and adept athletes (*Od.* 7). Although the reasoning is somewhat obscure, these very similar groups are often sharply distinguished and located at the extreme ends of a culture/nature dichotomy where the Cyclopes are seen as representations of man’s natural savagery and the Phaeacians of culture in its highest form.⁹ This view is somewhat arbitrary and not supported by Hesiod’s (*Op.* 112-5) early descriptions of mankind which suggest that the Phaeacians, rather than the Cyclopes, are better examples of man in his natural state:

ὥστε θεοὶ δ’ ἔζων ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες
νόσφιν ἄτερ τε πόνων καὶ οἰζύος· οὐδέ τι δειλὸν
γῆρας ἐπῆν, αἰεὶ δὲ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὁμοῖοι
τέρποντ’ ἐν θαλίῃσι κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἀπάντων.

they lived like gods without sorrow of heart,
remote and free from toil and grief:
miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing
they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils.¹⁰

It would clearly be a mistake to speak of Hesiod’s first men as somehow pre-cultural. Like the Phaeacians, these beings were cultured and possessed laws and custom prescribed by the gods themselves (*Op.* 276-80).¹¹ This in fact is true not only in respect of the Phaeacians and Hesiod’s early men, but almost every society described by Homer. And every society including that of the Olympians were expected to abide by nearly identical customs. Homer’s

⁶ From the Greek ἀγρός field.

⁷ Compare this with descriptions of Odysseus’ father Laertes (11.187-96) who has taken to living in the fields. There is also little evidence that Polyphemus and his fellow Cyclopes are struggling to survive. Indeed considering how the fields are perpetually fertile they live an enviable life.

⁸ See also Hesiod’s description of the Golden race (*Op.* 112-117).

⁹ Clay (1983) points out that ‘when Kirk tries to schematize the different characteristics of the Cyclopes on a grid of nature/culture the results turn out to be peculiarly unsatisfactory. He finds himself obliged to use categories like ‘super-civilized,’ ‘civilized,’ ‘relatively civilized,’ ‘uncivilized,’ and ‘super-uncivilized.’ The emerging pattern becomes blurred rather than focused, and Kirk concludes with some rather vague statements concerning the ambiguities of nature and culture. After reading Kirk’s analysis, one cannot help but feel that his scheme is misconceived, that the coordinates of his discussion are somehow wrong. At least, they are unhomeric’ (127).

¹⁰ Trans. Evelyn-White (1914).

¹¹ Long (2005) 414.

Trojans worship the same gods and practise similar customs to the Greeks and Odysseus in his travels is shocked whenever Greek customs are flouted.¹² In this respect culture does not appear to be something acquired, but is a universal standard of behaviour which exists from the very beginning. Given this emphasis on a single monoculture throughout early poetry, the Cyclopes appear not so much as a Protagorean pre-cultural society, but a hubristic society living in defiance of universal norms.¹³ In this and other respects, Homer stands Protagoras on his head and presents a vision of humanity not in terms of their natural animality, but as innately civilized beings. This inversion is fitting and if for Homer ‘custom’ (νόμος) was used in the singular, he paradoxically understood ‘nature’ (φύσις) in the plural. Φύσις is a rare word in early poetry and appears only once in Homer in reference to a magical plant. Hermes (*Od.* 10.303), explaining the φύσις of this plant to Odysseus, outlines the colour of its flower and roots and its divine name, Moly.¹⁴ This usage is similar to Pindar’s usage of φύσις where it again appears to describe physical appearance and form.¹⁵ It is important to note that φύσις in these examples is very specific. Everything from men, gods and plants possesses a φύσις, yet nowhere do we see Nature in the singular as an autonomous realm. In certain respects, early Greek poetry comes close to inverting Protagoras’ model, presenting a world of many natures and a single divine culture.

If Nature writ large is not found in early epic, its discovery is usually attributed to the sixth-century BC and the figures Aristotle (*Eth. Eud.* 1235a) referred to as the φυσιολόγοι or ‘investigators of nature.’¹⁶ As the name suggests, these philosophers inquired into the nature of the world as a whole describing, as I outlined in Chapter Three, its complex workings and underlying order. The nature philosophers did not, however, oppose νόμος to φύσις in any way analogous to the Sophists.¹⁷ On the contrary, they viewed the terms as part of a continuum. Heraclitus (DK 22 B114) describes how:

¹² Heath (2005) 62. Homer was not totally unaware of cultural differences and the presence of different languages is introduced at times and even applies to the gods (*Il.* 20.74). The important point, however, is that he consistently chooses to discuss these societies in terms of universal norms.

¹³ This is similar to Clay (1983) 127 who argues the Cyclopes viewed alongside the super Phaeacians are better described as ‘subhumans.’ Long (2005) also notes ‘the normativity of justice to humans is equally universal, but unlike the beasts we can spurn that gift. Animals behaviour is predictably predatory; human action is not predictably just’ (416).

¹⁴ It is not surprising that this example refers to a plant as φύσις derives etymologically from φῶω to grow.

¹⁵ Pindar uses the term in *Nem.* 6.5 where he compares men and god in terms of φύσις and in *Isth.* 4.49 where he contrasts Mellissus to Orion in terms of his φύσις. See Curd (1998) 44.

¹⁶ *Eth. Eud.* 1235a: οἱ δὲ φυσιολόγοι καὶ τὴν ὅλην φύσιν διακοσμοῦσιν ἀρχὴν λαβόντες τὸ τὸ ὅμοιον ἰέναι πρὸς τὸ ὅμοιον (And the natural philosophers even arrange the whole of nature in a system by assuming as a first principle that like goes to like). Trans. Rackham (1981). See Macé (2017) 206-7.

¹⁷ Many of the Presocratics did not discuss νόμος at all. However, their new concept of order was frequently discussed in terms of δίκη (justice). Anaximander (DK 12 B 1), for example, describes how existing things: διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν (pay penalty and retribution to one another for their injustice, according to the assessment of time) translation Long (2005). Long (2005) 416-7 also notes the place of justice in Parmenides (DK 28 B 8.14-15) and Heraclitus (DK 22 B 94).

τρέφονται γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἀνθρώπειοι νόμοι ὑπὸ ἐνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

All human laws are nurtured by the One law of the god.

The phrase suggests a more organic view where a diversity of νομοί flourishes from a single underlying unity. Laws are recognized to vary but as Long puts it, for Heraclitus there is no split between νόμος and φύσις rather ‘divine law is a law of nature.’¹⁸ In other words, far from divorcing nature from culture, we see a kind of monistic culture-nature totality. The split between nature and culture was, however, drawing near and may first appear in the strikingly modern cosmology of Democritus or the sophistic writing of Antiphon.¹⁹ For Democritus nature was comprised of atoms and void. This, however, had little to do with how the world was experienced by humans. To account for this, Democritus introduced the idea of subjective distinctions made according to νομοί such as taste, colour and temperature (DK 68 125).²⁰ By sharply distinguishing between the natural world and the world of subjective and inconsistent experience, Democritus paved the way for the νόμος/φύσις divide adopted by his compatriot and in some traditions student (Diog. Laert. 8.50), Protagoras of Abdera. The idea was also very clearly expressed by the fifth century sophist, Antiphon, who rather than focusing on sensory experience, contrasted laws based on man-made agreements with the universal laws of nature (DK 87 B 44 b). With these figures, we witness the birth of a powerful theory which centuries later was projected back upon the world at large.

¹⁸ Long (2015) 418.

¹⁹ The dating is difficult and Democritus may have been the younger of the two. See Lavery (2008) 42 n. 2.

²⁰ Νόμῳ γὰρ φησι γλυκύ, (καὶ) νόμῳ πικρόν, νόμῳ θερμόν, νόμῳ ψυχρόν, νόμῳ χροὴ, ἔτεῃ δὲ ἄτομα καὶ κενόν (for by convention he says sweet, by convention bitter, by convention hot, by convention colour, but in reality atoms and void) (trans. Graham 2010).

APPENDIX THREE

The Swineherd's Sacrifice

The sacrificial model I presented in Chapter Two was drawn from a number of different texts and may in this respect appear somewhat synthetic. This is to some degree unavoidable, and though sacrifice was common, thick descriptions are rare. For this reason, it might be useful to complement my analysis with a brief outline and analysis of one of the most extensive sacrificial scenes in archaic literature (*Od.* 14. 418-38):

ὥς ἄρα φωνήσας κέασε ξύλα νηλεῖ χαλκῷ,
οἱ δ' ὃν εἰσηγον μάλα πίονα πενταέτηρον.
τὸν μὲν ἐπειτ' ἔστησαν ἐπ' ἐσχάρη: οὐδὲ συβώτης
λήθετ' ἄρ' ἀθανάτων: φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ' ἀγαθῆσιν:
ἀλλ' ὃ γ' ἀπαρχόμενος κεφαλῆς τρίχας ἐν πυρὶ βάλλεν
ἀργιόδοντος ὕος, καὶ ἐπεύχετο πᾶσι θεοῖσιν
νοστήσαι Ὀδυσῆα πολύφρονα ὄνδε δόμονδε.
κόψε δ' ἀνασχόμενος σχίζῃ δρυός, ἦν λίπε κείων:
τὸν δ' ἔλιπε ψυχῇ. τοὶ δ' ἔσφαζάν τε καὶ εὔσαν:
αἴψα δέ μιν διέχευαν: ὃ δ' ὠμοθετεῖτο συβώτης,
πάντων ἀρχόμενος μελέων, ἐς πίονα δημόν,
καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐν πυρὶ βάλλε, παλύνας ἀλφίτου ἀκτῆ,
μίστυλλον τ' ἄρα τᾶλλα καὶ ἄμφ' ὀβελοῖσιν ἔπειραν,
ὥπτησάν τε περιφραδέως ἐρύσαντό τε πάντα,
βάλλον δ' εἰν ἔλεοῖσιν ἀολλέα: ἂν δὲ συβώτης
ἴστατο δαιτρεύσων: περὶ γὰρ φρεσὶν αἴσιμα ἦδη.
καὶ τὰ μὲν ἔπταχα πάντα διεμοιρᾶτο δαΐζων:
τὴν μὲν ἴαν νύμφησι καὶ Ἑρμῇ, Μαιάδος υἱεῖ,
θῆκεν ἐπευξάμενος, τὰς δ' ἄλλας νεῖμεν ἐκάστω:
νώτοισιν δ' Ὀδυσῆα διηνεκέεσσι γέραιρεν
ἀργιόδοντος ὕος, κύδαινε δὲ θυμὸν ἀνακτος.

Calling out as he split up kindling now with a good sharp ax and his men hauled in a tusker five years old, rippling fat, and stood him steady by the hearth. The swineherd, soul of virtue, did not forget the gods. He began the rite by plucking tufts from the porker's head, threw them into the fire and prayed to all the powers, "Bring him home, our wise Odysseus, home at last!" Then raising himself full-length, with an oak log he'd left unsplit he clubbed and stunned the beast and it gasped out its life . . . The men slashed its throat, singed the carcass, quickly quartered it all, and then the swineherd, cutting first strips for the gods from every limb, spread them across the thighs, wrapped in sleek fat, and sprinkling barley over them, flung them on the fire. They sliced the rest into pieces, pierced them with skewers, broiled them all to a turn and, pulling them off the spits, piled the platters high. The swineherd, standing up to share the meat — his sense of fairness perfect — carved it all out into seven equal portions. One he set aside, lifting up a prayer to the forest nymphs and Hermes, Maia's son, and the rest he handed on to each man in turn. But to Odysseus he presented the boar's long loin and the cut of honor cheered his master's heart.¹

The swineherd Eumaeus' offering presents an excellent example of sacrifice as an always potentially flexible and creative act.² I will not attempt to analyse the scene and its rich

¹ Trans. Fagles (1996).

² The most extensive Homeric description of sacrifice has been viewed as somewhat exceptional. See Petropoulou (1987) and Kadletz (1984). However, as Hitch (2009) argues in her extensive analysis of Homeric sacrifice 'no single detail can be used in Homer to define an action, even a 'typical action', since the variation

vocabulary in detail and simply offer a brief description of the scene and how it relates to my argument.³ Eumaeus' sacrifice is a multifaceted act involving the organizing of a previous whole, the animal, into a complex series of parts in an effort to honour gods, make requests, and feed human and divine participants. The first offering (ἀπαρχή) in this sacrifice is the animal itself, represented by the hairs from the live animal and a prayer to all the gods. At this point a request is made. The swineherd then continues to divide the gods' special share, through the act of ὠμοθετεῖν. The name as noted above refers to placing raw meat from all the limbs, laid in fat and offered alongside barley. This as mentioned earlier may be intended as another representation of the whole animal.⁴ Following this, Eumaeus divides the animal into seven portions and sets one aside for Hermes and the Nymphs. While the portion offered to Hermes and the Nymphs is indeed burnt and thus offered as smoke, the cut suggests a hierarchy amongst the gods in which these figures, because of both their contact with the earth and mortals are closer to men than Zeus. In some respects, Hermes appears as a kind of divine ξένος at Eumaeus' table.⁵ Apart from Hermes the meal is also an example of extension of ξενία to the disguised Odysseus. His share is the prized γέρας which is specified as the 'unbroken back' (νῶτον διηνεκής). Like the gods' ὠμοθετεῖν the reference to unbrokenness or continuity may represent another case of a stress on totality against the divided parts. This single process of complex divisions, uniting gods, more ambiguous figures such as Hermes and the Nymphs, superior men like Odysseus and commoners like Eumaeus combines to form the hierarchal chain that is the 'equal feast.'

between scenes is an essential part of the creation of meaning and the composition-in-performance of the poem' (46). In this respect the scene is indeed typical.

³ The apportionment vocabulary in this short scene includes ἀπάρχομαι, first offerings; ὠμοθετέω, placing of the raw pieces on the thigh bones, covered in rich fat; two *dais* derived terms, δαιτρεύω and δαίζω; γεραίρω a special verb for offering a γέρας; νέμω 'to deal out,' 'dispense' and διαμοιράω, related to μοίρα. The named offerings are no less impressive and include κεφαλῆς τρίχας 'three hairs from the head,' Odysseus' νῶτον 'back,' the gods ὠμοθετέω and finally seven shares subdivided into six for mortals and one for Hermes and the Nymphs.

⁴ Suk Fong Jim (2014) 57.

⁵ A related idea may appear in Simonides' (fr. 20) enigmatic phrase θύουσι νόμφαις τῷ τε Μαιάδος τόκῳ: οὗτοι γὰρ ἀνδρῶν αἷμ' ἔχουσι ποιμένων. 'They sacrifice to the Nymphs and the son of Maia, (Hermes): for these have the blood of shepherd men.' How to read this passages has perplexed scholars but see Versnel (2011) 369 and Ekroth (2011) 24 for some suggestions.

APPENDIX FOUR

The Derveni Commentator and his Influences

The Derveni papyrus is the oldest surviving book in Europe.¹ The text is an exegesis on an Orphic poem, the *Derveni Theogony*, and discusses in detail an underlying cosmogony and philosophical world view espoused by Orpheus. This is not a unique text and similar exegetic studies of Orphic material, often nestled within larger commentaries on Plato, survive by Damascius and other Platonists.² The Derveni commentary, however, has the advantage of being considerably earlier, around the late fifth or fourth century BC, and was composed by an Orphic practitioner or priest.³ This poetic commentary might at first glance appear to make my analysis in Chapter Three somewhat redundant. After all, who can interpret an ancient Orphic poem, better than an ancient Orphic? Surprisingly the commentator's exegesis has received little attention among modern interpretations of the poem, which for the most part see the Derveni commentator's method as idiosyncratic and puzzling. Some deny any connection between poem and commentary altogether. West, for example, argues that the commentator 'has a preconceived system to which he is determined to fit Orpheus and everything else. The consequence is that his interpretations are uniformly false.'⁴ This view at times appears to be well grounded. For example, the commentator explains a line by Orpheus describing 'snow-capped Olympus' by stating that 'Olympus and time are the same' (col.12.3). His meaning here is unclear. More frequently, however, the commentator interprets names through a kind of etymologising process. The goddess Demeter, for example, is plausibly said to be derived two words, Μήτηρ mother and Δε, a corruption of Γῆ. The name then really means 'Earth mother,' i.e. Gaia (col. 22.9-10). While I find some of his interpretations reasonable and many rather baffling, the commentator as an ancient Orphic representative cannot be ignored. After all, any interpretation of Orphic poetry which has nothing to do with the exegesis of a native Greek opens itself up for serious criticism. In this Appendix, I will therefore argue that the commentator's position, like the theogony itself, expresses a broadly pantheistic position.⁵

¹ See Papadopoulou (2014) xi.

² The Platonic tradition of interpretation, beginning with Plato's student Xenokrates is outlined in Chapter Four.

³ See Betegh (2004) 350-9.

⁴ West (1983) 79.

⁵ The commentator's position of course does not exhaust the interpretations of the poem and I will argue that Orphic poetry like Hesiod has its own conventions and means of expressing its ideas. My analysis in Chapter Three, while respecting the general position of the commentator, thus takes a different approach.

The Commentator and Cosmogony

For the commentator, nothing is what it seems. Orpheus' meaning, far from obvious, is a kind of riddle (col. 7.4-9):

ἔστι δὲ ξ[ένη τις ἢ] πόησις
[κ]αὶ ἀνθρώ[ποις] αἰνι[γμ]ατώδης, [κε]ῖ [Ὀρφεὺς] αὐτ[ὸς]
[ἐ]ρίστ' αἰν[ίγμ]ατα οὐκ ἤθελε λέγειν, [ἐν αἰν]ίγμασ[ι]ν δὲ
[μεγ]άλα. ἱερ[ολογ]εῖται μὲν οὖν καὶ ἀ[πὸ το]ῦ πρώτου
[ἀεὶ] μέχρι οὗ [τελε]υταίου ῥήματος.

His poetry is something strange and riddling for people.
But Orpheus did not intend to tell them captious riddles, but momentous
things in riddles. Indeed, he is telling a holy discourse from the first and up
to his last word.⁶

The commentator's means of answering these enigmas can be likened to a kind of etymologising, though it should be stressed that it usually has little to do with modern etymological methods. Instead names, particularly divine names, can be deciphered to reveal true things about reality and how the cosmos was guided by a pantheistic super god. His process of identifications relies on three interrelated elements, poetic material, a process of analysis (usually punning associations) and a cosmogony which emerges from this process. The commentator does not privilege one over the other but treats all three of these elements as a unity emerging from the authoritative message of Orpheus. While this unity is increasingly recognised by scholars, earlier studies of the papyrus tended to isolate these elements, treating each as a self contained system. Thus the poem has been left to literary scholars, the cosmogony to the philosophers, and the etymologising bridge to the increasingly popular sub-discipline looking at ancient allegory.⁷ This neat division of labour has been only partially successful, particularly when it comes to understanding the commentator's influence and cosmogonical system and after fifty years since the discovery of the papyrus, no common consensus on his philosophical position has been achieved. Some points, however, have a broad consensus and the cosmogonical position of the commentator is generally agreed to be what is known as Post-Parmenidian, that is a pluralist response to Parmenidian strictures against the kind of becoming Heraclitus and the other Milesians championed.⁸ This appears in col 16.7-8 where the things that are said to have always existed:

[ἐ]ν τούτοις σημαίνει ὅτι τὰ ὄντα ὑπῆ[ρ]χεν ἀεὶ, τὰ δὲ
νῦν ἑόντα ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων γίν[ε]ται.

⁶ Trans. Betegh (2004).

⁷ See Most (1997) 118.

⁸ See Curd (1998) for the importance of this distinction.

in these verses he [i.e. Orpheus] indicates that the beings always subsisted, and the beings that are now come to be from subsisting things.⁹

Furthermore the commentator identifies god with air and mind and describes a cosmos consisting of underlying real things, mixing and separating as directed by this god. Because of their shared use of mind, mixing and separation, Anaxagoras is among the most frequently cited influences on the commentator's position.¹⁰ Another prominent figure in the debate is the monist Diogenes of Apollonia who, like the commentator, identifies Air with Mind and God. So great are the similarities that Diogenes has even been suggested by Janko as the author of the papyrus.¹¹ Kahn, on the other hand, argues in support of a little known figure from Plato's dialogues, Euthyphro,¹² and Janko later revises his position in favour of Diagoras of Melos.¹³ In addition to this already extensive list, West points out similarities with the atomist Leucippus,¹⁴ Betegh draws attention to anticipations of Stoicism,¹⁵ and Brisson even attempts to revise the dates and argue for Stoic authorship.¹⁶ In short, while a good deal has been revealed in these studies, the bewildering influences of the commentator, spanning it seems every position in Presocratic philosophy and beyond, has ensured little scholarly agreement beyond the eclecticism of the author.

The disagreement is not surprising for such a fragmented papyrus. One significant interpretive issue is that the author's cosmogony must be reconstructed based on events from the middle and end of his cosmogony. This inevitably influences the kind of model that will be proposed. Betegh, for example, argues an 'air-fire opposition is at the heart of the author's physics.'¹⁷ This division appears most clearly in what Kouremenos calls the 'fire era' which appears in column 9.5-8:¹⁸

γινώσκ[ω]ν οὖν τὸ πῦρ ἀναμεμειγμένον τοῖς
ἄλλοις ὅτι ταρασσοὶ καὶ κ[ωλ]ύοι τὰ ὄντα συνίστασθαι
διὰ τὴν θάλπιν ἐξάλλασ[σει ὅσ]ον τε ἱκανόν ἐστιν
ἐξάλλαχθὲν μὴ κωλύ[ειν τὰ] ὄντα συμπαγῆναι.

⁹ Trans. Betegh (2004) modified.

¹⁰ See Betegh (2004) 278-306.

¹¹ Janko (1997).

¹² Kahn (1997).

¹³ Janko (2001).

¹⁴ West (1983) 81 n. 20.

¹⁵ Betegh (2004) 265; (2009).

¹⁶ Brisson (2009).

¹⁷ Betegh (2004) 312.

¹⁸ Kouremenos et al (2006) 30.

Now knowing that fire [in as much as] it is mixed together agitates the things that are and hinders them from getting set together because of fomenting, he removed it to an adequate distance.¹⁹

This does suggest a dualist position, yet there are problems. First, in the papyrus only air is said to be eternal and ungenerated (col. 17.2-3)

ἦν γὰρ καὶ πρόσθεν [ἐ]ὼν ἢ τὰ νῦν ἐόντα συσταθῆναι
ἀήρ καὶ ἔσται ἀεὶ· οὐ γὰρ ἐγένετο, ἀλλὰ ἦν.

For air existed even before the things that are now were set together and always will exist. For it was not born, but existed.

Secondly, the fire era is probably not the first stage in Derveni cosmogony and in column 17 the commentator mentions the name of Zeus, a ‘floating era’ and a cyclic cosmos (17.7-9):

καὶ τοῦτο αὐτῷ διατελεῖ ὄνομα ὄν,
μέχρι εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος τὰ νῦν ἐόντα συνεστάθη
ἐν ᾧπερ πρόσθεν ἐόντα ἠωρεῖτο.

It will continue to be his name until the things that are now have got set together in the same form in which they were floating as they were before.²⁰

This appears to refer to a stage prior to the fire era,²¹ a view which is further strengthened when we consider the general alignment between myth and commentary. For example, the ‘fire era’ parallels Kronos’ usurpation of Ouranos’ throne. This is not in any reading the beginning of the poem and it omits Protogonos, Night and Aither. The floating era thus seems to represent an earlier stage in the cosmogony and we have no evidence that it has anything to do with fire. It is, however, identified with a plurality of sorts represented by the eternally subsisting things (τὰ ὄντα ὑπῆ[ρ]χεν ἀεὶ) (col. 16.7-9). This could be plurality of different elements such as fire and air or as air is the only element to be said to be ungenerated and birthless, we could see in the floating era a plurality of air particles.²² As no description of this stage survives, a possible guideline is that it follows Diogenes’ (DK 64 A 6) view of a universe composed of air in motion which became rarefied in places and dense in others and only in later stages involved the mixing of elements. Despite the similarities between Diogenes and the commentator, the idea of the commentator as a monist has received little

¹⁹ Trans. Betegh (2004).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Betegh (2004) 259 agrees that a floating stage preceded the fire era but still maintains a dualist view.

²² There is no consensus on the nature of *ta onta*. Burkert (1997) 169 argues that they are corpuscles similar to those described by Leucippus. Betegh (2004) 265, while uncertain of their nature, argues that at least air and fire are represented by *ta onta*. That they are single natured is hypothetical but it is of note that both Diogenes and the Derveni commentator have been associated with the atomist Leucippus. Guthrie (1980) 368 argues that in Diogenes’ case this appears in his acceptance of void but the only surviving evidence is that in Theophrastus’ (DK 64 A 5) opinion, Diogenes in his cosmology adopted aspects of Anaxagoras’ and Leucippus’ theories. It is purely speculative but possible that both Diogenes and the commentator began with a plurality of air particles.

support.²³ This is based on his specification of the plurality of basic things and his description of mixing. This is hardly conclusive and there is also a good deal of identification made between elements in the papyrus. Earth and Air are identified via Mind (col. 26.1) and Okeanos, a god closely associated with water, is said to be the air (col. 23.3). We also see hints of rarefaction (col. 10.12). Finally, everything at one stage becomes one in Zeus and here at least we see a total identification of Air and everything else. I propose that the view that the commentator was a monist similar to Diogenes is as possible as any other suggestion. This proposal is intended as hypothetical and as said, it is very difficult to say what the author's position is without knowing the beginning of the cosmogony. This is not, however, to say that we cannot say anything about him. Indeed, it is possible that rather than trying to discover a cosmogonical model amidst the fragmented text, the commentator may be better understood in the terms he presents himself, namely as an interpreter of ancient poetry.

The Cosmos as an Oracle

Earlier studies of the Derveni papyrus have tended to treat its multiple elements in isolation and in particular focus on its cosmogonical pedigree. Not only has this separation between philosophical and poetic content been only partially successful, it also has ignored the commentator's insistence that his cosmic vision arises from his efforts to unriddle (αἰνίζεται) each word (col. 13.6). Turning away from the commentator as primarily a cosmogonical writer, the inseparability of poem and cosmogony has recently attracted a good deal more attention.²⁴ Indeed, if Diogenes of Apollonia and Anaxagoras show the closest cosmogonical parallels, they would have been of limited assistance in interpreting the poem. The commentator instead may have turned to the existing allegorizing tradition practised by figures such as Theagenes of Rhegium and Metrodorus of Lampsacus.²⁵ Metrodorus, himself, said to have been a student of Anaxagoras, related Homeric heroes to cosmic elements. In his schema, Agamemnon is identified as the aether, Achilles as the sun and the gods with organs where Demeter is the liver, Dionysus the spleen, and so on (DK 61 A 4). Clearly there are general similarities in Metrodorus' and the Derveni commentators' aim to interpret traditional material in terms of Presocratic ideas. However, even from the limited surviving material Metrodorus' methodology appears somewhat distinct from that of the commentator and the same appears to be true of Theagenes of Rhegium. The commentator relies primarily on

²³ Boyancé (1974) 103.

²⁴ See for example Most (1997); Bierl (2014); Betegh (2004) 349-73.

²⁵ For an introduction to the allegorical tradition see Struck (2004).

punning etymologies. Demeter, as mentioned, was Ge meter, ‘earth mother.’ In Metrodorus’ equation between Demeter (Δημήτηρ) and the liver (ἥπαρ) on the other hand, there are no transparent similarities between the name analysed and the identification. Rather, it might be guessed that Metrodorus is making equivalences based on existing hierarchal or analogical similarities. Agamemnon, the king, is therefore the most elevated element, aether etc. Although the comparative material is admittedly small, this suggests that Metrodorus’ identifications were not etymological at all, but perhaps closer to the identifications between gods and elements made by Empedocles.²⁶ If the methodology of the Derveni commentator was not inspired by Metrodorus or Theagenes, it does show some important similarities with antiquity’s most famous riddler, Heraclitus (D. L. 9.6). This similarity is fitting as Heraclitus is also the only philosopher actually quoted in the papyrus (4.4-9):

ἄρ' οὐ τά[ξιν ἔχει διὰ τό]νδε κόσμος;
κατὰ [ταῦτ]᾽ Ἡράκλειτος μα[ρτυρόμενος] τὰ κοινὰ
κατ[αστρέ]φει τὰ ἴδ[ι]α· ὅσπερ ἱκελα [ἀστρο]λόγοι λέγων [ἔφη·]
“ἥλι[ος . . .].ου κατὰ φύσιν ἀνθρ[ωπ]οῦ εὖρος ποδός [ἐστι,]
τὸ μ[έγεθος] οὐχ ὑπερβάλλον εἰκ[ότας οὐ]ρους ε[ὔρους]
[έου· εἰ δὲ μ]ή, Ἐρινύε[ς] νιν ἐξευρήσου[σι, Δίκης ἐπικούροι·]

Is it not on account of these that the cosmos possesses order? In the same way, Heraclitus . . . the common . . . overturns what is private; he who speaking as someone telling holy discourses said:

‘The sun . . . according to nature is a human foot in width, not transgressing its boundaries. If . . . oversteps, the Erinyes, the guardians of Justice, will find it out.’²⁷

The citation is a rather strange choice. Based on the Heraclitean-like phrases of the bone plaques rather than a comment on the sun’s shoe size we might expect an enigmatic statement on life and death or a riddle on the soul. Nonetheless, the commentator perceived something important in this passage and it is left to us to interpret what he meant by this. On a general level the quotation is one about cosmic order.²⁸ This is a useful, if general, point of departure. Indeed, not only Heraclitus but almost all the Presocratics, bar the atomists, considered the world a cosmos. The quote is even more mysterious considering the lack of Heraclitean cosmogonical influence in the papyrus as a whole. Fire plays an important role for the

²⁶ See (DK 61 A4). Trans. Struck (2004) 28. Theagenes’ system of identifications as described by Porphyry in his *Homeric Questions* appears to be similar. One exception is Theagenes’ (DK 8 A 2) punning association between Hera and Air. This may have been too obvious or well established a connection to be ignored. The similarity between the names did not, however, influence the commentator.

²⁷ Trans. Betegh (2004).

²⁸ The commentator elsewhere talks about this order in reference to the moon and sun (cols. 24; 25). This understanding is also broadly reflective of what Heraclitus had in mind and according to Kahn (1979) describes how ‘the role assigned to Dike by Heraclitus in XLIV is a personified expression of Anaximander’s concept of cosmic justice, insofar as both authors see the regularity of nature as exemplified in the order of the seasons’ (161).

commentator in column 9 but it clearly pales in comparison with his identification of Air as Mind and God.²⁹ Indeed, in general the cosmogonical correspondences are weak and the commentator's reference appears as a rather puzzling nod to Heraclitus in a commentary which has little to do with him. The reference, in other words, seems to be a kind of red herring, and, with the exception of Sider, most consider that the commentator's key cosmogonical influence to lie elsewhere.³⁰

If we adopt a rigid Aristotelian tradition of Presocratic development in terms of substance the discussion might stop here.³¹ However, the cosmogonical Heraclitus is not the philosopher the commentator mentions in his quotation. Rather he describes how Heraclitus 'invoking common truths, overturns the private, speaking like a teller of *sacred tales* [or myth maker].'³² The invocation of Heraclitus the teller of sacred tales suggests that the fragment was chosen as much for its mythological subject matter as for its cosmogonical significance.³³ Indeed, the mention of the avenging goddesses, the Erinyes, must have deeply impressed the author. As Sider points out, it is hardly coincidental that the Erinyes and Helios occupy a prominent place in the Derveni papyrus elsewhere.³⁴ The Erinyes in particular are repeated a number of times in the early and mostly unintelligible columns (cols. 1; 2) and probably elsewhere. If the Eumenides, as is likely the case, are taken to be the same goddesses, they also form the basis of an elaborate association in column 6 between these gods, avenging souls, and the sacrifice of innumerable cakes. The second god mentioned in this fragment is Helios (sun) and he, too, plays a considerable role for the commentator where he is identified with the reverend god, Protogonos (col. 13.8-12; col. 16.1).³⁵ Heraclitus' understanding of the Erinyes and Helios is not clear from this particular fragment. However, elsewhere he shows a central concern with

²⁹ So too are the commentator's ideas of warming and cooling (col. 10.11-12) somewhat reminiscent of Heraclitus' DK 22 B 126.

³⁰ Sider (2014).

³¹ On the Aristotelian version of Presocratic history see Warren (2007) 3-6.

³² λόγῳι is the only clearly surviving element of this word. Betegh reconstructs it as ἱερολόγῳι someone telling sacred stories; Tsantsanoglou (1997) as μυθολόγῳι.

³³ The Pythagoreans seem to have understood it as such and paraphrased it as one of their religious maxims or askousmata concerning body/soul relations. See Finkelberg (2017) 144.

³⁴ Sider (1997) 146.

³⁵ There is, as discussed in Chapter Three, a good deal of debate surrounding who Protogonos is in the Derveni papyrus. However, in later Orphic poetry Phanes, Zeus and Dionysus are all identified with Helios. It is unclear whether the idea appeared in the Derveni poem, but if we assume that the idea was present suddenly the commentator's identification would make a good deal more sense. At any rate, the idea is early and Helios is given supreme importance by Orpheus in Aeschylus' lost play *the Bassari* (OF 536). Furthermore, fourth century bone plaques from Olbia confirm the importance of the sun in Orphic circles: βίος βίος Ἀπόλλων Ἀπόλλων ἥλιος ἥλιος κόσμος κόσμος. See Graf and Johnston (2007) 188. Diodorus (1.12.3) cites an Orphic hymn which identifies Phanes and Dionysus with Helios and Macrobius dedicates several pages to the subject in his *Saturnalia* and too quotes at length from another Orphic hymn (OF 539). Not only these particular gods but also more generally a similar argument could be made in respect to the other gods mentioned by Heraclitus including Zeus, Apollo, Dionysus and Hades. Whether these figures, with the exception of Zeus and Apollo, held any special significance for Heraclitus is not clear, but they all play central roles among the Orphics.

‘etymologising’ and unriddling the names of a number of other gods. Indeed like the commentator, Heraclitus was obsessed with language and it was arguably this dual combination of gods and riddling etymologising that attracted the commentator to his philosophy.

Heraclitus’ theory on language is among the most interesting linguistic theories presented in antiquity. For Heraclitus not only do words reveal greater cosmic meaning, he proposed that the cosmos itself was a word, the Logos (DK 22 B 1):

τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπείροισιν εἰκάσι πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγέσθαι κατὰ φύσιν διαίρων ἔκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅκως ἔχει· τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λανθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιοῦσιν ὅκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὔδοντες ἐπιλανθάνονται

Although the logos holds forever, men ever fail to comprehend, both before hearing it and once they have heard. Although all things come to pass in accordance with the logos, men are like the untried when they try such words (ἐπέων) and works as I set forth, distinguishing each according to its nature (κατὰ φύσιν) and telling how it is. But other men are oblivious of what they do awake, just as they are forgetful of what they do asleep.³⁶

The Logos is among Heraclitus’ most debated ideas. The Greek term has a notoriously broad semantic range including ‘account,’ ‘ratio’ and ‘deceptive argument,’ to name but a few.³⁷ Heraclitus’ use of the Logos seems to only widen the already extensive range of meanings describing it as an ordering cosmic principle. The Logos is certainly more than a word, yet given the amount of fragments which talk about names and language we cannot ignore this basic meaning either.³⁸ Heraclitus’ Logos is not a message beyond everyday speech or understanding. On the contrary, as emphasised by the commentator and affirmed in the citation above, Heraclitus favours common meanings to the private understandings of men. This is not a paradox. The Logos is not something transcendent but rather something all around us and observable through the senses. However, men fail to use their senses correctly because of their private understandings, i.e. their assumptions or ‘barbarian souls’ (DK 22 B 107) prevent them from seeing what is right in front of their eyes (see also DK 22 B 72). Heraclitus in this respect demands that we shake off these assumptions and look to the world itself for answers through our eyes and ears (DK 22 B 55). In this respect, the call to look to the Logos appears as a kind of enlightenment-like call to reject the shaky foundations of tradition and look to the world itself. The view of Heraclitus as proto-naturalist would,

³⁶ Trans. Kahn (1979).

³⁷ See Guthrie (1980) 419-424.

³⁸ Jiyuan Yu (2015) 110-12 broadly compares the Logos and the Dao in terms of their similar ambiguities and semantic range. He notes that ‘both Heraclitus and Laozi deal with the relationship between language and reality, and the language here refers not only to ordinary language but more to the people’s conventional opinions and moral discourses. Both of them are at pains to demonstrate that there is a distance between what people say and what the reality is’ (112).

however, be misleading. Heraclitus was interested in cosmic observations but just as Night and Day are really one (DK 22 B57), as are Dionysus and Hades (DK 22 B15). By placing the cosmic riddle of Day and Night on the same standing as the divine names of Hades and Dionysus, Heraclitus calls us to reposition ourselves in relation to everything observed by the senses. This was not limited to what we now call the realm of nature, but included many things we would consider cultural such as ritual, language and law.³⁹ This requires a correct understanding of the hidden harmony, or oppositional unity, of the cosmos at large. It also requires something we do not commonly associate with natural scientists, a riddling ‘etymological’ procedure based on a partial relation between names and their referents. This is exactly what Heraclitus develops and a surprisingly large number of his fragments are dedicated to the relation between reality and names. In DK 22 B 48 we are told:

βίος τῷ τόξῳ ὄνομα βίος ἔργον δὲ θάνατος.

The name of the bow is life, but its work is death.⁴⁰

This, like Night and Day, is an excellent example of how the Logos is both common and misunderstood. βίος means bow, an instrument of war and death. βίος, however, also means life. The name of the bow then contains its own opposite, signifying both life and death simultaneously.⁴¹ This is the hidden harmony the masses fail to see and trapped in their private understandings hear βίος at one time as an instrument of death and at another as life. However, the double meaning forces us to see a concealed opposition and process of life-death.⁴² DK 22 B15 presents a more complicated version of a similar idea:

εἰ μὴ γὰρ Διονύσῳ πομπὴν ἐποιοῦντο καὶ ὕμνον ἄσμα αἰδοίοισιν, ἀναιδέστατα εἴργαστ' ἄν
 οὗτος δὲ Αἰδης καὶ Διόνυσος, ὅτε μαινόνται καὶ ληναΐζουσιν.

For if it were not to Dionysus that they made a procession and sang a hymn to the genitals (*aidoia*), they would act most shamelessly (*anaidestata*). But Hades (*Aides*) and Dionysus, for whom they madly celebrate the bacchic rites, are the same.⁴³

Again this text hinges on the identification between two things, in this case the idea that two gods are really the same. Kahn explains this sentence in terms of a complex word play where ‘the identification of the god of sexuality with the god of death, reinforced by the word play on ‘shame,’ ‘phallic song,’ ‘shamelessness.’⁴⁴ Like many of Heraclitus’ fragments the meaning can be pursued even deeper. Drozdek, for example, looks at the conflict between

³⁹ Kahn (1979) 15; Pritzl (1985).

⁴⁰ Trans. Graham (2010).

⁴¹ See Kirk (1954) 116-122.

⁴² The relation between life/death, sleep/awake is paraphrased in a number of Heraclitus’ fragments. See DK 22 B 26; B21; B 75.

⁴³ Trans. Graham (2010) modified.

⁴⁴ Kahn (2004) 264.

Dionysus as a god of fertility and life in contrast with that of the god of death, Hades.⁴⁵ In this reading Heraclitus, like in the example of the bow, is identifying life and death as inseparably bound and calling us to look to the Logos itself. Life/death, day/night, Dionysus/Hades.⁴⁶ This list of oppositions goes on but Heraclitus' etymological theory is most elaborately developed in his discussion of Zeus.⁴⁷ In DK 22 B 32 he describes how:

ἐν τὸ σοφὸν μόνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα.

The wise is one alone, unwilling and willing to be spoken of by the name of Zeus.⁴⁸

The fragment appears to repeat a similar idea to that found in DK 22 B 15 and DK 22 B 48. In DK 22 B 32 Heraclitus uses the old genitive form of Zeus, ζηνός instead of Διός and Kahn points that 'Zenon recalls the verb *zēn* 'to live.'⁴⁹ In this respect, we might guess that if Zeus means to live, like bios and Dionysus, Zeus' unspoken name refers to the opposite of living, namely dying. Zeus then, like everything else possesses a dual aspect. Zeus, however, is also much more than a concealed opposition between life and death and in Heraclitus' theology the father of gods and men is willing to be called a great number of other names including the Thunderbolt (DK 22 B 34) and War (DK 22 B 37). The idea takes full force in DK 22 B 67:

ὁ θεὸς ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη, χειμὼν θέρος, πόλεμος εἰρήνη, κόρος λιμός. ἀλλοιοῦται δὲ ὅκωσπερ πῦρ, ὅπταν συμμιγῇ θυώμασιν, ὀνομάζεται καθ' ἡδονὴν ἐκάστου.

god is day night, winter summer, war peace, surfeit hunger. It alters as when mingled with perfumes, it gets named according to the pleasure of each.⁵⁰

This terse fragment is among the most important passages for our understanding of Heraclitus' process pantheism where summer/winter, night/day i.e. everything in the cosmos, emerge as temporary designations or refractions of the single God or Logos in motion.⁵¹

By looking at Heraclitus, as he was understood by the commentator, namely as a riddler rather than a substance theorist, we can better appreciate just how many correspondences exist

⁴⁵ Drozdek (2007) 40.

⁴⁶ The passage it should be noted also refers to the performance of a ritual stressing that actions like words or natural observations are true in part if understood correctly.

⁴⁷ The position is nicely summarised by Drozdek (2016) who notes 'the Olympian gods are not the ultimate religious reality but signs of this reality, avenues which lead to reality to this reality, manifestations of this reality' (41).

⁴⁸ For a comparison between this fragment and Zeus in the Derveni papyrus see Bossi (2011).

⁴⁹ Kahn (1981) 270.

⁵⁰ Trans. Kahn (1981). The reconstruction of the text is debated. Diels supplies πῦρ. My reading follows Kahn (1981).

⁵¹ That the god in DK 22 B67 should be identified with Zeus, or more accurately a super-Zeus see Kahn (1979) 277; Leon Ruiz (2007) 77. Kahn (1979) notes that the 'manifestation of fire changes, it looks and certainly smells differently with spices than without them, but fire is still fire. Fire as a substrate does not change. And so God does not change either, God who manifests himself to the human eye under the guise of contradictory appearances such as night and day, but just as night and day are inextricably intertwined in a unity of the night-and-day, and winter and summer in the unity of a year, so are these unities manifestations of the underlying order and harmony that is called God' (277).

between their models. As Sider points out the commentator similarly complains about the lack of comprehension among those who perform the rituals and recite the poems (cols. 5.10; 20.3).⁵² The solution is not to abandon the rites but to look more deeply into the hidden harmony of Orpheus' words. As in Heraclitus, Zeus receives special attention in the commentator's etymologising project. When Zeus is said to be have been born (presumably in the Orphic succession narrative), people mistakenly think that a new god has come into being. However, the author stresses that the things that are, τὰ ἔόντα, preceded this name. While Zeus as a name appeared at a particular point, the commentator too insists that Zeus always existed (Col 17.1-6):

π[ρ]ότερον ἦν πρ[ὶν ὄν]ομασθῆναι, ἔπ[ει]τα ὀνομάσθη·
 ἦν γὰρ καὶ πρόσθεν ὧν ἢ τὰ νῦν ἔόντα συσταθῆναι
 ἀἴρ καὶ ἔσται αἰεὶ· οὐ γὰρ ἐγένετο, ἀλλὰ ἦν. δι' ὃ τι δὲ
 ἀἴρ ἐκλήθη δεδήλωται ἐν τοῖς προτέροις. γενέσθαι δὲ
 ἐνομίσθη ἐπεὶτ' ὀνομάσθη Ζεύς, ὥσπερ εἰ πρότερον
 μὴ ἔών.

existed both before the things that are now were set together and
 always will exist. For it was not born, but existed. And the reason
 why it was called air has been made clear above. But it was thought
 that it was born, because it was named Zeus, just as if it did not exist
 previously.⁵³

In other words, Zeus is a partial name for a god who always was. This point is of pivotal importance for the Derveni author who repeatedly stresses that rather than separate and individuate things in themselves, names are temporary designations of an underlying reality in motion (col. 16.7-8). Not only Zeus but other divine names too reveal themselves as aspects of the One. Kronos, Zeus' father is etymologised as the striking mind (col. 14.2-8), Moira identified as the 'breath' (πνεῦμα) of Zeus (col.18.3), Aphrodite based on the Greek expression to aphrodize (ἀφροδισιάζειν) is the creative aspect of Zeus and the goddess Harmonia his harmonising aspect (col. 21.10-3). As described by Betegh in summary 'the personal identity of the individual gods is absorbed into the monumental figure of the one cosmic Mind.'⁵⁴ Mind may be reminiscent of Anaxagoras, but in the general emphasis on names, reality, motion and the Cosmic God the sentiment is very Heraclitean. There are of course some differences here as well. While the commentator's etymologies are based on word play, they are not based exclusively on polar oppositions but on a more general vision of a pantheistic God. Another difference appears in their theory of change. Heraclitus appears to favour a kind of Milesian substance transformation.⁵⁵ The commentator may also do so but he

⁵² See Sider (1997) 132-3 who draws close attention to col. 20.7-8 and DK 22 B 40 and DK 22 B55.

⁵³ Trans. Betegh (2004).

⁵⁴ Betegh (2004) 219.

⁵⁵ Graham (2006) 87.

also repeatedly refers to mixing and separating. Indeed the commentator stresses in relation to Zeus that there is no becoming only a mixing of the underlying real things (Col. 16. 7-8):

[ἐ]ν τούτοις σημαίνει ὅτι τὰ ὄντα ὑπῆ[ρ]χεν αἰεί, τὰ δὲ
νῦν ἔόντα ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων γίν[ε]ται.

in these verses he [i.e. Orpheus] indicates that the beings always subsisted, and the beings that are now come to be from subsisting things.

Separating (διακρίνω) is a central idea and is elaborated at some length. The commentator tells us in relation to the goddess Harmonia (col. 21.13-4):

ἦν μὲν γ[ὰρ καὶ π]ρόσθεν, ὠνομάσθη δὲ γενέσθ[αι] ἐπει
διακρίθ[η].

For it existed even before, but it was called 'to be born' after it was separated out.⁵⁶

Aspects of this view sound, as noted earlier, more Post-Parmenidian than Milesian. Empedocles, for example, describes a very similar argument against birth, destruction and the perils of mortal names in DK 31 B 8:

ἄλλο δέ τοι ἔρέω· φύσις οὐδενός ἐστιν ἀπάντων
θνητῶν, οὐδέ τις οὐλομένου θανάτοιο τελευτή,
ἀλλὰ μόνον μίξις τε διάλλαξις τε μγέντων
ἐστί, φύσις δ' ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀνομάζεται ἀνθρώποισιν.

I shall tell you another thing, there is no birth of any of all mortal things, neither any end in destructive death, but only mixture and separation of mixed things, exist, and birth is a term applied to them by men.⁵⁷

The commentator's possible rejection of birth in favour of mixing may show a fairly major disagreement with Heraclitus' theory of substance and this has prevented many scholars from describing him as a follower of Heraclitus. The position is not, as I have argued, secure and it is possible that commentator was a monist in the spirit of Diogenes. Moreover, even if Heraclitus and the commentator disagree on some points, it should be stressed that substance theory is only one form of agreement and the commentator is not required to adopt every idea to maintain a broadly Heraclitean position. For example, it could be argued that for Heraclitus coming into being should not be understood as the birth of new things but the same transforming itself. In this respect, Empedocles, the commentator, and Heraclitus all broadly agree that in a world defined by movement, there is only exchange and no new things come into being.⁵⁸ Moreover Empedocles, Heraclitus and the commentator are all broadly

⁵⁶ Trans. Betegh (2004).

⁵⁷ Trans. Graham (2010).

⁵⁸ It could also be pointed out that Heraclitus at times talks of mixing. In DK 22 B 125 he describes how 'καὶ ὁ κυκεὼν δίσταται <μή> κινούμενος' and indeed in DK 22 B 67 the god 'συμμίγνυμι, ὁπότεν συμμιγῇ θωώμασιν,

pantheists. The pantheism of the Milesians where the ruling substance is identified with god has already been discussed in Chapter Three. These are often opposed to the pluralist positions taken by Empedocles and Anaxagoras. However, pluralist positions can also be pantheist. A case in point is Stoic cosmology which involves an active principle (God; pneuma) and a passive principle (matter). Despite the fact that the passive principle has no trace of divinity, the position is considered pantheistic because the passive principle exists only as it is saturated by the active divine pneuma. This kind of pantheism resembles a sponge (passive matter) filled with water (pneuma).⁵⁹ The notable differences between this and Heraclitus' pantheism might complicate the issue of influence, yet this did not stop the Stoics from seeing themselves as Heraclitus' heirs. Finally there is one compelling reason to take the commentator's professed affinity with Heraclitus seriously: his uncanny similarity with antiquity's most famous Heraclitean, Cratylus.

The Commentator, Cratylus and the Heracliteans

Almost everything known about Cratylus comes from Plato's dialogue about an etymologising Heraclitean with an obsession for divine names.⁶⁰ The authenticity of Plato's portrayal of Heraclitus and especially Cratylus is often viewed suspiciously. However, the similarities between the underlying views in the Derveni papyrus and the *Cratylus* suggest Plato was not far off the mark.⁶¹ Plato describes the etymological procedure as a kind of prophecy (χρησμοφδέω) and divine inspiration (ἐπίπνους) (428c) and later discusses how he learned some of these ideas from secret (ἀπόρητος) (413a) teachings taught by the Heracliteans. If this sounds close to the position of the commentator, Kahn stresses that 'the importance of the [Derveni] papyrus document for an understanding of Plato's *Cratylus* is incontestable.'⁶² Indeed at times his etymologies are very close. When discussing Zeus'

ὀνομάζεται καθ' ἡδονὴν ἐκάστου.' From these examples we may guess that alongside coming into being in the standard Milesian fashion, Heraclitus too accepted a certain amount of mixing.

⁵⁹ See Drozdek (2007) 238-42.

⁶⁰ Aristotle (*Met.* 4.1010a) briefly mentions Cratylus as an example of an extreme Heraclitean:

Κρατύλος εἶχεν, ὃς τὸ τελευταῖον οὐθὲν ᾔετο δεῖν λέγειν ἀλλὰ τὸν δάκτυλον ἐκίνει μόνον, καὶ Ἡρακλείτῳ ἐπετίμα εἰπόντι ὅτι δις τῷ αὐτῷ ποταμῷ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμβῆναι: αὐτὸς γὰρ ᾔετο οὐδ' ἅπαξ.

⁶¹ For example Colvin (2007) notes 'in the *Theaetetus* and *Cratylus* there is neither any exegesis of Heraclitus' words, nor any evidence that Plato has in mind any historical Heracliteans (at least, no more than that he seriously thinks that Homer teaches a flux-doctrine)' (767).

⁶² Kahn (1997) 63. Apart from the many parallels mentioned above, Kahn points out there is a surprising cross over when Plato discusses how these Heracliteans puzzlingly identify the Sun with justice. Plato stresses the allusion further describing how Socrates by pestering the Heracliteans was attempting to 'leap over the trenches' (ὕπερ τὰ ἐσκαμμένα ἄλλεσθαι 413a-b). The phrasing is different yet the comment when presented in relation to the sun and justice seems to be an ironic allusion to DK 22 B 94 where it said that the sun should not 'overstep its measures' (ὕπερβῆσεται μέτρα). Sedley (2003) 117 points out that Heraclitus does not associate the sun with justice but as confined by justice. That Plato's allusion to DK 22 B 94 appears to be more than a coincidence and notably the Pythagoreans also adopted this phrase as one of their *akousmata* and discuss the phrase in relation to

father, Kronos, Plato's dialogue reveals the name to be an aspect of Zeus and mind (*Crat.* 396b):

τοῦτον δὲ Κρόνου υἱὸν ὑβριστικὸν μὲν ἂν τις δόξειεν εἶναι ἀκούσαντι ἐξαίφνης, εὖλογον δὲ μεγάλης τινὸς διανοίας ἔκγονον εἶναι τὸν Δία: κόρον γὰρ σημαίνει οὐ παῖδα, ἀλλὰ τὸ καθαρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκήρατον τοῦ νοῦ.

And it might seem, at first hearing, highly irreverent to call him the son of Cronus and reasonable to say that Zeus is the offspring of some great intellect; and so he is, for κόρος signifies not child, but the purity (καθαρόν) and unblemished nature of his mind (νόος).⁶³

This particular etymology is reminiscent of that offered by the commentator in column 14.2-8:

τοῦτον οὖν τὸν Κρόνον
γενέσθαι φησὶν ἐκ τοῦ Ἡλίου τῇ Γῇ, ὅτι αἰτίαν ἔσχε
διὰ τὸν ἥλιον κρούεσθαι πρὸς ἄλληλα.
-διὰ τοῦτο λέγει "ὃς μέγ' ἔρεξεν." τὸ δ' ἐπὶ τούτῳ·
-"Οὐρανὸς Εὐφρονίδης, ὃς πρώτιστος βασιλευσεν".
κρούοντα τὸν Νοῦν πρὸς ἄλληλ[α] Κρόνον ὀνομάσας
μέγα ῥέξει φησὶ τὸν Οὐρανόν·

He says that this Kronos was born to earth
from the sun because he was the cause via the sun that they were
struck (κρούεσθαι) against one another. For this reason he says,
(He) who did a great deed.
And the verse after this,
Ouranos son of Night, who ruled first of all:
naming the Mind that strikes things against each other Kronos.⁶⁴

In both cases the name Kronos is revealed as either a striking mind or a pure mind. Apart from being similar to each other the shared use of the Greek term νόος ('mind') also suggests a certain Anaxagorean influence in Cratylus' etymological method. In 400 a-b Socrates, giving an etymology of the soul, that appeals to Euthyphro and his followers and is agreed with by Cratylus, again draws on Anaxagorean ideas of Mind. Elsewhere we are told that members of the secret groups which Socrates pestered at times even presented Anaxagorean etymologies in favour of Heraclitean ones (413c). Nonetheless, Plato's Socrates insists that at root all the etymologies offered in the dialogue are Heraclitean (411B-C). In other words, a similar eclecticism which disqualified the commentator as a Heraclitean does not seem to be particularly problematic for Plato. Plato can make this assessment because his view of what makes a Heraclitean is not a dogmatic agreement with the fragments (if this is even possible)

the body and soul describing how 'if you (i.e. the soul) depart from your private place (the body), don't turn back, otherwise Erinyes, ministers of Dike, will pursue you.' See Hippol. Haer. Vi. 25.4-26.2 and Iambl. *Protr.* 107.14). See Finkleberg (2017) 144.

⁶³ Trans. Fowler (1921).

⁶⁴ Trans. Betegh (2004).

but more general focus on motion. And it is precisely motion that turns out to be the riddle at the base of all the etymologies in the *Cratylus*.⁶⁵ In Socrates' words (411B-C):

καὶ μὴν, νῆ τὸν κύνα, δοκῶ γέ μοι οὐ κακῶς μαντεύεσθαι, ὅκαὶ νυνδὴ ἐνενόησα, ὅτι οἱ πάνυ παλαιοὶ ἄνθρωποι οἱ τιθέμενοι τὰ ὀνόματα παντὸς μᾶλλον, ὥσπερ καὶ τῶν νῦν οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν σοφῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ πυκνὰ περιστρέφεσθαι ζητοῦντες ὅπῃ ἔχει τὰ ὄντα εἰλιγγιῶσιν, κάπειτα αὐτοῖς φαίνεται περιφέρεισθαι τὰ πράγματα καὶ πάντως φέρεσθαι. αἰτιῶνται δὲ οὐ τὸ ἔνδον τὸ παρὰ σφίσιν πάθος αἴτιον εἶναι ταύτης τῆς δόξης, ἀλλὰ αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα οὕτω πεφυκέναι, οὐδὲν αὐτῶν μόνιμον εἶναι οὐδὲ βέβαιον, ἀλλὰ ρεῖν καὶ φέρεσθαι καὶ μεστὰ εἶναι πάσης φορᾶς καὶ γενέσεως ἀεὶ. λέγω δὲ ἐννοήσας πρὸς πάντα τὰ νυνδὴ ὀνόματα.

By dog, I believe I have a fine intuition which has just come to me, that the very ancient men who invented names were quite like most of the present philosophers who always get dizzy as they turn round and round in their search for the nature of things, and then the things seem to them to turn round and round and be in motion. They think the cause of this belief is not an affection within themselves, but that the nature of things really is such that nothing is at rest or stable, but everything is flowing and moving and always full of constant motion and generation. I say this because I thought of it with reference to all these words we are now considering.⁶⁶

Just as most of Heraclitus' wordplays direct us from seeing isolated elements to the processes underlying them, Plato's Heracliteans stress an underlying but concealed ontology of flux present in the Greek language itself.⁶⁷

Socrates and presumably Plato ultimately reject the etymological approach, yet given the close overlap between *Cratylus*' and the commentator's position on names it appears that Plato knew these ideas very well.⁶⁸ It is thus not surprising that a general stress on motion, as noted above, also applies to many of the etymologies in the Derveni commentary (e.g. cols. 21.10-3; 14). Indeed, by placing flux as the key to understanding philosophical positions, Plato presents an alternative history not in terms of substance becoming but in terms of cosmogonies which emphasise movement, flux, directed by a divine order or more generally what I call pantheistic cosmogonies.⁶⁹ This broader definition helps make sense not only of Presocratic Heraclitean influence on *Cratylus* and the commentator but also of the sometimes puzzling reception of Heraclitus by later Greeks. A case in point is the Heraclitean reception by the Stoics. Long's study of early Stoicism, and in particular Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*

⁶⁵ See also 401c; 402a-c; 440e. In the *Theatetus* he discusses similar examples of Heraclitean etymologising and grants κρᾶσις ('mixture') a central role (152d-e). Moreover κρούω ('to strike') (426e) in Plato's *Cratylus* is described as a kind of motion. More generally, Plato in the *Sophist*, blissfully ignorant of the Pre/Post-Parmenidian distinction, argues that we see broadly shared systems in the philosophy of Empedocles and Heraclitus because of their similar discussions of the one and the many in motion (242d-e).

⁶⁶ Trans. Fowler (1921).

⁶⁷ On Plato's understanding of Heraclitean flow see Chapter Three.

⁶⁸ Just as Plato describes Socrates engagement with secret groups (*Crat.* 413 a-b), Aristotle says Plato learned about *Cratylus* in his youth (*Aristot. Met.* 1.987a).

⁶⁹ Although there have been attempts to distance Heraclitus from Plato's interpretations, Guthrie (1980) argues that this stress of motion accords well with Heraclitus' views and 'the tenor both of the fragments and of other testimony, in particular that of Plato, whose remarks consort well with the fragments themselves. Perhaps the strongest evidence of all is the primacy given to fire' (466).

persuasively demonstrates that the Stoics knew Heraclitus' writings very well.⁷⁰ However their ideas often show a rather selective adaptation or even distortion of their master's ideas. Their selective adoption however is far less puzzling if instead of seeing it in relation to Heraclitus' own texts we see it as a continuation of the Heraclitean tradition outlined by Plato in the *Cratylus* and preserved in the Derveni papyrus. Indeed the commentary is particularly important in this narrative and some notable parallels with later Stocism include pantheism, the importance of air and the cyclical destruction and recreation of all things.⁷¹ Furthermore Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* is itself very Orphic in its composition. Finally, like the commentator and Cratylus, the Stoics, early and late, show a similar concern for etymologies.⁷² Indeed, Domaradzki describes the logic behind early Stoic divine etymologies in very similar terms to those I have used to discuss Heraclitus, Cratylus and the commentator:

The Stoics' pantheistic, hylozoistic, vitalistic and organicistic view of the cosmos makes it natural for the thinkers to use etymology as a tool for deciphering the diverse manifestations of God. Consequently, etymology becomes in Stoicism not so much the study of the history of words, but rather the study of how God makes Himself known to us in the various phenomena of our world. Inasmuch as God is here a creative force that permeates the universe and assumes distinct appellations in correspondence with its numerous powers, the particular names of the traditional gods and goddesses transpire to be no other than expressions of one and the same Divinity. Hence, the Pantheon of the Greek gods proves to be a self-externalization of the Stoics' pantheistic Deity.⁷³

Names and Nature

Before concluding this discussion of the commentator's interpretation of the Orphic theogony, it is worth asking an important question; why did the commentator etymologise at all? Was it based on a sincere belief that Orphic poetry could really teach us about reality or was it an attempt to salvage Orpheus' authority in face of 'the pressure exerted upon him by a world which has become permeated by a mechanical physics, [a world that has experienced] a shift

⁷⁰ Long (1996).

⁷¹ While a cyclical cosmos has been rejected by Kouromenos (2006) 33, following Betegh (2004) 259 I consider that col 17.9 indicates a cyclical conception of the cosmos where the things which are now separated will return as they were before (ἐν ᾧπερ πρόσθεν ἔόντα ἡωρεῖτο). At this point Zeus or any of the other deities will no longer be referred to by their present names, but will continue to exist as Mind or Air. For a discussion on Stoicism and the Derveni papyrus see Betegh (2007) who, after dismissing the minority view that the Derveni papyrus is a post Stoic text, asks 'should we then perhaps return the direction of influence and claim that the early Stoics were influenced by the Derveni text? Nothing is impossible, but especially as we do not know who and how well known the Derveni author was, I doubt that we could or should establish such a direct connection. My own view is that the papyrus may interest students of early Stoic theology and cosmology in so far as it can provide some further information about the general religious, intellectual and cultural background from which Stoicism, with its complex theology, cosmology and physics, emerged' (151). This is a fair point, yet if we reformulate the question and ask what does Stoicism owe to a wider Heraclitean tradition illustrated by figures such as Cratylus and the Derveni commentator, the idea of a broad influence becomes more plausible.

⁷² Stoics practised etymologising from the beginning. See Domaradzki (2012). The best preserved example which shows close parallels with the Derveni papyrus is Cornatus' *Greek Theology* (esp. 1-8).

⁷³ Domaradzki (2012) 126.

from mythos to logos?’⁷⁴ For the most part, scholars have focused on the idea of etymologists as saving myth. There are, however, two significant problems with this procedure. The first is its redundancy. After all, if the etymologists aim is to align myths with the latest theories why not simply leave out the middle man and take science as their point of departure. Secondly, the salvation of myth is paradoxical and involves the admission that the myth as it appears cannot be true. Orpheus may have really known scientific theories, however, the myth as it is told and understood by everyone else has no relation to this reality. To put the problem in another way, if the etymologists tell us that Orpheus writes day but really means night, the end result is not that we have learned anything from Orpheus but that we have simply redefined night and day. In this light, it is not surprising that West considers the commentator’s interpretations to be ‘uniformly false.’⁷⁵ Of course some etymologists and allegorists, including perhaps Metrodorus, may have attempted to rescue myth in just this way. However, I believe a very different position can be found in the fragments of Heraclitus and the Derveni papyrus which saves not only the myths, but the etymologising process itself. This must begin with an acceptance that Orpheus knows truths unknown to mortal men. Betegh in this respect likens the commentator’s view of Orpheus’ poem not to something which needs to be saved by modern knowledge but to an oracle, something which is by definition true but always liable to be misunderstood.⁷⁶ I wish to take Betegh’s position even further. Not only is Orpheus’ poem like an oracle, but also in a view shared by the commentator, Heraclitus and Cratylus, language itself is like an oracle in that all words are true by nature. In other words, there is no split between ideas and natural things and language is as much a part of reality as are trees and stones. Plato’s *Cratylus* presents us with the most detailed theory of natural language and it will be useful to start our discussion here. Cratylus may be presented as divinely inspired, yet this does not mean that he lacks a method. Indeed, Plato makes his founding assumptions quite clear outlining that for Cratylus names have a natural relationship to their referents (383 a-b):

Κρατύλος φησὶν ὅδε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὀνόματος ὀρθότητα εἶναι ἐκάστῳ τῶν ὄντων φύσει πεφυκυῖαν, καὶ οὐ τοῦτο εἶναι ὄνομα ὃ ἂν τινες συνθέμενοι καλεῖν καλῶσι, τῆς αὐτῶν φωνῆς μῶριον ἐπιφθεγγόμενοι, ἀλλὰ ὀρθότητά τινα τῶν ὀνομάτων πεφυκέναι καὶ Ἑλλήσι καὶ βαρβάροις τὴν αὐτὴν ἄρασιν.

Cratylus, whom you see here, Socrates, says that everything has a right name of its own, which comes by nature, and that a name is not whatever people call a thing by agreement, just a piece of their own voice applied to the thing, but that there is a kind of inherent correctness in names, which is the same for all men, both Greeks and barbarians.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Most (1997) 123.

⁷⁵ West (1983) 79.

⁷⁶ See Betegh (2004) 364-72.

⁷⁷ Trans. Fowler (1921).

In other words, Cratylus holds that names are correct not by convention but by nature. Moreover this natural relationship holds true not only with Greek names but with all names in all languages. The opposite position in this dialogue is taken by Hermogenes who argues that the relation between names and referents is purely conventional. In this respect Hermogenes' understanding is similar to the idea of Descola's ontological 'naturalism' championed by Democritus and the Sophists. These figures it will be recalled argued that names and conventions are arbitrary and variable, possessing no intrinsic relation to natural things. This nature/culture division is I think often implicitly read into the commentator's analysis and is one of the main reasons why the project appears to be so paradoxical.⁷⁸ However, Cratylus specifically states that names are not arbitrary social conventions but natural.⁷⁹ This position echoes Heraclitus' call to examine names and customs in the same way as physical things. This is possible because, as Kahn notes, for Heraclitus 'there is no split between *nomos* [custom] and nature. As an institution, law is neither man-made nor conventional, it is the expression in social terms of the cosmic order for which another name is Justice.'⁸⁰ This does not mean that Heraclitus was ignorant that human laws and languages differ. Coming from Ephesus he had first-hand experience of Persian rule, language and customs. Nonetheless, despite these differences, like Cratylus, Heraclitus considers all customs to be naturally related to their referents (DK 22 B 114):

τρέφονται γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἀνθρώπειοι νόμοι ὑπὸ ἑνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

all human laws are nourished by the One divine law.

The term 'nourish' (τρέφω) here implies as elsewhere in Heraclitus that human laws are not identical to divine laws, but, like human words, relate to them in some respect. For Heraclitus, words as much as things experienced by the senses are part of one single nature and both are useless without understanding. This makes understanding words as important as understanding eclipses. To return to the example I used earlier, day does not really mean night in this model. Day is not being redefined but re-understood. Day, as understood by the many, is a correct but partial truth which may require, for example, that we understand Day in relation to Night. This does not redefine Day as Night, but opens up further understandings about its nature such as Day-Night. The real truth of names then appears to be precisely that

⁷⁸ Most (1997) describes how the author 'almost becomes a kind of Wilhelm Nestle or Bruno Snell *avant la lettre*, himself convinced that Greek culture had progressed from *mythos* to *logos*' (124). Elsewhere he writes: 'There can be no doubt that Orpheus is his central spiritual authority-but just as little, that he is fully aware that he lives in a world in which science has made enormous progress and physicists have proposed theories which cannot simply be dismissed but instead with which he must in some way come to terms' (122).

⁷⁹ Socrates and presumably Plato ultimately reject the etymological approach, yet given the close overlap between Cratylus' and the commentator's position on names it appears that he knew these ideas very well. It should also be noted that Plato/Socrates does not reject the idea that language conceals an ontological theory outright. What he questions is whether the inventors of language were in a better position to know reality than we are (439a-b).

⁸⁰ Kahn (1979) 15.

they mean more than one thing and point towards underlying transformations of the One. In the same way Orpheus wrote his poetry with these differences in mind (col. 22):

πάν[τ' οὐ]ν ὁμοίω[ς ὠ]νόμασεν ὥς κάλλιστα ἢ[δύ]νατο,
γινώσκων τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὴν φύσιν, ὅτι οὐ πάντες
ὁμοίαν ἔχουσιν οὐδὲ θέλουσιν πάντες ταυτά·
κρατιστεύοντες λέγουσι ὅ τι ἂν αὐτῶν ἐκάστωι
ἐπὶ θυμὸν ἔλθῃ, ἅπερ ἂν θέλοντες τυγχάνωσι,
οὐδαμὰ ταυτά, ὑπὸ πλεονεξίας, τὰ δὲ καὶ ὑπ' ἀμαθίας.
Γῆ δὲ καὶ Μήτηρ καὶ Ῥέα καὶ Ἥρη ἢ αὐτή. ἐκλήθη δὲ
Γῆ μὲν νόμῳ, Μήτηρ δ' ὅτι ἐκ ταύτης πάντα γ[ίν]εται,
Γῆ καὶ Γαῖα κατὰ [γ]λῶσσαν ἐκάστοις. Δημήτηρ [δὲ]
ὠνομάσθη ὥσπερ ἢ Γῆ Μήτηρ, ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ἔ[ν] ὄνομα
τὸ αὐτὸ γὰρ ἦν.

So he (sc. Orpheus) named all things in the same way as finely as he could, knowing the nature of men, that not all of them have a similar nature nor do all want the same things. When they have the power, they say anything that occurs to each one's heart, whatever they happen to want, never the same things, through greed (or: arrogance), sometimes also through lack of understanding. Earth (Ge), Mother (Meter), Rhea and Hera is the same (or: are one and the same). She/it was called Earth (Ge) by convention; Mother, because all things are born from her (or: from this one). Ge and Gaia according to each one's dialect. And (she/it) was called Demeter as The Mother Earth (GeMeter), one name from the two; for it was the same.⁸¹

In other words, Orpheus' speaks of a variety of goddesses, who are in fact One, because he is addressing the partial understandings of the many, their different desires, greed, lack of understanding and even dialectal differences. The commentator makes this underlying unity clear, yet if we recall that for Heraclitus understanding reality meant looking beyond a single meaning, his solution is equally partial. The real explanation of the name is not that many are really One, but that the One and the many are the same (τὸ αὐτὸ γὰρ ἦν). In other words, both accounts are right, but partial, and the commentator attempting to stress this merely draws our attention in one particular direction. This is paradoxical because understanding escapes language and sense perception which focus on one meaning at one time. To understand that the many are one is to understand something which cannot be seen, heard or expressed by words. It is a truth which can only be understood. Answering then why someone should study and etymologise names is as straightforward as answering why someone should study the movement of the stars, eclipses or any of the seemingly chaotic events in the natural world. All these things are as real as they are mysterious. They are riddles whose 'nature loves to hide' (DK 22 B123) and whose answer is usually flow.

⁸¹ Trans. Betegh (2004).

Conclusions

To briefly summarise my position. The Derveni commentator etymologised the successions and rivalries in Orpheus' narrative as an expression of cosmic pantheism which was broadly Heraclitean in its orientation. Furthermore, this was not a meaning he imposed onto the poem but one derived from a careful study of the Orphic material and particularly its language. This of course does not mean that it is a good reading. After all, many ancient allegorists attribute ideas to poems, which the poets cannot possibly have imagined. Plutarch (*Fr* 200.1-13), for example, discusses the magical transformation of Odysseus' men into pigs (*Od.* 10.249) as a veiled allegory for metempsychosis. There are few today who would accept that Homer had this reading in mind or the long list of other anachronistic ideas allegorists attributed to him over the centuries.⁸² Like Homer, Orphic poetry was widely cited and manipulated to support very different positions by a range of thinkers including Stoics such as Chrysippus (*Cic. Nat. D.* 14.41), a number of Platonist interpreters such as Xenocrates and Damascius, Peripatetic interpreters such as the writer of the Pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *On the Cosmos* (7.401a), and even Christian and Jewish writers.⁸³ All these and more could claim that Orphic texts in some way supported their very different views and of course not all can be right.⁸⁴ While I will not attempt to defend these varied uses of Orphic literature, it is sufficient to point out that an Orphic such as the Derveni commentator has a rather different relationship to Orphic poetry and rituals than did the Platonists or Christians. The Orphics not only cited indiscriminately part of an Orphic poem to prove a particular point, they also wrote and revised the poetry itself. In this respect, Orphic poems and interpretations are closer to the genre of philosophical hymns such as those composed by the Stoic Cleanthes or Proclus where we might equally expect a broad overlap between poem and philosophical speculation.⁸⁵ This at any rate is true of the Derveni commentary and theogony.

⁸² Plut. *Fr* 200.1-13 Sandbach: Stob. *Flor* 1.49.60.1-13 See Edmonds (2013) 339-40. Homer was allegorised by almost everyone including the Derveni commentator (col. 26.4).

⁸³ Platonists cite Orpheus everywhere see below. Damascius' *On First Principles* and generally Platonist commentaries on Plato are particularly valuable sources. Christian writers were generally hostile to Orphic poetry. See Herrero de Jáuregui (2010). Jewish theologians are more favourable to Orpheus. The Jewish Orphica are collected in Holladay (1996).

⁸⁴ It could be argued that many of these writers did not defend Homer or Orpheus in their entirety but rather selectively drew upon certain examples. The peripatetic treatise *On the Cosmos*, for example, cites a lengthy Orphic hymn to Zeus (401a25). Many of the ideas are clearly incompatible with Aristotle's views, though the poem may simply have been selected because it shows an elevated and impressive Zeus not found in traditional religion. Likewise when authors cite that this idea is visible in Homer, they do not necessarily imply that Homer everywhere proposes these ideas. Meisner (2015) notes for the Platonists 'allegorically interpreting the *Rhapsodies* was not simply a matter of charting random correspondences between this deity and that philosophical concept. Rather, there were features of the text of the *Rhapsodies* that illustrated Neoplatonic metaphysical concepts very well, and they made use of these' (258).

⁸⁵ On Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* see Long (1996). On Proclus' hymns see Van den Berg (2001).

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