

Imagining the World's End in Ancient Greece

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Joseph Michael Lipp, M.A.

Graduate Program in Greek and Latin  
The Ohio State University  
2014

Dissertation Committee:  
Carolina López-Ruiz, Advisor  
J. Albert Harrill  
Anthony Kaldellis

Copyright by  
Joseph Michael Lipp  
2014

### **Abstract**

This dissertation studies world-end scenarios in ancient Greek literature. It responds, first, to an expansion and imposition of the term “eschatology” beyond biblical studies into other scholarly domains (such as Buddhist and Hindu studies), and, second, to a lack of scholarly attention to the topic within the field of Classics. After an initial survey of past and present conceptualizations of “eschatology,” Chapter 1 contends that the term is not heuristically useful for Greek material of the Archaic and Classical periods. The question is, then: how might a Classicist address specific building blocks of eschatology that *do* have relevance to early Greek culture—e.g., the “end” of civilizations, views of the future, concepts of hope, the fate of humanity? The rest of the dissertation pursues the first of these building blocks—the theme of “the end”—in Greek literature from Homer (ca. 750BC) to Aristotle (ca. 300BC).

Methodologically, the chapters are organized by theme, each addressing a particular world-ending cause or scenario: the world’s end by water (Chapter 2), by war (Chapter 3), in periods of time (Chapter 4), and by fire (Chapter 5). Within each chapter I analyze the material according to sub-topics, and then chronologically by author or literary work. The dominant mode of analysis is close readings of texts, and my guiding question throughout is twofold: who says what about the end, and why? The approach is thus more literary than historical. I ask, for example, about themes, and about how the particular *part* of the text that I am interpreting fits into the text *as a whole*. Aside from the basic

inquiries about a text's themes and purposes, I am interested in two further aspects of the nature of any given discourse: First, is it religious or non? Second, does the text pursue its aims via personal characters or impersonal forces? In terms of closure, Chapter 1 concludes with suggestions for topics of future studies. Chapter 5 likewise ends in a way that points to a potential next "chapter" in the study of the world's end in ancient Greece.

Broadly speaking, the study results in a negative conclusion and several positive ones. Negatively, it finds "eschatology" unhelpful as a category of analysis for Archaic and Classical Greek literature and philosophy. Positively, the study finds that ancient Greek authors do talk about the end of the world as they knew it. Four areas of concern predominate: identity, ethics, political philosophy, and science. First, Greek authors throughout the period *negotiate ethnic identity* using the world-ending tale of the flood (e.g., Hesiod, Pindar, early Greek mythographers). Second, writers of Greek epic use world-end scenarios to *provoke thought about ethics* (e.g., Hesiod). Third, the end and rebeginning of civilizations as a literary theme and historical topic commonly shows up in early Greek *political philosophizing* (e.g., Hesiod, Plato). Fourth, Greek scientific thinkers, sometimes called natural philosophers, discuss the world's end as a *material fact* (e.g., the Presocratics, Aristotle). These meditations on the world's end do not constitute "eschatology." But they do challenge the Classicist to imagine a time before the *eschaton*.

## **Dedication**

To Carolina López-Ruiz

βούλεψε φρεσὶν ἤσιν ὁδὸν τὴν πέφραδ' Ἀθήνη  
(*Odyssey* 1.444)

## Acknowledgments

I am honored to recognize the following individuals for their help on this project: my committee as a whole, Carolina López-Ruiz, Bert Harrill, and Anthony Kaldellis, for striking an impressive balance of criticism and compassion; Anthony Kaldellis, for unwavering support over the years (which meant putting up with countless crazy ideas) and the conversation and singular observation that sparked my interest in this project; Bert Harrill, for willingly jumping in somewhat *in medias res* and regularly forcing me to think harder about my assumptions; both Fritz Graf and Sarah Iles Johnston, for a small but ultimately significant piece of advice at a crucial moment; Bruce Heiden, for lessons on reading, thinking, and other things yet unknown; Benjamin Acosta-Hughes, for personal hospitality and consistently sound advice (and Italian neckties); the Department of Classics at The Ohio State University, for the opportunity to become a scholar.

With deep gratitude I also recognize Lauren Brown, for generously sharing her home; Michelle and Dave, Becca and Brenda, and Tine, for quiet faithfulness; Joey Danielewicz, Marion Kruse, Laura Marshall, and Ryan Woods, for *philia*—Zeus will not destroy this race of men if you do for others what you’ve done for me.

Without William and Margaret Veith and my mother I wouldn’t have a B.A., let alone a Ph.D.—how do I rightfully acknowledge you three? A similar aporia comes over me: yet Shanna Marie, for *homophrosyne*.

At the end of this project my deepest debt of gratitude is for Carolina López-Ruiz. All I can say is: Telemachus had Athena.

## **Vita**

2006.....B.A., Classical Humanities, The Ohio State University

2008-2014 .....Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of Classics, The Ohio State University

2010.....M.A., Classics, The Ohio State University

2014-Present.....Lecturer, Department of Classics, The Ohio State University

## **Fields of Study**

Major Field: Greek and Latin

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgments .....	v
Vita.....	vi
List of Tables.....	ix
<b>CHAPTER 1: ESCHATOLOGY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
I. The Eschatological Imagination .....	1
II. <i>Status Quaestionis</i> : “Eschatology” as a Term of Scholarly Analysis .....	5
III. <i>Status Quaestionis</i> : “Eschatology” & Classics .....	17
IV. Methodology: Sources, Organization, and Approach.....	25
V. Ways Forward: Future Time, Future Hope, and Religious Discourse.....	30
<b>CHAPTER 2: WATER.....</b>	<b>34</b>
I. Introduction: The World’s End by Water .....	34
II. The Watery Demise of Homer’s Demigods.....	36
III. Deukalion’s Deluge & the End of Anonymity .....	44
IV. Natural Flood Catastrophes & the End of Civilization .....	82
V. From Water to War .....	110
<b>CHAPTER 3: WAR.....</b>	<b>112</b>
I. Introduction: The World’s End by War .....	112
II. Troy: Zeus’ Plans & Heroic Ends .....	113
III. Atlantis: Where the Athenians End, Revolution Begins.....	150
IV. Qumran: Yahweh’s Coming War & the End of Darkness.....	154
V. Babylon—Troy—Qumran: Mythic Cataclysm & the Question of Planning .....	161
VI. Conclusion: Implications—Psychological, Historical, and Religious .....	172
<b>CHAPTER 4: ERAS.....</b>	<b>174</b>
I. Introduction: The World’s End in Time .....	174
II. Hesiod: The World’s End as Ethical Provocation .....	177
III. Plato’s Eleatic Stranger: The World’s End as Ideology.....	216
IV. Dikaiarchos: The World’s End as the End of Man.....	234
V. Conclusion: A Future Era?.....	241
<b>CHAPTER 5: FIRE.....</b>	<b>244</b>
I. Introduction: The World’s End by Fire.....	244
II. Hesiod’s Zeus: The World’s End as Political Philosophy .....	245
III. Physiologoi: Fire & the Undying Cosmos.....	264
IV. Conclusion: Two Fiery Paths to Eschatology .....	279



<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>285</b>
---------------------------	------------

### **List of Tables**

Table 1: Imagined chronology in the Hesiodic <i>Catalogue</i> and Genesis.....	47
Table 2: Transmission of Kritias' tale in Plato's <i>Timaeus-Critias</i> . ....	92
Table 3. The ethics, livelihood, and death of Hesiod's Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Divine races.....	203
Table 4: The storm god and the watery dragon. ....	259

## CHAPTER 1: ESCHATOLOGY

### I. The Eschatological Imagination

“It always makes a good story—the end of the world.” I look up from my black coffee and Bible, ominously opened to Revelation. The speaker, a lanky, sun-kissed triathlete, surfer, and professional teacher of Zen meditation, is talking to the cafe’s barista about the movie *Snowpiercer*, just out in the small theater in the north Jersey beach town where I am writing. Opposite the Zen surfer, this barista, a religiously-confused recent graduate from a liberal arts college in eastern Pennsylvania, designs a flower in the surfer’s macchiato. She doesn’t look up. “True,” she says patly, “but is it worth seeing?” The surfer shrugs. He couldn’t care less, and goes on to describe the movie as a “typical post-apocalyptic scenario” and an “ambitious science fiction film.”

*Snowpiercer* was directed by the Korean film-maker Bong Joon Ho and released in the US in July 2014. The movie’s website describes it like this:

It’s been 18 years since we froze the earth. The few remaining humans live on the *Snowpiercer*, a train on an infinite loop around the globe. For those at the front, it’s a lavish paradise of drugs and sushi in the lap of luxury; for those trapped in the tail section, life is short and cruel.

But change is in the air. Curtis (Chris Evans), desperate to escape the tail of the train, plans an uprising, aided by his mentor Gilliam (John Hurt). What begins as an isolated riot explodes into a mass revolution, an all-or-nothing push to the front of the

train, and a war for humanity's future. Who will live and who will die? How far can they go? Is there hope beyond the frozen wastes?<sup>1</sup>

The plot is fueled by a past cataclysm, a human remnant, deep socio-economic class division, an end-time battle aimed at restoring justice, and a longing for restoration. It provokes thought about topics such as socio-economic injustice, human resistance to domination, communal restoration, and future hope. In a different context, Elana Gomel, Professor of English and American Studies at Tel Aviv University, boils down this general narrative path into two crucial stages of “destruction and renewal,” and terms it the “apocalyptic plot.”<sup>2</sup> It goes without saying that the apocalyptic plot has been a central feature of the Western, Judeo-Christian imagination for millennia. But, as Gomel points out, the apocalyptic plot is but one instance of a more general phenomenon of temporality, a conceptualization that “attempts to create a humanly meaningful narrative of historical change.”<sup>3</sup> The plot has some cache among authors and film-makers, now including Bong Joon Ho, and transcends all kinds of boundaries—religious, national, ethnic.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century eschatology is a taken-for-granted concept. The point of my anecdote is to give a brief demonstration of that fact—that the apocalyptic plot, including notions of a pending world's end (however “world” and “end” are construed) is everywhere—movies, books, and the haze of shared consciousness. The scene in that cafe provides a little window onto the wide world of the eschatological imagination.

After all, the surfer is not a Christian (and in fact self-identifies as a Buddhist), nor is the

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.snowpiercer-film.com/about> (September 4, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Gomel 2010, 186. Gomel's article focuses on four dystopian, apocalyptic novels by the British author J. G. Ballard.

<sup>3</sup> Gomel 2010, 185.

barista—and neither of them are experiencing any kind of imperial domination. Moreover, while they are American and the film-maker is Korean, eschatology was conceived in neither of these countries, and in its inception had nothing to do with related national identities. And yet all of them know about eschatology. Bong Joon Ho knows enough about it to write a film featuring its central (i.e., apocalyptic) plot (whether knowingly or not); and the Buddhist-barista pair attest to the topic’s widespread familiarity in the easy flow of their conversation. Moreover, all three of these individuals speak in this discourse without any reference to its important historical and textual origins such as the Hebrew book of Daniel, the Maccabean Revolt, Jesus of Nazareth’s apocalyptic eschatology, or the book of Revelation. Even the scholar whose work I mention after the Buddhist-and-barista anecdote attests to the eschatological *koine*: Elana Gomel is a professor of English literature, not ancient Mediterranean civilizations, and yet the modern taken-for-granted nature of “eschatology” shines throughout her essay. At the very least, we are at a point where a certain notion of temporality—with its particular version of the future—is so familiar that we can “boil it down” to a plot type. The academy, popular culture, international mass media—eschatology is everywhere. (And I have not even mentioned Christian congregations.)

In the scholarly world the question of eschatology is expanding beyond the biblical context. What began in 17<sup>th</sup> century German Lutheran theological circles as a term of analysis for the books of Daniel and Revelation now has its own Oxford Handbook, *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*,<sup>4</sup> which contains essays devoted mostly to Christian

---

<sup>4</sup> Walls 2008.

material but also to Jewish, Muslim, and more surprisingly, Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Watching the scholars in these non-biblical fields of study attempt to fit their material in the analytical framework of “eschatology” is discomforting. A number of them even say outright that the term does not fit, but then do their best to fulfill the volume’s purpose: to examine “X Eschatology.”

I will have more to say about the history of scholarship below. For now I will state that my dissertation is one step in responding to this analytical expansion, even imposition. The *Handbook of Eschatology* does not feature Greco-Roman material, and, reading it for the first time, that absence inspired me to ask myself, “what would a chapter on Greek eschatology for this volume look like?” My dissertation thus began as a kind of thought experiment. At this point I can say that if what has come so far, especially in the *Handbook*, proceeds on assumptions of *similarity*—even universality, i.e., some (implicit) understanding that everyone has an eschatology (even Buddhists)—, this study will demonstrate that eschatology represents a moment of conceptual *difference*, at least in the religions and literatures of the ancient Mediterranean. As a starting point of response, I wanted, first, to step back and analyze what is distinctive about eschatological notions *before* applying them outside biblical material, let alone taking it for granted that eschatology is a universally-relevant phenomenon and category of analysis. Second, as a scholar of non-biblical traditions, I felt obliged to find ways of discussing notions contained within and relevant to eschatology that are most helpful for my own material. In the rest of this chapter I will (1) provide a brief history of scholarship on eschatology and its related concept group, apocalypticism; (2) introduce

the route that my dissertation takes to address the question of a Greek eschatology; and (3) suggest avenues of future research that this study has provoked but left unexplored.

## **II. *Status Quaestionis*: “Eschatology” as a Term of Scholarly Analysis**

Eschatology as an explicit category of analysis has its origins in the religious discourse of Lutheran theological circles in Germany.<sup>5</sup> The term stems from its use by Philipp Friedlieb and then Abraham Calov in the middle 1600s; both men are Lutheran thinkers, systematizers really, of Christian thought. The 17<sup>th</sup> century saw attempts by them and others at compiling a doctrine of the so-called “last things”—some authors use the term *eschatologia*, some *novissimis*, and others *extrema*.<sup>6</sup> According to Calov, for example, the *eschaton* (singular) occurs specifically when Jesus Christ, after subjugating all powers and authorities, delivers the dominion to God the Father, as per 1 Corinthians 15:24. But this event is part of the broader *eschata* (plural), the “last things” or “last days” as the conclusion of history. To give another example, the title of Friedlieb’s work (published in 1644), one of the first to use the term, lays out the fundamental subjects of eschatology, as if programmatically: *Eschatologia seu Florilegium theologicum exhibens locorum de morte, resurrectione mortuorum, extreme iudicio, consummation seculi, inferno seu morte aeterna et denique vita aeterna*. Friedlieb invents the Latin word *eschatologia* to include such topics as death, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, the fulfillment of history, hell and eternal death, and eternal life. Indeed, this has remained its content for the most part to the present, aside from a digression in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

---

<sup>5</sup> For general works of reference see Frey 2011; *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Eschatology;” *EDDS*, s.v. “Eschatology;” Vermes 2003.

<sup>6</sup> For the history of “eschatology” see Frey 2011, especially 6-19.

when the term was used in a less descriptive and more evaluative sense to refer to a “true” Christian (an eschatological believer was one who was focused on what really matters, i.e., things transcendent).<sup>7</sup> Yet, as Jörg Frey points out, despite the appearance of clarity suggested by a definitional list, these early authors actually used the term vaguely, and it was only around 1900 that Christian theologians developed eschatology as a central exegetical and theological category.<sup>8</sup> I will complicate this picture below, but for a basic working definition of eschatology as it is used in biblical studies today, one cannot outdo that of John J. Collins in his entry “Eschatology” in the *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*:

In the context of biblical studies eschatology embraces several complexes of motifs, most of which deal with the future of Israel and the expectation of divine intervention for judgment and salvation on behalf of the community. In the Hellenistic period, and especially in the apocalyptic literature, there arises the expectation of judgment of individuals too after death, resulting in everlasting salvation or damnation. This judgment may or may not entail bodily resurrection. Also, apocalyptic works in particular frequently contain panoramic overviews of history, dividing it into a set number of periods and culminating in a catastrophic judgment that entails the end of this world.

The prominent themes in biblical texts are the communal life of Israel, especially connected to future restoration; divine judgment and salvation; the individual afterlife; views of history’s eras, commonly ending with a destructive event or events, followed by renewal. These are themes in the abstract, synthesized of course from a great body of material. Along with these thematic topics, other important axes of investigation include:

---

<sup>7</sup> Such an atemporal use of the term (by the likes of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann) is motivated by an embarrassment with the idea that Christian belief ultimately rests on figures who thought the world would end in their time. See Frey 2011, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Frey 2011, 6. Two important figures in the concept’s emergence are Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer.



whether and the degree to which eschatology is present- or future-oriented; eschatology's religio-historical origin and background of development; and the (potentially embarrassing) issue of the delay of the *parousia*, the second coming of Jesus. Finally, just to give an idea of some of the textual materials that scholars deal with on this topic—central texts in the study of eschatology would include Isaiah 24-27; Ezekiel 40-48; Zechariah 1-4; Daniel (especially 7-12); 1 Enoch (especially 1-36); various Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., 1QM, 11QT<sup>le</sup>); 1 Thessalonians 4; 2 Thessalonians 1-2; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10; Gospel of Mark 13; and Revelation. The point of this list and the brief mention of themes and topics of investigation above is not to be exhaustive, but to present some of the texts and ideas that would constitute a corpus of materials which could likely constitute a body of evidence for “eschatology.”

Even if, however, some of the topics and go-to texts remain a central part of the eschatological discourse, the term causes a certain amount of confusion to this day. Before quoting Collins' definition of eschatology in the *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* above, I said that I would shortly complicate the picture. Consider the following assessments by a few leading scholars in the field. David Aune asserts that “the very nature of eschatological thought seems resistant to consistency and coherence.”<sup>9</sup> And Jan van der Watt, editor of the recent volume *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, based on a conference and representing the state of the question, demonstrates the lack of consensus beyond the basics of Friedlieb's programmatic title—Watt's introduction to that volume begins:

---

<sup>9</sup> Aune 2008, 36.

In theological circles the meaning of the term ‘eschatology’ (first used in the seventeenth century) seems clear—coined on the Greek word ἔσχατον, it refers to a set of doctrinal teachings concerning the ‘last’ or ‘final’ things that will occur ‘at the end.’ At a conference on the eschatology of the New Testament and some related documents, held at the University of Pretoria in 2007, it became evident that this is more or less where the consensus ends. *Simply agreeing on what should be included or excluded when dealing with the concept of eschatology of the New Testament has proven to be a challenge*, leading to intense debates. Efforts in formulating an overarching definition that would include the variety and richness of what eschatology is about, has resulted in a deadlock. That is why the authors of this volume were asked to state their views on eschatology in their respective articles.<sup>10</sup>

One contributor, Cilliers Breytenbach, who writes the piece on eschatology in Romans, even refuses to use the term: “Due to lack of clarification. . . we will refrain from using the umbrella terms ‘apocalyptic’ and ‘eschatology’ in this essay.”<sup>11</sup> Breytenbach explains further, noting with apparent disapproval that the “meta-term” eschatology is a “neologism, which originated as a descriptive in seventeenth century protestant dogmatic theology.”<sup>12</sup>

Terminological confusion meets more chaos when we bring in the closely-related concept-group including apocalypse and apocalypticism. These words are well-established in colloquial English usage to refer to the catastrophic nature of an event. My Buddhist surfer, for example, was easily able to refer to *Snowpiercer*’s setting and plot as “a typical post-apocalyptic scenario.” Here, “apocalyptic” means catastrophe of widespread destruction. But in scholarly discourse the terms have specific, technical meanings (that is to say, they are *terms*). The history of this semantic investigation has important plot points in (1) a conference and its consequent volume of essays in Uppsala

---

<sup>10</sup> Watt 2011, v (italics mine).

<sup>11</sup> Breytenbach 2011, 182.

<sup>12</sup> Breytenbach 2011, 182, n. 5.

in 1979,<sup>13</sup> (2) an edition of *Semeia* devoted to apocalyptic literature,<sup>14</sup> and (3) John J. Collins' now-standard introduction to Jewish apocalyptic literature.<sup>15</sup> These investigations and others have resulted in impressive, though of course not universal, consensus on what counts as apocalyptic.<sup>16</sup> Though I do not use these terms much in the rest of my dissertation, it is worth noting their meanings in the academy: "apocalypse" refers specifically to a genre of literature,<sup>17</sup> "apocalypticism" to a social movement or community presumed by the literary works,<sup>18</sup> and "apocalyptic eschatology" to a worldview, mindset, or set of motifs concerned with end times (i.e., eschatological) that is also apocalyptic in some sense.<sup>19</sup> Aside from terminology, the search for the origins of the apocalyptic has all but halted, with claims about Persian Zoroastrian<sup>20</sup> and Jewish

---

<sup>13</sup> Hellholm 1983.

<sup>14</sup> Collins 1979. In a later publication Collins speaks about the aim of *Semeia* 14: "The purpose of *Semeia* 14 was to give precision to the traditional category of "apocalyptic literature" by showing the extent and limits of the conformity among the allegedly apocalyptic texts." (Collins 1998a, 4).

<sup>15</sup> Collins 1998a.

<sup>16</sup> See *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism." For the most up-to-date account of the state of apocalyptic studies, which of course gives a much fuller account than what I've mentioned here, see Adela Yarbro Collins' talk dedicated to this topic: Collins 2011.

<sup>17</sup> The *Semeia* group resulted in the following definition of apocalypse as a literary genre: "'Apocalypse' is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world" (Collins 1979, 9).

<sup>18</sup> "A movement might reasonably be called apocalyptic if it shared the conceptual framework of the genre, endorsing a worldview in which supernatural revelation, the heavenly world, and eschatological judgment played essential parts. Arguably, both the Qumran community and early Christianity are apocalyptic in this sense, quite apart from the production of apocalypses. We should remember, however, that the argument depends on analogy with the apocalypses and that the affinity is always a matter of degree" (Collins 1998, 13).

<sup>19</sup> The letters of Paul are examples of phenomena that can be examined under the category of apocalyptic eschatology: they are not apocalypses but deal with eschatological concerns from an apocalyptic perspective (i.e., cosmic dualism, a coming judgment); see de Boer 1998. Apocalyptic eschatology can be distinguished from prophetic eschatology, a view of the end times or future found in the Hebrew prophets. But "common to both is the belief that, in accordance with divine plan, the adverse conditions of the present world would end in judgment of the wicked and vindication of the righteous, thereby ushering in a new era of prosperity and peace" (Hanson 1992, 280-81).

<sup>20</sup> Norman Cohn (1993) argues for the primacy of Zoroastrianism. On Persian apocalypticism in its own right see Hultgård 1998.

prophetic<sup>21</sup> traditions often still mentioned but the latter seen as more fruitful.<sup>22</sup> Each have their own roles to play.<sup>23</sup> There is agreement, however, that apocalyptic literature functions generally as a literature of resistance, precipitated especially by Hellenistic and then Roman imperial domination of Palestine.<sup>24</sup> Psychologically, apocalypticism provides “support in the face of persecution, reassurance in the face of culture shock or social powerlessness, reorientation in the face of national trauma, consolation for the fate of humanity.”<sup>25</sup> To these statements about apocalypses and apocalypticism I would append the observation that eschatological thinking, whether encapsulated in the form an apocalypse or not, flourishes in times of perceived slavery and impoverishment—hence its connection with restoration and hope.

Standard reference works dealing with eschatology and apocalypse are *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*,<sup>26</sup> whose article groups of 1992 still remain relevant and insightful for their recognition of the topic’s frustrating heterogeneity. Brian Daley’s handbook on patristic eschatology,<sup>27</sup> likewise, shows an appreciation for nuance with its close readings of different texts across time. Building on elements of both agreement (e.g., the general historical milieu; its function) and confusion (e.g., origin) that I have just mentioned, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, eschatology was firmly enough established in the

---

<sup>21</sup> H. Rowley’s famous dictum that “apocalyptic is the child of prophecy” (1963, 15) exemplifies the claim of a genetic relationship between the Hebrew prophets and the later apocalypses. But Hanson 1975 is the signature study here.

<sup>22</sup> See Collins 1998b, 145-47. “While some scholars have traced this idea to the teaching of Zoroaster in ancient Iran, a clearer line of transmission can be traced to the Hebrew prophets. The ultimate roots of the concept lie in the combat myths that can be found in various cultures of the ancient Near East” (Collins 1998b, 129). I will return to the combat myth in Chapter 5.

<sup>23</sup> Wisdom literature (von Rad 1965) is currently given little originaive weight.

<sup>24</sup> Portier-Young 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Collins 1992, 287.

<sup>26</sup> Freedman 1992.

<sup>27</sup> Daley 2010 (first published 1991).

scholarly discourse to be a standard entry in English language reference works dealing with both biblical and non-biblical material. Such works include *Brill's New Pauly* (1996), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998), *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* (2000), *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000), *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (2003), *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (2005), and *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007). I have left the three-volume *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (1998) out of this chronologically-ordered list because it would seem to go without saying that eschatology would have a privileged place in its entries. The fact that a reference work of this kind even exists, however, also attests to the broad scholarly interest in things eschatological and apocalyptic.

This general trajectory of expansion and familiarity is fine enough, but it is mostly to *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* that this study responds. As I mentioned above, I was struck by the inclusion and efforts of non-biblical (better: non-Abrahamic) traditions to address the question of eschatology. Sure, when Donald Gowan earlier had set out to write his study of eschatology in the Old Testament,<sup>28</sup> he indeed wrestled with the concept's applicability to the Hebrew bible. Compelled to ask, "the *end* of what?" he settled on a literal understanding of eschatology as the "doctrine of the end," and concluded that in the Old Testament a major theme is the "End of Evil."<sup>29</sup> Gowan's attempt occasions a certain amount of terminological slippage, and he, like so many who deal with "eschatology," must in the end simply define his term as he will and then set out to use it. Gowan's study was first published in 1986, but as Watt's introduction to the

---

<sup>28</sup> Gowan 2000 (first published in 1986).

<sup>29</sup> Gowan 2000, preface.

recent volume on eschatology in the New Testament shows (which I discussed above) scholars are still faced with the problem of terminology. Nevertheless, Gowan finds something workable. Noting that as of his writing, “the word is not commonly used outside of theological scholarship,”<sup>30</sup> he adeptly navigates the conceptual terrain and ends up with a compelling work that has so far stood the test of time.

But this is not how things turn out for Jan Nattier and David Knipe, the authors of *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*’s entries on “Buddhist Eschatology” and “Hindu Eschatology,” respectively. Consider the very first paragraph of Nattier’s entry:

To speak of Buddhist eschatology is, in a sense, a misnomer. If eschatology is understood to refer to “final things”—that is, the idea that the world will one day come to a definitive end—there is *simply no parallel* in the Buddhist tradition. On the contrary, Buddhist scriptures regularly refer to “beginningless *samsara*,” a cycle of birth and death of the universe (as well as of the individual) for which no starting point can be discerned. Nor is there an end, for Buddhists share with members of other Indian religions (notably the Hindus and the Jains) the idea that the universe passes through an unending series of cycles of manifestation and nonmanifestation. Not surprisingly, therefore, there is only the briefest reference to Buddhism in the article on “Eschatology” in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, and the *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (Buswell ed., 2004) has no entry for eschatology at all.<sup>31</sup>

This last statement is telling—the fact that the discipline’s reference work contains no entry for eschatology, for it indicates the absence of meaningful parallels and heuristic value. One may critique Nattier’s characterization of eschatology as “a definitive end,” since eschatological scenarios are rarely absolute in this sense. But that would miss the point: the basic feature of *dissimilarity* stands.

Knipe, too, admits a striking lack of conceptual parallels in the introduction to his essay on Hindu eschatology:

---

<sup>30</sup> Gowan 2000, viii.

<sup>31</sup> Nattier 2008, 151 (*italics mine*).

Noticeably absent from this digest of Hindu beliefs is the notion of an end time, a last day. . . Unlike Zoroastrianism and modern Parsis, or Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Hinduism has no *last day* or *end time*, nor any *completion of history*, *resurrection of the dead*, and *universal last judgment*.<sup>32</sup>

Knipe here hits on some of the more traditional themes of eschatology, seen in Friedlieb's title and Collins' definition—but Knipe raises them to note their absence in the Hindu material. Both Nattier and Knipe, however, go on to discuss theories of cycles of cosmic destruction and recreation. To come back to my study, as I read these entries I began to think that my hypothetical chapter on Greek eschatology would likely resemble those of the Buddhist and Hindu traditions much more than it would the Jewish, Christian, Islam, or indeed any of the new religious movements which envision violent transformations into a so-called millennial period during which the present world is overthrown and another established.<sup>33</sup>

So far I have demonstrated the expansion of the term eschatology, given one explicit attempt at a definition and several implicit others, and shown some of the challenges in both defining and applying the concept within and especially without the biblical context. What I want to do now, before turning to the question of eschatology and early Greek traditions, is to mention three further attempts to work with eschatology as a term of analysis. These attempts are not associated with *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*.

First, it must be recognized that one scholarly trend gives eschatology a wide conceptual spread, wider than I have suggested above. Scholars have at times left behind its Jewish and Christian context, and at others even removed its religious nature. The

---

<sup>32</sup> Knipe 2008, 171 (italics mine).

<sup>33</sup> On such religious groups see Partridge 2008.

*eschat-* in eschatology can now refer, not only specifically to the Jewish and Christian *eschaton/eschata* as the final day(s) of judgment, to the end time(s) in which god will otherwise intervene in world affairs, or to the *parousia* of Jesus, but also to a sanitized “end” of almost *anything*. This trend typically introduces eschatology including basic notions of “the end” in three realms: first, the end of the individual person at death; second, the end of the collective, as in the destruction of this or that people group or the end of history; and third, the end of the material universe as a whole. This adds another layer to what is currently taken for granted about eschatology: one can simply assert without any criticism or push-back that eschatology is individual, collective, or cosmic. As an example of this trend, William Lane Craig provides one of the more comprehensive notions of eschatology with his assertion that eschatology is “the description of the destiny of the spatiotemporal world and its human inhabitants. . . It deals with the history of mankind and the universe in the *later than* direction.”<sup>34</sup> His definition thus includes all three ends—includes pretty much the future of *everything*. But what is *eschato*-logical about this category? Where is a notion of an *eschaton*, or of specific materials (e.g., texts) that would warrant such an analytical term? And how is this notion of “eschatology” different from studying “the future”—from a variety of angles, scientific, philosophical, religious? Such whitewashing raises a concern about the heuristic value of the term. My response here is to ask the difficult question, when have

---

<sup>34</sup> Craig 2008, 601-2. Craig does mention the broadening trajectory I have pointed out in this chapter. He confidently asserts: “Eschatology is no longer exclusively the subject matter of theology but has in the last quarter century or so emerged as a new branch of cosmology (the study of the large-scale structure and history of the universe), being a sort of mirror image of cosmogony, that branch of cosmology that studies the origin of the universe” (602). Despite his scientific tone and certainty, Craig himself seems not to have left theology behind: he quotes New Testament texts as evidence for what will happen in the future (602), and his essay often reads as a thinly-veiled work of Christian apologetic.



we broadened a term of analysis so much as to blunt its capacity to provide sharp conceptual clarity on the materials and questions at hand?

The edge is not always so blunt, of course. The work of J. J. Collins, just to name one scholar, whose definition of eschatology in relation to the Dead Sea Scrolls I quoted above, amply demonstrates this. There is much good (i.e., helpful at understanding materials) scholarship on eschatology—work that picks up on an *eschaton* and seeks to elucidate it. Consider two other notices for the way that they offer an insight about what eschatology as a term of scholarly analysis aims to help us understand.

Eschatology fundamentally involves an imaginative act of periodization. Simon J. Joseph puts it well:

The term “eschatology” is frequently (mis)understood as signifying a literal “end of the world.” Yet the “eschatological community” at Qumran illustrates that it can be understood as not the end of the world but the last in a series of divinely determined *periods* of time.<sup>35</sup>

Joseph here responds to the phenomenon that I have been discussing: the expansion of the notion approaching a point at which clarity on some fundamental concepts is lost. He aims to bring the discussion back a little, by reminding readers that for the term “eschatology” to continue to be useful we must bear in mind its referent to particular views of periodization. The *eschato-* in eschatology is reasonably limited to the end or last season of a period of time.

The final point I want to make about eschatology as a term is in regards to a prominent theme in the literature which is justifiably researched under the category of

---

<sup>35</sup> Joseph 2013, 957, n.10.

eschatology. That theme is *restoration*. David Aune demonstrates this in an essay entitled “From the Idealized Past to the Imaginary Future: Eschatological Restoration in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature.”<sup>36</sup> Looking at ten Jewish apocalypses, composed between the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, Aune examines six aspects of restoration, all of which feature a future return (i.e., an eschatological re-storation) to an idealized past. Generally, the first four have a nationalistic focus, addressing, for example, specific geographic areas or political institutions. The last two feature more universalistic tendencies, relevant to creation as a whole. The themes are: (1) the restoration of the *land*, “the indispensable setting for the playing out of the eschatological drama;”<sup>37</sup> (2) the restoration of a theocratic *monarchy* or *kingship*, usually in the form of a *Davidic Messiah*; (3) the restoration of the *people of Israel as a nation*; (4) the restoration of the *city of Jerusalem* and its *temple*; (5) the restoration of *paradise*; and (6) the restoration of *creation*, or *heaven and earth*. To my mind, this kind of analysis vis-à-vis the term eschatology is much more heuristically useful—when the aim is understanding the ancient materials—than the universalizing tendencies seen lately. This approach helps us limit what counts as “eschatological” to materials which actually feature a temporal *eschaton*—a period of time in the future, even if the present is somehow already part of that future—, and then to make meaningful assertions about their notions of temporality, historical change, and so on.

The aim of this brief survey of eschatology in the academy has been severalfold. I hope to have demonstrated the basic fact of the expansion of the term’s applicability to

---

<sup>36</sup> Aune 2008, 13-38.

<sup>37</sup> Aune 2008, 18.

the book of Daniel and Revelation in the specific discourse of 17<sup>th</sup> century German Lutheran theology (e.g., Calov) to the cosmos as a whole in certain segments of the current American academic discourse (e.g., Craig); to have shown the challenges of defining and applying the term inside and especially outside biblical studies (e.g., Gowan, Nattier, Knipe); and to have provided a few specific definitions to show the range (e.g., Collins). The Classicist is left with the question of what to do with this term.

### **III. *Status Quaestionis*: “Eschatology” & Classics**

To the extent that eschatology has a conceptual presence in Classics, it shows up in its tripartite form—the end of the individual, the group, and the cosmos. Among Classicists and other scholars of the ancient Mediterranean there is ample discussion about the first of these strands, individual eschatology,<sup>38</sup> and so I do not deal with this subject here. But there is relatively little about the other two. The Uppsala volume, mentioned above in the context of apocalypticism, casts its net wide including “the ancient Mediterranean and the Near East.” Its focus, however, is on apocalypticism in its various manifestations, with little relevance for eschatology of early Greek materials. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., 2012), for its part, does not feature an entry devoted to eschatology. In 1993 Ludwig Koenen delivered the *American Philological Association*’s presidential address; the paper version in the following year’s volume of *TAPA* is entitled “Greece, the Near East, and Egypt: Cyclic Destruction in Hesiod and the *Catalogue of Women*.”<sup>39</sup> Koenen thus addresses the topic of the world’s end in selected early Greek materials, but he does

---

<sup>38</sup> See Albinus 2000 and Johnston 2004, 486-88.

<sup>39</sup> Koenen 1994.

so without using eschatology as a term of analysis. Nor is his study devoted to eschatology. It is, rather, part of the debate about Greece and the Near East—Koenen chooses accounts of destruction as one example of intercultural exchange. Several years later the *Encyclopedia of Classical Philosophy* (1997) was published, also without an entry on eschatology.<sup>40</sup> This survey demonstrates two simple points: (1) when Classicists think of eschatology they think of life after death, and (2) despite opportunities to apply the term differently (for example, Koenen might have used the category to analysis accounts of destruction in Hesiod) they have not done so. It would seem that the scholarship both within the discipline of Classics and also in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* would present me with a blank slate.

But it doesn't. This is due to the work of Hubert Cancik. He contributed an essay to the aforementioned *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*,<sup>41</sup> and that essay is the sole work of any substance to address the question of eschatology and Greco-Roman materials. *Brill's New Pauly* includes an entry on "eschatology," but it is a condensed version of Cancik's longer essay in the *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*.<sup>42</sup> I will now spend a moment on Cancik's essay, after which I will turn to the current study.

Cancik's contribution to *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* is in the first part of volume 1 (titled "Apocalypticism in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean"), alongside two other pieces devoted to (1) the roots of apocalypticism in Near Eastern

---

<sup>40</sup> This work has since been revised (2013), still without an entry on eschatology.

<sup>41</sup> Cancik 1998.

<sup>42</sup> The article is a summary of Cancik's longer piece plus a few paragraphs on Jewish, Christian, and Reception topics. Its outline is as follows: A. Term and Subject Matter; B. Graeco-Roman Domain; C. Hebrew Bible and Hellenic Judaism; D. Christianity; E. Reception. If anything, the result of the close juxtaposition of all this material, no matter how briefly presented, only highlights the distinctive nature of *eschaton*-oriented material and non-eschatological other.

myth and (2) Persian apocalypticism. These three studies get the encyclopedia going, setting the stage for Parts 2 and 3 on "Apocalypticism in Ancient Judaism" and "Apocalypticism in Early Christianity." As the only contribution in the volume dedicated to Greek and Roman views, Cancik casts his net extremely wide, referencing works, authors, and practices "from Homer until the end of eternal Rome" (85). He tries to do it all, and the title of his chapter reflects the tripartite understanding of the term eschatology: "The End of the *World*, of *History*, and of the *Individual* in Greek and Roman Antiquity" (italics mine).

Cancik's paper has two sections. The first covers apocalyptic phenomena (e.g., the Sibyls) and individual eschatology (e.g., burial rites, cult of the dead, mystery cults). The second covers all other senses of the *eschaton*. This he separates into myth (e.g., Homer, Hesiod), history (e.g., Hellenistic chronographers, Polybius, models of historical succession, prophecies of Rome's demise), and philosophy (e.g., the Presocratic cosmologies of Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Empedocles, Plato, Seneca the Younger, and Virgil). Note the separation of individual eschatology (combined with his apocalyptic material) on the one hand, and cosmic eschatologies, which emphasize the end of human groups and the world, on the other. This division is repeated in the introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, mentioned above.

Cancik's work is helpful in a number of ways. For one thing, it puts Greco-Roman ideas about the last things on the map, so to speak. For another, he refuses to interpret the material teleologically, as a mere lead-up to Jewish and Christian notions. Further, he is sensitive to the way that the concepts with which he interprets the materials of classical

antiquity have been developed in modernity, mostly by Christians (87), and he criticizes scholars who reduce and polarize Israel and Greece "into a sterile antithesis" (90). From this we can trust that he is trying to understand the Greco-Roman authors on their own terms and in their own contexts. Finally, his work surely exhibits one way to organize the material vis-à-vis the question of eschatology.

While Cancik's synthesis is impressive, the amount that he is trying to cover in the allotted space necessitates leaving much aside and limiting the depth of analysis of what is included. At times this can feel like a smattering of passages taken to illustrate his point, with little or no mention of how they fit into their literary context. For instance, when looking at Hesiod's myth of the metals (or "the races") in the *Works and Days*, he reviews them, mentions their Oriental antecedents, and says that they show that Hesiod stands at the beginning of a Greek "philosophy of history" (105). He says nothing, however, about the rest of the poem and the myth of the metals' place in it. Still, his chapter is in some ways a miniature version of what I had originally set out to do in this dissertation. And if nothing else, his piece underscores the necessity of a closer reading of individual passages both in their broader social and literary contexts.

What about more conceptual aspects of Cancik's use of the term eschatology? Here there is a tension: he employs the term while also admitting a lack of relevant material. On the one hand, and at the very least, Cancik takes it for granted that the term is useful. This is implicit in the first paragraph:

The topics of the following essay are the eschatology and apocalypticism of the Greeks and Romans in classical antiquity. Their eschatology includes ideas (a) concerning the end of the individual and his/her continuation after death, (b)

concerning the end of people, cities, kingdoms, humanity, and the possibility of their renaissance, and (c) concerning the eternity of the world or its annihilation through fire or water and possibly its renewal. The subject of this essay, then, includes cosmology, psychology (the doctrine of souls), and speculation about history from the flood of Deukalion down to the renewal of the world purified through fire (the Stoic *apokatastasis*).

Note the phrases “the eschatology and apocalypticism of the Greeks and Romans” and “their eschatology.” The impression is that “eschatology” is out there in Greco-Roman antiquity, if only we can find it—Cancik assumes we can. This is precisely the kind of taking-for-granted that I am calling into question. Are all narrative and scientific accounts of “the end” necessarily eschatological? Cancik does assert that we must test “the concepts with which the facts and texts of classical antiquity shall be comprehended,” and that “their applicability to classical and non-Christian phenomena must be considered” (87). But there is no substantive critique, aside from pointing to the Christian origins of the terms eschatology and apocalypticism, and Cancik simply defines his use of eschatology as follows: “the word ‘eschatology’ will be used here as a collective term for the ideas that Greeks and Romans developed concerning the death and life to come of individuals, the world, people, and states. Eschatology can be more or less mythical, scientific, philosophical, or religious” (87). Such a use of the term seems quite blunt when compared to its (relatively more) precise use in biblical studies, where the scholar can easily point to texts with detailed, future-oriented, imaginative scenarios, such as, to take one example, the Pauline First Letter to the Thessalonians.

On the other hand, Cancik admits a lack of eschatological material—but, oddly, this does not result in his denying the term’s applicability. Consider the following three points. First, Cancik notes that “Greek mythology developed no twilight of the gods:” the

succession of gods ends with Zeus, and there is no coming Antichrist, no future battle of angels, no returning Elijah or a martial Messiah (86). Nor, I would add, is there anything comparable to the Norse Ragnarök. Second, among Greek and Roman philosophers, none “have suggested a dramatic scenario like the one with which Augustine introduced the last things in the last books of his *Civitas Dei*,” and “a full systematic exposition regarding the end of the world, resurrection, judgment, damnation, and salvation, such as is developed in the supplement to the third part of *Summa Theologiae* of Aquinas (questions 69-99), is not imaginable in Varro’s *Summa* of Roman theology” (86-87). These two elements are important: “a dramatic scenario,” since true eschatology constitutes a type of narrativity on the cosmic level, and the list of traditional Christian eschatology themes (resurrection, judgment, etc.). Cancik’s brief juxtaposition of Augustine and Varro has its own way of pointing up eschatology’s distinctive features by way of contrast. Third, Cancik finds it “striking” that “the Greeks lack a mythical eschatology” (87). I have two responses. First, if Cancik concludes this after analyzing the material, then why cling to the analytical category of eschatology, instead of finding better ways of conceptualizing Greek mythology? Second, why is it “striking”? What if we turn the question around and ask, why is it not striking that anyone would actually have an eschatology? Indeed, eschatological texts such as Daniel and eschatologists such as Jesus of Nazareth and Paul the Apostle, despite their vast influence, were in the minority in the ancient Mediterranean. The non-eschatological text and worldview was the status quo. Cancik’s impressive synthesis leaves me wondering, how does this analysis help me understand any of this material better, taken on its own or together? What



horizon does this analytical window frame bring into view that I otherwise would not have seen, or seen only dimly? I never found a good answer to that question, except to question the category of “eschatology.”

By way of a general response to the history of scholarship that I have just presented, I want to make two final points, the first regarding heuristic devices and the second regarding two salient features of eschatology. First I focus on the heuristic nature of our terms of analysis. Put simply, “eschatology” is a heuristic device. It is not an artifact “out there” in the “real (i.e., material) world” to be searched for, and once discovered, analyzed. Nor therefore should we expect mathematical or scientific precision when attempting to identify and analyze things “eschatological.” Hence, since scholars consciously design and employ such heuristic devices only insofar as they are helpful in our pursuit to understand the material at hand, the criterion for judging their validity is their relative helpfulness in defining material and bringing out its salient features. How helpful is “eschatology?” How helpful is “eschatology” if there is no *eschaton*, no end times, no future moment of decisive change?

If there is no *eschaton*, there is no eschatology. By *eschaton* I simply mean a time in the future constituting a meaningful change (even if that time has already begun in some sense), deliberately conceptualized by a human being. From this perspective, compared to the Jewish and Christian traditions, there is a lack of broad thematic thinking of an *eschaton* (or *eschata*) in the early Greek literary, philosophical, and religious traditions. And of course if there is no Greek *eschaton*, then there is no Greek eschatology. I admit, however, that from this perspective it is quite possible to have non-Jewish and non-

Christian eschatologies. For example, I would be prepared to analyze Stoic theories of *ekpyrosis* with the term eschatology. But Hektor's isolated lines in the *Iliad* to the effect that "there will be a day" (*Iliad* 6.448) do not constitute an eschatology. Simply talking about destruction in the future does not add up to "eschatology." Nor does Hesiod's statement in the *Works and Days*, that Zeus "will destroy this race of men too, when..." Again we are dealing with an isolated statement—and even if it had the potential to be interpreted and expanded into something constituting an eschatological strand of thinking, no Greek thinker left any traces of such an expansion. Moreover, when read in its literary context (which I do later in this study), it is seen that the assertion is an ethical provocation rather than a declarative statement about history. Here too we see that a statement about a future end does not constitute eschatology.

These two elements (future, end) bring me to my final point. I have just highlighted the heuristic nature of eschatology, and previously shown its meaningful application in Jewish and Christian contexts due to the presence there of a family of themes and motifs. Beyond these specific notions, two more fundamental ideas within the concept of eschatology become salient when studying the term's history. Eschatology must necessarily involve (a) a view of *future time* and (b) an *end* (or at least a meaningful *change*, which is experienced as an *end*). These two are not sufficient to constitute eschatology, as I've argued, but are a bare minimum necessity.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, eschatology itself is a genus of a species: eschatology is a view of time (or future time). Better yet, eschatology is a version of temporality. An end-time change in the past would thus not

---

<sup>43</sup> Compare Gowan's reflection on this point (2000, viii-ix).

constitute eschatology. But neither would a view of the future without an *eschaton*. Faced with material that is not properly eschatological but which shows certain thematic affinities, I would suggest that these two elements (“future time” and “the end”) show themselves to be possible objects of inquiry. Early Greek literature contains imaginative scenarios of the world’s end but none of them constitute eschatology, given the definitions I have just reviewed. None of them are future-oriented in the sense of giving an outline of history, even if or no matter how imaginative they seem or claim to be. Nor do the ends in question ever seem to have come to be about a future end to the present order followed by a restoration—so crucial in the Jewish, and hence early Christian, eschatologies. Hence, eschatology as a heuristic device, a conceptual category, a frame for viewing other, real items from antiquity such as texts is not helpful for this material. This study about the world’s end, therefore, is not about eschatology strictly speaking.

#### **IV. Methodology: Sources, Organization, and Approach**

In what could be a long project addressing the basic building blocks of eschatology as a concept (i.e., temporality, periodization, end) and their near-analogues in Greco-Roman literary traditions, in this dissertation I have chosen to focus on a cluster of motifs, stories, and traditions all centered on the theme of the end. The sources are Greek writings from Homer to Aristotle. I do bring in non-Greek texts, both within and without the temporal boundaries of Homer and Aristotle. I do this when there are relevant thematic parallels, but I make no claims of historical influence. The aim of such comparison is to help understand distinctive features of the Greek material, the non-

Greek material, or both. The concept of a broad Mediterranean cultural *koine* underwrites the comparative endeavor, with ample scholarly documentation as of late.<sup>44</sup> This study shows, however, a difference rather than a commonality—even if it is the *eschaton* that comes to appear *sui generis*. Finally, the nature of the sources is limited to texts. A fuller study involving other media and evidence, for example, archaeology, visual art, or linguistics, will have to wait. Yet given the high level of abstraction involved in imagining the world’s end—a task which may never get its head out of the clouds and its feet on the ground, so to speak—, it makes sense for the study to begin with texts anyway.

I organize the sources thematically: the world’s end by Water, War, Eras, and Fire. But this was not my original plan. I first considered a chronological arrangement by text and author: Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Presocratics, and so on. As I studied the sources, however, and began to see certain themes showing up across the authors, this option became less and less attractive for the way that it could diminish the salience of the themes. I then considered a hybrid of chronological and thematic arrangement. My idea was to have theme-based chapters covering a variety of relevant authors but with one author and text as the flagship. For instance, I would cover accounts of the world’s end by water through an initial emphasis on Pindar’s tale of Deukalion and Pyrrha in *Olympian* 9, using it as a kind of central trunk and then branching out from there. Such a mixed organization would have the advantage of allowing careful close readings of certain exemplary texts while also covering a broad range of material. In the end,

---

<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., on Greek material generally but especially cosmogonies López-Ruiz 2010, on Israelite materials Doak 2012. General overviews in Burkert 1992 and West 1997.

however, the risk of over-emphasizing one text in the sub-tradition seemed too great a risk. Moreover, according to what criteria would I choose the flagship accounts? Along with such thoughts, the more I studied the material, the more I noticed a few conspicuous end motifs: flood, the Trojan War, fire, and periodization. While no scholar aims to pigeon-hole material, one must still categorize. Hence, a strictly thematic arrangement became increasingly reasonable and desirable. This is how I ended up with one chapter devoted to each of the four themes mentioned above. Let me say, however, that I do not thereby implicitly claim that these four motifs represent *Ur* typologies. I do not believe that there is one, originative, pure version of the Flood, from which all “others” somehow derive and depend—likewise for the Trojan War. Yet done responsibly—i.e., with due attention to crucial contexts, historical, literary, and otherwise—such thematizing can be illuminating. After all, traditions do exist. Story types do exist. Various Greek authors know of the character Deukalion, to stick with his example, and his story of a flood. And these authors vary the elements for their own purposes. Scholars can gather and analyze multiple versions of a story or account, recognize their similarities (which suggest their being categorized together) and differences (which illuminate the most important aspects of a given piece), and detect change over time—without positing an archetype.

Having settled on these four categories, I make a deliberate choice to arrange them in such a way that represents a kind of temporality—in “cosmic” chronology, beginning with flood (since mythologically it happens “close” to creation), moving to war (which ended the previous, heroic generation), then to eras (answering the necessary temporal need to know “when are we living now?”), and ending with fire (because it segues nicely

into a bona fide Greek eschatology among the Stoics). I admit the artificial nature of this choice, but such an arrangement further shows that there are world's end narratives and motifs used variously over time, and my readings will demonstrate this. It also demonstrates that they are not in service of formulating a future era. For example, religiously, there is no myth that Zeus will act in the future on behalf of an oppressed community. Zeus is imagined as the last king (like Marduk in the Mesopotamian *Enuma Elish*), and his reign represents the finality of the present epoch: human beings are established under him and his justice, and is paradigmatic for the human realm.

Within the chapters I organize the sources chronologically, and do close readings of the texts—as close as is reasonable given the amount I have to cover in each chapter. This means that while I have certainly done my best to be current on the scholarship on each author or text, it is obviously impossible to be an absolute expert in each and every one. My interpretive aim throughout has been to ask, What does X author or Y text say about the end, and why? This question has yielded a few recurring themes, but it must be stated that beyond the theme of the end there is a lack of other thematic coherence in terms of purpose and content. In other words, I cannot assert anything universal and grand such as, for example, that when the Greeks talked about the end they talked about hope, or the like. In this regard, I would compare the strong connection between Christian eschatology and the theme of hope: it may not always be there, but it is always close at hand.

That said, within each strand there are trends. Greek stories about Deukalion's Flood, studied in Chapter 2, tend to be told in service of a group identity, a narrative to ground

the otherwise culturally constructed notion of “we” into a homogeneous, more naturally occurring entity. Contrast such a past-future relationship with the past-future relationship of the Flood to the *eschaton* in the Christian Gospel of Matthew where the Flood in Genesis is taken as a model for certain end-time scenarios. The Gospel’s author uses the Flood to make a statement about the future. The strand of thinking about the Trojan War, part of Chapter 3, also grounded the present in a certain view of the past—the poet of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, for example, constructed the “Hellenic” identity based on the heroes from that War. Yet here too the story’s main event remains a past moment, even if with an important present presence. As I show in that Chapter, the Greek tradition of the *past* Trojan War more resembles other eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamian myths of *past* destruction than it does the *future* myth of an eschatological war, as seen for example in the end-time battle in the War Scroll from Qumran. But if eschatology were going to be applicable to any early Greek material, it would likely be for the subject of Chapter 4, on the topic of periodization. For, as Joseph noted (whom I quoted above), eschatology fundamentally partakes of periodization. Yet here we see the non-eschatological nature of Greek thinking in three accounts of periodization for three different purposes: ideology, ethics, and anthropology. Fire as a world-ending scenario, the subject of Chapter 5, shows two strong trends: one mythological (Just Zeus vs Watery Snake), and one natural-philosophical (fire as *archē* and natural substance). To answer the question I posed to myself on reading the absence of Greco-Roman materials in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, none of this adds up to a chapter on “Greek Eschatology” that we can sit next to the other chapters there on “The Eschatology of the

New Testament Church,” “Eschatology in the Early Church Fathers,” “Jewish Eschatology,” and “Muslim Eschatology.” But the study has provoked many questions and avenues of future research on the question of eschatology and the early Greek tradition which I have not been able to pursue here. I will close this chapter with a brief reflection on the more salient of these possibilities and problems.

### **V. Ways Forward: Future Time, Future Hope, and Religious Discourse**

Based on my understanding of the material after this study I suggest the following topics as potential ways forward: eschatological analogues, the integration of other types of evidence, and religion.

First, a study that aimed to address concepts relevant to eschatological aspects would have to address (a) views of the future and (b) sources of hope. The study of the future could take the form of a phenomenological analysis. For this we have good conceptual direction in the works of the philosopher Calvin Schrag.<sup>45</sup> The historian Steven Kern has successfully applied such a phenomenological framework to a cultural history of Western Europe and America for the period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the outbreak of WWI.<sup>46</sup> Another avenue of approach to the future would be studies of temporality and narrativity, employing, for example, Ricouer’s notions of narrative time or Bahktin’s notion of the chronotype.<sup>47</sup> I cannot speak to the heuristic value of any of these approaches because I have not thought with them; I am merely suggesting here that all three—phenomenology,

---

<sup>45</sup> Especially Schrag 1969.

<sup>46</sup> Kern 2003.

<sup>47</sup> A good place to begin is the volume of essays devoted to narrative in Richardson 2002.



narrative time, and the chronotype—suggest potential orienting procedures and models of analysis.

Connected with the future is hope: how do specific texts or communities express their individual and collective hope for well-being in the future? What did Greek communities envisage as their sources for hope? What language is used to express it? A sub-topic regarding hope would be responses to perceived communal crises, especially imperial domination—this is an ineradicable element in the growth of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, and, as I noted above in passing, is a central concern in Christian discourses about eschatology. An interesting comparison could be examined: how did Greeks respond in literature to perceived imperial domination, and what about a specific case study of Persia here? There was much identity-forming among both Hellenic and Israelite groups in the Persian period. How much was “due” to the Persian threat, and what were the directions that these groups and their subgroups took in response? And what is the legacy of this response? However they are construed and aimed at, I would suggest views of the future and sources of hope as insightful analogues to the study of “eschatological” elements in non-eschatological texts and traditions.

Second, there is the question of sources. In terms of texts, the Book of Daniel could helpfully be used as a comparandum. There is no such thing as an archetype eschatological text, but Daniel is without a doubt one of the most important examples of eschatological materials that we possess (and many later authors draw on its images). It would have particular relevance for my chapters on war and on eras, and would perhaps be better than the War Scroll in the former. On the Greek side, Pindar’s poetry seems to

provide a rich source for thinking through individual and communal futures, and given its distinctive standing amidst fiction and fact, between mythic stories and historical locales, it could serve as the vanguard on the use of mixed media investigations. With this in mind, I want to raise the question of other sources of evidence. In particular, how to integrate the literary analysis I do here with the study of other sources and fields, such as epigraphy and the history of religion. The notions we see in literature—do we see any of these in the inscriptions? What about cult activity or prayer? And does it change over time, or place?

Finally, religion deserves a special mention both because the earliest eschatological phenomena were fundamentally framed in a religious discourse (even if folks over time have tried to talk about eschatology without religion, reducing it to scientific cosmology or the like), and also because of the use of religion as a term of analysis in this study. Must eschatology be religious? Does it make sense to talk about non-religious eschatology? This kind of question could bring certain clarity to the discussion of eschatology, since it involves questions of god, divine justice, and so on.

But religion itself is a contested term, and so I must clarify what I mean when I use it. I follow Bruce Lincoln here.<sup>48</sup> He identifies at least four domains which would constitute religious phenomena—discourse, practice, community, and institution. In the main, only the first is relevant to my study. When I refer to “religion” or describe something as “religious” I mean, to quote Lincoln here, “a discourse whose concerns transcend the human, temporal, and contingent and that claims for itself a similarly transcendent

---

<sup>48</sup> Lincoln 2006, 5-8.

status.” Such a discourse, it should be noted, may or may not be “about” god or gods. The crucial feature is the claim to more-than-human epistemological status. This is an important axis in claims about time, especially the future. And this points to the verb “imagining” in the title of my study: things past and things future (even many things present) are by definition not in front of us, not readily available for examination, for knowing. Thus, we must imagine them. No matter if the speaker claims a narrative style or scientific discourse, it is worthwhile to examine such imaginings. This is the departure of the current study: why imagine the world’s end? Religious or non, scholarly or not, we can agree with the Buddhist surfer: the end of the world always makes a good story.

Yet, there may be more than the pleasure of a good story at stake. For, as Collins and his co-editors of *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* point out, apocalyptic and eschatological notions are “dangerous” and “almost ineradicable from Western society.”<sup>49</sup> They are dangerous “because of their innate power to foster self-righteousness among the elect and at times violent opposition to, even persecution of, those identified as belonging to Satan’s party. Apocalypticism has been the source of hope and courage for the oppressed, and—not *too* paradoxically—intransigence and savagery on the part of some oppressors.”<sup>50</sup> But are they “ineradicable” too? Collins et. al. argue that “a critical retrieval of apocalypticism is a major challenge confronting contemporary religious thought: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim.”<sup>51</sup> Here’s another critical response, perhaps no less challenging: to imagine a time before eschatology.

---

<sup>49</sup> Collins 1998b, x-xi.

<sup>50</sup> Collins 1998b, x.

<sup>51</sup> Collins 1998b, xi.

## CHAPTER 2: WATER

### I. Introduction: The World's End by Water

The world's end by water is perhaps best known through the myth of the Deluge and its survivor.<sup>52</sup> But the tradition of the Deluge has its own variations, and, depending on one's interests, can even be classified as a species of various genera. For example, we can think of it in terms of other Myths of Destruction, including the Greek myth of the Trojan War, or the genus of natural catastrophes such as earthquakes and volcanic activity.<sup>53</sup> Due to the variety of flood narratives, I follow Joshua Chen in using “flood” or “deluge” (with minuscule first letters) to refer to destructive floods in general, and “Flood” or “Deluge” (with majuscule) to denote the primeval Flood myth in particular.<sup>54</sup> Aside from this basic dichotomy between the Flood and floods, descriptive identifiers—such as Sumerian, Babylonian, Mesopotamian, biblical, Near Eastern, Greek, and so on—must be given careful attention, and I therefore employ such terminology deliberately.

But stories about the Flood and floods are not the only accounts of the world's end by water in antiquity.<sup>55</sup> Water itself is an important source of origin and end in broader

---

<sup>52</sup> The broadest overview of the Flood myth, with a worldwide scope, is Dundes 1998. For the myth in central and western Eurasia, see Martinez and Luttikhuisen, eds. 1998; West 1997, 489-93

<sup>53</sup> I will discuss the Trojan War as a myth of destruction in the next chapter. On natural catastrophes in antiquity, see Sonnabend 1999.

<sup>54</sup> Chen 2013, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Neither Flood tradition, nor exactly Primeval Waters (although more related to the Primeval than to the Flood) is the dichotomy between Fresh and Salt water, evidenced in the *Iliad* and elsewhere; see Fenno 2005.

eastern Mediterranean and western Asian thought.<sup>56</sup> Hence we also see the Primeval Waters tradition, manifested in part via the great Combat myth and in a more scientifically-oriented mode of speculation about the world's natural order. I treat the first of these, i.e., versions of a Combat Myth, in my later chapter on fire, since in the Greek tradition the watery villain of the Combat Myth is overcome by Zeus' lightning fire. Thus the world's end by water is really the world's *near* end by water, and *actual* salvation by fire. The Storm God's fire always trumps the Snakey Monster's fire. As for the second, i.e., the philosophically-oriented thinking about the world's end by water, it dovetails with flood traditions, and so will be covered in the last section of the present chapter.

Here I follow three trends of thinking about the world's end by water in the archaic and classical Greek material. First, I analyze a passage in the *Iliad* thought to contain traces of the Mesopotamian Flood myth; this Flood functions as a tale of annihilation of a previous race of human beings. I then turn to the genealogical Flood tradition, centered on the Flood survivor and his descendants; this motif, prominent in the eastern Mediterranean after the collapse of the late Bronze age civilizations, is not about the *destruction* of a race, but the *construction* of a group's identity. The third, and final, section traces the Flood and floods in the Greek philosophical tradition whose authors subsume the Flood into a mechanical view of the world—it becomes one natural occurrence, albeit an outstanding one, among innumerable instances of catastrophes.

These traditions seem ripe for growing themes of destructive end-time scenarios. Does anything come to fruition in this regard? Only in a limited way. While Greek

---

<sup>56</sup> Wyatt 2001, 95-146.

authors make various uses of Deukalion's Deluge and other flood accounts, the great emphasis of the three trends I just mentioned is on Deukalion and his Flood as the *beginning* of Greek collective identity. This identity is construed differently in different times and places, but, thanks to an ingenious Flood-based discourse prominent in the eastern Mediterranean in the archaic period, Deukalion is almost always near at hand, even until the temporal barrier of this study, i.e., Aristotle. The narrative and philosophic accounts are thus more about the possibilities of *origin after the Flood or floods* than about what the waters destroyed.

## **II. The Watery Demise of Homer's Demigods**

The exception to the last statement is my first piece of evidence. Taken together, the end of *Iliad* 11 and the beginning of *Iliad* 12 feature a stark juxtaposition of perspectives on what is at stake on the Trojan plain: a movement from the smallest unit of concern in the immediate fighting—i.e., the individual human life—to a grand narrative continuing after Troy is sacked and all the Argives have gone home (or, in the case of many unfortunate souls, died). Book 11 ends with a microscopic focus on Patroklos healing the wound of Eurypylos. The emphasis is on Eurypylos as one distinctive person, his physical body and blood, his open wound, and Patroklos' knife, the cut into flesh, a small rooty plant in his palms—and the fact that it works: Patroklos heals Eurypylos and relieves his pain.

And bracing the captain, arm around his waist,  
he helped him toward his shelter. An aide saw them  
and put osme oxbides down. Patroclus stretched him out,  
knelt with a knife and cut the sharp, stabbing arrow  
out of Eurypylus' thigh and washed the wound clean

of the dark running blood with clear warm water.  
Pounding it in his palms, he crushed a bitter root  
and covered over the gash to kill his comrade's pain,  
a cure that fought off every kind of pain . . .  
and the wound dried and flowing blood stopped.  
(11.842-48, trans. R. Fagles)

This intimate, detail-oriented scene then functions as the transition to Book 12. Once there, however, Homer immediately zooms out—*way* out—and gives a picture of the broad narrative of the Trojan conflict, not just in terms of *one* fighter's experience of *one* wounded leg, but in terms of the fate of an *entire generation* of human beings.

And so under shelter now Menoetius' fighting son  
was healing Eurypylos' wounds. But hordes of men fought on,  
the Achaean and Trojan infantry going hand-to-hand.  
(12.1-3, trans. R. Fagles)

What is of interest to me here is the general narrative to which Homer then connects his particular *Iliad* story. Moving from the *tent* that protects Patroklos and Eurypylos to the *wall* that protects the Greeks, Homer says that it could not last much longer. The profound relief that readers see Patroklos so kindly bringing to Eurypylos is given new (sad) perspective in the context of what is happening—and what will happen—outside the tent. Eurypylos' reprieve will at once seem minuscule and transient—and so all the more dear. In the following passage, notice (a) the *reason* for the wall's pending failure, (b) *who* is responsible, and (c) how Homer integrates the Trojan War into a broader narrative:

—they [the Achaeans] never gave the gods  
the splendid sacrifice the immortals craved,  
that the fortress might protect the fast ships  
and the bulking plunder heaped behind its shield.

Defying the deathless gods they built that wall  
 and so it stood there steadfast no long time.  
 While Hector still lived and Achilles raged on  
 and the warlord Priam's citadel went unstormed,  
 so long the Achaeans' rampart stood erect.  
 But once the best of the Trojan captains fell,  
 and many Achaeans died as well while some survived,  
 and Priam's high walls were stormed in the tenth year  
 and the Argives set sail for the native land they loved—  
 then, at last, Poseidon and Lord Apollo launched their plan  
 to smash the rampart, flinging into it all the rivers' fury.  
 All that flow from the crests of Ida down to breaking surf,  
 the Rhesus and the Heptaporus, Caresus and the Rhodius,  
 Grenicus and Aesepus, and the shining god Scamander  
 and Simois' tides where tons of oxhide shields  
 and horned helmets tumbled deep in the river silt  
 and a race of men who seemed half god, half mortal.  
 The channels of all those rivers—Apollo swung them round  
 into one mouth and nine days hurled their flood against the wall  
 and Zeus came raining down, cloudburst powering cloudburst,  
 the faster to wash that rampart out to open sea.

(12.6-26, trans. R. Fagles)

What matters here is that the Achaeans built their wall without involving the gods; that the gods will thus destroy that wall with a flood; and that the generation of men involved are specifically called demigods (ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν, 23). What we have, then, is a story in which the grand works of Homer's demigods drown, so to speak, in a god-sent flood. Down in the Achaean camp, Patroklos ran water over Eurypylos' wounded leg and the blood stopped. But when Apollo runs rivers of water over the Achaeans' wall, the goal is not healing, but punishment. The passage raises the question, therefore, of how much bloodflow could have been prevented had the Greeks consulted the gods on the project of building a wall for protection—how many heroic souls could have been saved had the heroes themselves stuck to their human limits?



Ruth Scodel has demonstrated that these opening lines of *Iliad* 12 contain echoes of the Near Eastern Flood myth.<sup>57</sup> An important aspect of her argument is Homer's mention of "a race of demigods:"

κάππεσον ἐν κονίῃσι καὶ ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν  
(12.23)

This is the only use of the word in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but its use in other early Greek poetry allows for a good grasp of its semantic range. Who are the demigods? The first question is, should we take the word literally? That is, must a demigod be a human being with one divine and one mortal parent? Hans Van Wees has shown that the answer is a decisive no.<sup>58</sup> He points out, first, that the term *always* exists in the plural to denote an entire generation of human beings, and, second, that this generation even includes persons and families without any divine ancestry. Incorporating Van Wees' observations, Jan Bremmer demonstrated that the more technical threefold classification of god-demigod-man is not evident until at least Isocrates.<sup>59</sup> The simple conclusion, then, is that "ἡμίθεοι is a normal designation of the older mythological generation."<sup>60</sup> Now, the most famous version of this previous generation's collective demise is the Trojan War. I will investigate the Trojan War as a myth of destruction in the following chapter.

For now, I return to Scodel's insight about the Achaian wall and the Flood. I just stated that the typical end to the demigods is the Trojan War—but the point here is that this passage in Homer gives us a glimpse of alternative Greek traditions in which the

---

<sup>57</sup> Scodel 1982. Martin West (1997, 377-80) has since argued that Homer got the idea for this episode in the actual historical event of Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon in 689 BC.

<sup>58</sup> Van Wees 2006, 364-66.

<sup>59</sup> Bremmer 2006, 24-25.

<sup>60</sup> Bremmer 2006, 24.

Flood, rather than the War, ends the heroic generation. Scodel uses the phrase “myth of destruction,” which nicely encapsulates a number of narratives about mankind’s collective demise in the ancient Mediterranean and Mesopotamian world.<sup>61</sup>

But the association of Homer’s *demigods* with *water* in particular makes the Flood myth connection surer.<sup>62</sup> Here is a Homeric reflection of broader Mediterranean traditions about a previous, heroic race of human beings, who are destroyed. Scodel, followed by more detailed analysis on the biblical side by Robert Hendel<sup>63</sup> and Brian Doak,<sup>64</sup> rightly points out an important parallel with Genesis in this regard. Consider the introductory sentences to the biblical Flood:

When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. Then the LORD said, “My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of reknown.

(6:1-4, trans. New Revised Standard Version)

These heroic warriors of reknown who take human wives for themselves are analogous to the Greek demigods.<sup>65</sup> Both are destroyed, although not necessarily completely, and in both cases some kind of impiety is involved. In Genesis, the problem is, as Hendel phrases it, mankind’s “evil imagination.”<sup>66</sup> Mankind is of course a broader category than the heroic warriors, but they are surely implicated in the mess. In *Iliad* 12, the problem is

---

<sup>61</sup> Thus, the title of her article, “The Achaean Wall and the Myth of Destruction.” But she also uses the phrase to refer specifically to the Flood myth (48).

<sup>62</sup> Scodel 1982, 48.

<sup>63</sup> Hendel 1987.

<sup>64</sup> Doak 2012.

<sup>65</sup> The best current discussion of this is Doak 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Hendel 1987, 24.

that the Achaean demigods built their wall without sacrificing to the gods or seeking divine advice. The parallel is not exact, since in the Greek text it is not mankind generally but only the Achaeans who are guilty; plus, in the *Iliad* the specific *act* (not just moral disposition) leading to divine anger is made clear. Scodel thought that the impiety was mere “motive-hunting.”<sup>67</sup> But we need not assert this if we recognize that one of the main functions of the demigods in the Mediterranean *koine* seems to have been to provoke thought about issues of impiety and divine-human relations; they are a good cast of characters for this, given the fact that they are, paradoxically, at once merely and more than human. They are, therefore, capable of nearly super-human feats, but nevertheless must still act within the bounds of human ethics. Their larger than life aura draws us to them as ethical exempla, but their human nature keeps them relatable. (Or so the theory might go.)

Moreover, the narrative in *Iliad* also resembles the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, perhaps more so since a building is involved, as well as issues of human over-reaching and a negative divine response.<sup>68</sup> But what adds even more weight to the Achaean wall—Tower of Babel parallel is the fact that in both the deities destroy, not the *demigods themselves* as in the myths of human destruction such as the Flood, but the *works* of the demigods. This is a point of paramount importance, and one which I have not seen in the literature. We see, then, stories about the demise of the demigods on the one hand, and the demise of human creations on the other. I ought, therefore, to amend the title of this section from “The Watery Demise of Homer’s Demigods” to “The Watery

---

<sup>67</sup> Scodel 1982, 34.

<sup>68</sup> Scodel 1982, 46.

Demise of the Works of Homer's Demigods.” For these are two distinct sub plots of a story type.

While the passage in *Iliad* 12 comes close to saying that Homer's demigods drown with their wall in Poseidon's and Apollo's flood, it does not. We must pay attention to the Greek: the demigods are tucked away inside a subordinate temporal clause. Here, Homer lists all the rivers that Apollo and Poseidon will combine into one in order to wash away the wall. Just after the final item, the River Simois, we get:

καὶ Σιμόεις ὅθι πολλὰ βοάγρια καὶ τρυφάλειαι  
κάππεσον ἐν κονίῃσι καὶ ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν

and the Simois **where** many oxhide shields and horned helmets  
fell in the dust—along with the race of demigod men.  
(22-23)

The rivers combine in the place where the demigods fought—and died—with their vividly imagined shields and helmets. Thus, Poseidon and Apollo do not destroy the race of demigods; they destroy their wall. But the demigods are listed, ironically, alongside their gear. The Greek gives the impression, through its positioning the demigods last, that the demigods perhaps were not all they were thought to be. Or that, while they were great, nevertheless in death they are just as their own physical possessions: long gone, even the signs of their greatness washed away with the wall they built, in vain, to protect their ultimately fragile lives. This feeling was also invoked from the stark juxtaposition between the end of Book 11 and the beginning of Book 12, with which I opened this section. Far from inchoherent and “motive-hunting,” then, the passage even evokes some of the poem's larger themes, many summed up in its protagonist, Achilles: if my life is

short, despite being great, what in the end will be worth it? If I am a larger than life warrior, but cannot recognize anything larger myself, than is my ethical greatness commensurate with my physical stature?

But I should not gloss over the fact that this story type, as represented in both Genesis and here in *Iliad* 12, is a religious story: there is a more-than-human element to both (i.e., Apollo, Poseidon, and Yahweh), as well as an appropriate ethical application rooted precisely in the religious discourse (i.e., in the *Iliad* proper respect for the gods evidenced by sacrifice).<sup>69</sup> It is possible for us scholars in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to read the texts as non-religious literature, even for edifying purposes (although in that case not necessarily as scholars), but we cannot fail to try to imagine how religious readers might have, or may still, read them. In this regard, the “demigods” and the heroic “warriors of reknown” become paradigmatic figures in a world where human over-reaching can be regarded not simply as *unjust* (by human standards—as would hold up, say, in a court of law), but even—and here is the specifically religious evaluation—*impious*.

That said, for any reader of the *Iliad*, ancient or modern, religious or non, the juxtaposition of Patroklos’ focused, comrade-oriented scene with the god’s-eye view of the demise of the demigods must remain poignant, even sad. For, even if in the larger narrative of heroic annihilation, Patroklos is just one individual, he is nevertheless an individual—a literary character who is above all—remembered for his kindness (*Iliad* 19.300). And that may be worth remembering. This story—of the Greek demigods, their larger than life deeds, and their cataclysmic demise—warrants more discussion in

---

<sup>69</sup> I mean religious according to the understanding laid out in Chapter 1. That understanding is derived from Lincoln 2003, 5-8.

connection with the Trojan War, and I will pursue this topic in the next chapter. For now, I return to an aspect of the Flood story that is absent from Homer's Diluvian echoes: its main protagonist.

### **III. Deukalion's Deluge & the End of Anonymity**

I'd like to begin again by asking a simple enough question: what can you do with a Flood myth? In some Mesopotamian king lists, the Flood functions as a chronological watershed in terms of human life spans, and kings are listed "before the Flood" and "after the Flood." The before and after features a change in human life span: before the Deluge men lived for hundreds, even thousands, of years; but after the Flood the human life span was limited to what we nowadays are used to. In the Babylonian epic *Atrahasis*, the Flood is but one of several *instruments* that the gods use to wipe out humankind: the gods first try plague, then famine, and finally the Flood. In the Standard Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the emphasis is on the Flood survivor, Utnapishtim: he alone survived, and therefore has special wisdom about eternal life and how best to live—that's why Gilgamesh seeks him out in tablet XI. Here alone we see three different uses of the Flood: to mark a decisive change in history; to provide characters in a story with a tool to deal with other characters; and to emphasize the primeval, almost other-worldly wisdom of the Deluge's human survivor.

Joshua Chen divides these early traditions into the chronological and the mythological.<sup>70</sup> The chronological tradition, exemplified in the W-B 444 version of the

---

<sup>70</sup> Chen 2013.

Sumerian King List, separates world history into two eras, the ante diluvian and the post diluvian. The tradition Chen calls the mythological, which is at work in the *Atrahasis Epic*, narrates a flood catastrophe “believed to have wiped out the whole world except for a few survivors in the primeval time of origins.”<sup>71</sup> There are, of course, myriad versions of these traditions, in accordance with the aims of every text. It is sufficient here just to point out the simple reality of variations in terms of function, as well as these broad trends of chronology and mythology.

There are, however, other uses for a Flood story. Indeed, while it is widely recognized that the Flood myth has its origins in Mesopotamia, Guy Darshan has recently shown that Greek and biblical authors in particular make *novel* use of the Flood survivor as a genealogical progenitor in projects of ethnic identity.<sup>72</sup> We can add this trend of identity formation via genealogy to Chen’s chronology and mythology.<sup>73</sup> Darshan speaks in particular of a body of writings that he classifies as a “genealogical-historic genre,” whose “principal goal” is “to outline the identity of the nation or ethnic group.”<sup>74</sup> Foremost among these documents is the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* and the biblical book of Genesis. It must be stressed that the formation of ethnic identity is not a function of either the Flood or its survivor in extant Mesopotamian accounts, and likely reflects the importance of building imaginative communities after the collapse of the Late Bronze age civilizations.<sup>75</sup> In the wake of whatever catastrophes befell the peoples in the eastern

---

<sup>71</sup> Chen 2013, 4.

<sup>72</sup> Darshan 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Yet another use is the Flood survivor as a culture hero, bringing the arts of civilization back to the devastated population group; see *EGM* 2, 116 for Deukalion in this role.

<sup>74</sup> Darshan 2013, 534.

<sup>75</sup> On this point, see also Finkelberg 2005, 161-76.

Mediterranean, thinkers in Greece and the Levant began rebuilding collective identity by basing their people group in the survivor of the mythical Deluge.

In this Greek and biblical genealogical tradition, the Flood myth tells the story of the *end* of anonymity. But for the Greeks, it simultaneously tells the story of the *beginning* of the end of the demigods, since the heroic era begins with Deukalion's Deluge and ends with the Trojan War (discussed briefly in the previous section). It is this line of thinking about the great mythological Deluge that stuck in the Greek tradition during the archaic and classical periods. And we can see it at work in the archaic poetry of Hesiod and Pindar, the mythographical tradition of the sixth and fifth centuries, and in the historiography of Herodotos and Thucydides. Again, the point to be stressed here is that, while we are so used to thinking of Noah and Deukalion as ancestral figures, as if this fact is nothing new, vis-a-vis the Mediterranean and Mesopotamian literary context, this is actually an innovation. Moreover, the fact that we have to make this point is perhaps evidence of just how successful these projects of genealogy-based identity were.

#### **(a) Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women***

The text that started this trajectory in the Greek tradition is the enigmatic, because so fragmentary, Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*.<sup>76</sup> I just made the point that for the Greeks Deukalion was a figure of origin, not end, and this is manifest in the *Catalogue* specifically. More particularly, however, Deukalion and his Flood is the beginning, rather than the end, of the heroic generations. The text itself is bracketed by two cataclysmic

---

<sup>76</sup> I do not mean to imply that the text was not created *ex nihilo*. Still, the circumstances of its production are largely unknown to us. For a recent assessment see Ormand 2014, 1-15.



events: the Flood and the Trojan War.<sup>77</sup> Note the difference in imagined chronology with the biblical version from Genesis, also featuring, even if muted, the fate of a heroic generation (I put a question mark after the Flood for the *Catalogue* because we are not sure if it was actually in the poem, a topic I discuss below):

**Table 1: Imagined chronology in the Hesiodic *Catalogue* and Genesis.**

<b><u>Hes. Cat.</u></b>	<b>Event:</b> Flood (?)	<b>Period:</b> Deukalion survives; progenitor of Hellenic peoples; the heroic period of divine/heroic mixing	<b>Event:</b> Trojan War ends divine/heroic mixing and the race of demigods
<b><u>Genesis</u></b>	<b>Period:</b> divine/heroic mixing	<b>Event:</b> Flood ends divine/heroic mixing as well as mankind for their “evil imagination”	<b>Period:</b> Noah survives; progenitor of biblical people

We can see that there is a basic association between the warriors of old and the Flood, but the traditions construe them differently. Among the Greeks the heroic generation obviously gained enormous importance, within both art and cult, while among the Israelites, at least as represented in Genesis, the tradition of heroes was suppressed.<sup>78</sup> The basic timelines, seen from the table above are: for the *Catalogue*, Flood—Ethnic Identity & Demigods—Trojan War; for Genesis, Demigods—Flood—Ethnic Identity. While both texts create national identity after the Flood, through its survivor, one important difference is what the Flood brings to an end. In the bible, the Flood ends the demigods (and humanity writ large). But in the *Catalogue*, the Flood is only the beginning of the

<sup>77</sup> Clay 2004, 167-8.

<sup>78</sup> On this suppression, see Doak 2012.

demigods. What, then, did the Flood end, if anything? I submit: “Hellenic” anonymity. In other words, Deukalion and his offspring give the Greeks, as “Hellenes,” a name—and puts other non-Hellenic populations in their place too.

The *Catalogue* poet sets out to write precisely about the race of demigods, beginning his poem with Deukalion and ending it with the Trojan War. We know that Deukalion was an important figure because we have fragments referring to him. But what about his Flood? Here we are in aporia, with no fragments about the event, and scholars are accordingly hesitant to take a stand either way.<sup>79</sup> But does it matter? I do not think it does. Brian Doak notes that just the mention of Deukalion would ensure for future readers at least the cataclysmic themes of the *Catalogue*, and hence the Flood as one of those cataclysms.<sup>80</sup> But more importantly, it does not matter because the Flood, as an event, is not what does the work, so to speak, in the genealogical-historic genre. Instead, Deukalion, as a personal progenitor, is the main thing. To see what is distinctive here, we could perhaps note that in the Babylonian *Atrahasis*, both the Flood and its survivor are important to the narrative—the Flood as one of the instruments used to annihilate the human race, and *Atrahasis* as the human person who survives and guarantees the continuance of the human race generally. But since the *Catalogue*’s task is to delineate a common Hellenic identity, articulated in terms of personal connection to, and ultimately issuing from, Deukalion, it is enough to have him.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Moreover, there really aren’t any arguments to deal with, just personal impressions. See, for example, West 1985, 55-56 (who thinks the Flood probably was not in the *Catalogue*) and D’Alessio 2005, 220 (who thinks the Flood probably was).

<sup>80</sup> Doak 2012, 132, n. 64.

<sup>81</sup> Further on the function of this type of literature with specific reference to the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, see West 1985, 11-30; Finkelberg 2005. And I have already referenced the work of Guy Darshan (2013).

Just to say a word about the nature of this way of construing collective identity. Nearly three decades ago now, West had noted that genealogies have a limited appeal to modern audiences; that we do not see them as a legitimate source of either entertainment or of knowledge about the past.<sup>82</sup> And Finkelberg hints at this modern mentality too, pointing out that “*the dry and apparently uninspiring material of the genealogies was hardly less important than the poems of Homer.*”<sup>83</sup> But when we consider the specific uses for the genealogy of the Flood survivor in service of, not just personal, but collective identity, we can make the comparison more acutely. For surely the interest in genealogy continues among people at the family level. So that is not the issue. Perhaps we have such a difficult time relating to his way of thinking, then, because we think of collective (but especially *national*) identity in terms of *impersonal* states, not *personal* connections.

Be that as it may, since West’s signature study of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, where he makes his observation about the modern stance toward genealogical thinking, scholars have gained much ground in explaining the genealogical phenomenon. While a vertical mode can be seen in king lists, whose interest is to emphasize continuity of reign, the genealogical-historic approach of the *Catalogue* and Genesis represents a horizontal structure of personal relations among otherwise independent locales. Its aim is to provide these independent-minded communities with an image of collective identification—I say “image” deliberately, to emphasize the constructed and socially conventional nature of the enterprise. This question of Greek identity, especially with reference to the concept of ethnicity, has received a lot of attention recently, for example in the works of Edith Hall,

---

<sup>82</sup> West 1985, 7-8.

<sup>83</sup> Finkelberg 2005, 24, italics mine.

Jonathan Hall, Irad Malkin, Jeremy McInerney, and Margalit Finkelberg.<sup>84</sup> A central question is identifying the criterion or criteria on which a definition of ethnicity ought to be based: common descent?,<sup>85</sup> something like ‘culture?’ or ‘shared historical experience’,<sup>86</sup> territory?<sup>87</sup> It has even been questioned whether or not we ought to be using the terms “ethnic group” and “ethnicity” to describe the archaic Greek context.<sup>88</sup>

The problem is that, while all of these are in some sense necessary, none are of themselves sufficient to account for the heterogeneity of the Greek ethnic landscape. For, underlying the image of a homogeneous ethnic group unified under their single ancestor Deukalion is the fact of ethnic difference even within the group which at some point in the archaic period came to designate itself as “Hellenes.” How, then, to deal with this heterogeneity? The first step is to acknowledge it, which even certain ancient Greeks themselves did,<sup>89</sup> and the second is to use a model of group identity that incorporates the multiple strands of ancestry, language, cult, historical experience, myths, and territory. Finkelberg provides this, examining “various manifestations of group identity as articulated through shared self-identification, shared language, shared cult practices and the foundational myth.”<sup>90</sup> This kind of approach considers the basic elements of human discourse and practice (covered by Finkelberg’s language, foundational myth, and cult

---

<sup>84</sup> E. Hall 1989; J. Hall 1997 and 2002; Malkin 1998; McInerney 1999 and 2001; Finkelberg 2005. The signature study on Greek ethnicity, representing the broad spectrum of scholarly opinions about the function of ethnicity as a human construct, is Malkin 2001. See also, more broadly on Greek kinship-based diplomacy and myth, Jones 1999 and Patterson 2010; but, as these authors acknowledge, the phenomenon is not limited to the Greeks—insightful in this regard is Amanda Podany’s study (2010) of how Mesopotamian and Near Eastern kings from c. 2300-1300 BC construed their relationships in personal terms, i.e., as brothers and friends.

<sup>85</sup> E.g., Hall 1997, 25.

<sup>86</sup> E.g., Malkin 2003, 66.

<sup>87</sup> E.g., McInerney 2001.

<sup>88</sup> Finkelberg 2005, 18, 20.

<sup>89</sup> Herodotos 6.53-4; Plato, *Menexenus* 245d; with Finkelberg 2005, 35-7.

<sup>90</sup> Finkelberg 2005, 16. Fowler 1998 and Hall 2002 also work with models that do not depend on the monopoly of a single criterion.

practices), as well as space-bound elements of place. On the topic of terminology, the archaic Greek context required what we may classify “multi-ethnic integration.”<sup>91</sup>

What has any of this to do with Deukalion? Among the interplay of the elements of practice, territory, foundation myths, and common descent, Deukalion provides the “Hellenes” with their singular common ancestry. His singularity is a powerful ideological antidote to the heterogeneous reality just mentioned. Finkelberg shows the kind of dexterity this task requires of the *Catalogue* poet.<sup>92</sup> Take, for example, the stemma of Deukalion and Inachos/Phoroneus.<sup>93</sup> In the Hesiodic *Catalogue* Deukalion is given the primary ancestor role; he survived the Flood (presumably), and his descendants are ontologically superior to all “members” of his “family.” As for Argive Phoroneus, while he became the first man in standard Greek tradition, Akusilaos has it that Phoroneus son of Inachos (a river) was the Flood survivor, not Deukalion son of Prometheus.<sup>94</sup> These two constitute the first and second lines, respectively, in standard Greek genealogy. But combining them in the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, not to mention subordinating the latter to the former, is a marked choice. We see here the complex reality of identity formation, and in particular the sub-categorical role of descent; for the *Catalogue* poet does not have to make all of Phoroneus’ descendents literal descendants to give the *impression* of common descent from Deukalion—and the impression is what matters in the rhetorical project. Their stemma can stand side-by-side and be linked by

---

<sup>91</sup> Finkelberg 2005, 20, drawing on the anthropological work of Ronald Cohen and John Middleton among African tribes (Cohen and Middleton, eds., 1970), which provides a good analogy for the circumstances of archaic Greece.

<sup>92</sup> Finkelberg 2005, 24-41.

<sup>93</sup> Finkelberg 2005, 33-5.

<sup>94</sup> 2 F 23a Jacoby.

marriage at some point. Moreover, the idea of descent is not to be taken literally here. Deukalion and Hellen can stand at the beginning of the family tree for all of those considered Hellenes, while smaller collective units can still trace their ancestry back to their local descendants.<sup>95</sup> The result is a “Hellenic” family comprised of many other families. “Thus, in the final analysis, the standard Greek genealogy emerges as an aggregate of mutually unconnected stemmas, each of them traced to a separate progenitor of its own: a far cry indeed from a unified genealogical tree, such as that of the descendants of Noah.”<sup>96</sup>

But who benefits from this single Greek progenitor? In the case of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*’s stemma built on Deukalion and Hellen: the Thessalians.<sup>97</sup> Robert Fowler<sup>98</sup> argues that the creation of specifically Hellenic identity should be connected to the Pylian amphiktionon since Thessalians were its leading members and its territory approximated the area of “Hellas” at a crucial stage. Moreover, the religious nature of the amphiktionon would have granted those espousing the identity the kind of persuasive force needed to convince other (i.e., southern) Greeks to adopt the name. In the Greek identity version of a great historical what if, Fowler remarks, “had Elis had the religious prestige of Delphi, the Greeks might have been known under a quite different name. As it was, the Eleians had to find a place in the Hellenic stemma.”<sup>99</sup>

This project of building Hellenic identity on the family metaphor around Deukalion was immensely successful. Pindar, one of our two earliest sources to discuss the Flood

---

<sup>95</sup> This is a major point made by Finkelberg 2005, chapter 2 (pp. 24-41).

<sup>96</sup> Finkelberg 2005, 35.

<sup>97</sup> *EGM* 2, 127-30.

<sup>98</sup> Fowler 1998; see too his discussion of “Hellenism” in *EGM* 2, 122-30.

<sup>99</sup> *EGM* 2, 130.

*explicitly*, follows the Hesiodic *Catalogue* in this respect, as do the early Greek mythographers, and our earliest two historians, Herodotos and Thucydides. Here, the primary role of Deukalion and his Deluge is to configure a collective identity. I will now discuss these authors, with a brief interlude to look at Epicharmos, whose comedy about Deukalion, Pyrrha, and Prometheus stands alongside Pindar's ninth Olympian ode as the other earliest extant source to make explicit mention of the Deluge. His comic play will form a kind of intermission from the heavy work of establishing a name for one's group.

### **(b) Pindar, *Olympian 9***

Pindar uses the genealogical-historic tradition of the Greek Flood in his ninth Olympian ode, and does so in service of collective identity. The group identity in question, however, is not the Hellenes, but the local inhabitants of Opous. In this song Pindar praises Epharmostos of Opous for his victory in wrestling at the Olympian games of 466.<sup>100</sup> That victory made Epharmostos a *periodonikes*, or a victor in all four crown games (Olympia, Pythia, Isthmia, Nemea). Winning at just *one* game *once* was a big enough deal in the ancient world to garner substantial praise for both the athlete and his city, but to become *periodonikes* was outstanding, and Pindar is accordingly eager to praise both Epharmostos and his city of Opous.<sup>101</sup> He thus explicitly fashions Deukalion's tale in order to praise Opous, but that praise of course implicitly redounds upon

---

<sup>100</sup> On various aspects of Opuntian geography, history, and identity, see Hornblower 2004, 166-70. On the date of the ode, see Hornblower 2004, 167, n. 146, where he argues that while the ode celebrates Epharmostos' Olympian victory of 468, Pindar composed it immediately following Epharmostos' Pythian victory in 466.

<sup>101</sup> Gerber 2002, 11 counts only three *periodonikes* in Pindar: Epharmostos here, Diagoras of Rhodes in *Olympian* 7, and Ergoteles in *Olympian* 12 (although the latter was not yet *periodonikes* at the time of Pindar's epinikian for him).

Epharmostos himself. Along with the glory comes responsibility. Pindar's ode and its Flood myth, then, contain a good deal of ethical parainesis along with the claims about identity.

Pindar does for the Opuntians what the *Catalogue* does for the Hellenes, tracing their ancestry to divine roots and basing their genealogy on Deukalion's race. But on top of that Pindar merges Opuntian and broader Hellenic identity through the character of Deukalion. The Opuntians, thus, are not just divine, and not just Hellenic, but in some senses the *most* Hellenic Hellenes of all. Pindar's song puts Epharmostos on the top rung of the Hellenic identity: he can claim Deukalion as an ancestor and he has won at all the major Greek athletic festivals.

Here, too, the Flood myth tells the end of anonymity for the Opuntians and other Lokrians. Pindar's version is a Hesiodic *Catalogue* in miniature in more ways than one, however, for it also narrates in condensed form the heroic generation. We will see, then, the same chronology as in the *Catalogue* (minus the Trojan War): Flood, followed by the heroic generation—importantly, though, in Pindar's version there is a distinctive continuity in the line of kings from the earliest heroic kings down to Epharmostos' days. The continuity gives the sense—again, imparting both glory and obligation on Epharmostos—that the current rulers are but the most recent in a long history of legitimate kings. Thus, Pindar tells this history in such a way that it gives an identity to the Opuntians (and thus Epharmostos) and also spells out an ethical paradigm for



Epharmostos. I will review the myth, then flesh out these points. Here is how Pindar introduces it (*Olympian* 9.42-46):<sup>102</sup>

Apply your speech to Protogeneia's  
city, where, by decree of Zeus of the bright thunderbolt,  
Pyrrha and Deukalion came down from Parnassos  
and first established their home, and, without coupling,  
founded one folk, an offspring of stone:  
and they were called people.

Pindar's Deukalion, like that of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, is located in a specific part of Greece: Parnassos and Opous. And while Pindar does not yet refer explicitly to the Flood in these very lines, with the mention of Deukalion and Pyrrha coming down the mountain the audience is primed for that part of the story. We further note Zeus' involvement here; it is somehow his decision (Διὸς αἴσα) for them to descend where they do.<sup>103</sup> We are of course ignorant of Zeus's potential involvement in the (also potential) Flood in the *Catalogue*; here Zeus's agency is critical. Another piece of the story here is the presence of a mountain: Parnassos, the highest mountain in Greece after Olympos, becomes the most commonly sited in the Greek flood story.<sup>104</sup> And the final piece introduced up front is the Lokrian anthropogonical myth about the stones as a means of producing the human race (but they do not here throw the stones behind them, as later authors will have them do<sup>105</sup>). Instead of having sex, Deukalion and Pyrrha simply "found" a "stoney offspring"

---

<sup>102</sup> The text and translation is that of W. H. Race 1997.

<sup>103</sup> Gerber 2002, *ad loc.* suggests that the thunderbolt here might have been a favorable sign for Pyrrha and Deukalion that the Flood was over and that they could accordingly descend Parnassos. Perhaps, however, the epithet could simply be evocative of storm weather imagery, while also bringing in Zeus as a personal agent. At any rate, D'Alessio 2005, 221, n. 17 notes that Horace uses similar imagery of Jupiter at *Carmina* 1.2.2-3 (*rubenta dextera*). Horace's allusion to Pindar is one effect (and at the same time cause) of his survival in a continuous manuscript tradition.

<sup>104</sup> Gerber 2002, *ad loc.*, who also notes that Hellanikos (*FGrHist* 4 F 117) names Othrys in Phthiotis.

<sup>105</sup> E.g. Ovid, *Met.* 1.381ff.

to be called “people.” There is a pun here on the word for stones and the word for people.<sup>106</sup>

Just to pause on this myth for a moment. There is a question of appropriateness here: the issue is incest. If there is only one human couple remaining and they are to be seen as the progenitors of some human population, how is that possible without incest? The people-from-pebbles is one solution. Instead of building up a population birth by birth, one can tell a story in which Zeus hands over some supernaturally endowed stones to Deukalion, stones from which an entire group will spring up. I do not claim that this is actually what either the author(s) of the *Catalogue* or Pindar were actually thinking, but in the context of a song to be publicly performed with the purpose of bringing Panhellenic renown to a local individual and city, we may wonder about the desire to avoid implicit notions of incest in the population. Questions of general applicability aside (after all, no one wants to think of their ancestors as incestuous), in the case of *Olympian* 9, there is the additional significance of where the stones are from—the Lokrians are privileged because it is from their stones that the race came. But this is not just an anthropogenic tale, as Simon Hornblower shows.<sup>107</sup> He analyzes it under the category of Pindaric colonizing myths, and in this context the stone people represent a type of autochthony.<sup>108</sup> Claims of autochthony were popular among the ancient Greeks,<sup>109</sup> and, just to name two, can be found for the Thebans (Kadmos sowing the teeth of the dragon

---

<sup>106</sup> Fowler suggests that Deukalion and the stones are two separate lineages: the aristocracy from Deukalion, the common people from the stones (*EGM I*, 114). I cannot see how this could be an acceptable claim to make in a public performance.

<sup>107</sup> Hornblower 2004, 313-16.

<sup>108</sup> Hornblower cites Loraux 1993, 85 for the point.

<sup>109</sup> Kearns 2005.

he slayed, giving rise to the Spartoi),<sup>110</sup> as well as for the Athenians (the autochthon Erichthonius representing Athenian claims to have sprung from Attic soil).<sup>111</sup> The result is the *impression* that the Opuntian Lokrians have always been where they are: the myth can simultaneously ignore any facts about who actually inhabited a locale at any given point and also imply the superiority of the autochthonous group.<sup>112</sup> Thus, rather than being the foreigners settling someone else's territory, they are always the gracious *hosts* welcoming other settlers, some of whom are quite prestigious as we will see below.

So far we have seen in Pindar's Flood (1) Zeus' involvement, (2) Deukalion and Pyrrha as a couple, (3) the specific location of Mt Parnassos and Opous in Lokris, (4) a people being created, although Pindar's Deukalion and Pyrrha have not so far created the *human* race in their entirety, and (5) stones being used in the process. Having introduced the story generally, a few of its central characters (Zeus, Deukalion, Pyrrha, the Opuntians), and the use he will put the story to (praising Opous), Pindar continues by indicating that while there are old versions of this story his will be new,<sup>113</sup> and then goes on to give a brief history of Opous beginning with Deukalion's Deluge (*Olympian* 9.47-67):

Awaken for them a clear-sounding path of words;  
praise wine that is old, but the blooms of hymns

---

<sup>110</sup> Heinze 1996.

<sup>111</sup> Kearns 1996.

<sup>112</sup> Kearns 2005: "True autochthons (as opposed to the merely earthborn, γηγενεῖς) remain in the land where they are born. Thus the autochthonous ancestor, like the founder-figure, expresses and forms the group's sense of its identity, making an implicit claim to superiority over non-autochthonous groups."

<sup>113</sup> The question of what exactly is "newer" about Pindar's story has alluded a certain answer; see Gerber 2002, *ad loc.* for discussion and his proclamation that "it is impossible to determine precisely what aspects of the myth are 'newer.'" D'Alessio thinks it has to do with the Lokros-Opous episode; see below. In my discussion, comparing Pindar's Flood with Homer's echoes, Mesopotamian accounts, and Genesis, I do not make claims to answer this question of newness, but instead make comparisons and observations about the rhetorical effects of various elements of Pindar's story.

that are newer. Indeed they tell that  
mighty waters had flooded over  
the dark earth, but,  
through Zeus' contriving (Ζηνὸς τέχναις), an ebb tide suddenly  
drained the floodwater. From them came  
your ancestors of the bronze shields (χαλκάσπιδες)  
in the beginning, sons from the daughters of Iapetos'  
race and from the mightiest sons of Kronos,  
being always a native line of kings,

until the lord of Olympos  
carried off the daughter of Opous  
from the land of the Epeians and quietly  
lay with her in the Mainalian glens, and brought her  
to Lokros, lest time destroy him and impose a destiny  
with no children. but his spouse was bearing the greatest  
seed, and the hero rejoiced to see his adopted son;  
he called him by the same name  
as the mother's father,  
and he became a man beyond description for his beauty  
and deeds. And he gave him his city and people to govern.

Foreigners came to him. . .

How does the Flood begin, and what does it end? It begins simply as a natural occurrence. And what does it end? Nothing—or, in my reading, non-identity. Recall that Homer's Diluvian echoes narrate some events prior to the flood: the key element is the heroes' neglect of the gods and the angry response of Poseidon and Apollo. In this respect, Homer's "Flood" bears more resemblance to the Babylonian *Atrahasis* and biblical Genesis than both the Hesiodic *Catalogue* and Pindar. The latter two (making substantial guesses for the *Catalogue* due to lack of evidence) ignore events before the Flood. I have connected this with the specific function of the Flood myth in service of identity: what matters is Deukalion and who is allowed to be connected to his family tree.

We have seen that Pindar does indeed focus on Deukalion—although, importantly, not Deukalion’s eponymous son Hellen since Pindar is not concerned with Greek identity at that national level, but only locally for the Opuntians. Zeus, too, is an important character in Pindar’s Flood myth. For it is Zeus who ends the Deluge. This is another difference vis-a-vis Homer’s echoes, the Mesopotamian *Atrahasis* and Gilgamesh epics, and the biblical Genesis: in all of these versions a god plans, executes, and ends the Deluge. These versions thus feature personal agents as total cause of the Deluge. But Pindar says nothing about Zeus or any other divinity or personal agent causing the Flood—another silence about ante Diluvian times. In Pindar’s version, the impersonal force of the “water’s strength” (ὕδατος σθένης, 51) causes the Flood—and *is* the Flood. That Pindar might have deliberately changed this element of the story to fit the poem’s theology is given weight by the construction he uses to denote the process of the Flood. Again, he says that “the water’s strength flooded the dark earth, but through Zeus’ designs an ebb tide suddenly drained the floodwater” (50-53). As Douglas Gerber observes,<sup>114</sup> the phrase ὕδατος σθένης is reminiscent of the epic usage of βίᾱ plus the genitive of a person. Gerber, however, stops at the observation; going a bit further, I would make the following interpretational move: there is an implicit notion that the usual story is of a *person* causing the Flood. Pindar signals this by using a construction that is typically personal, but substitutes the *impersonal* “strength of water” for that cause. But his story is not about a god punishing humans with the Deluge; it is, rather, a tale of a god helping a community begin their life after a devastating natural event.

---

<sup>114</sup> Gerber 2002, *ad loc.*

The theological implications of this Pindaric substitution—distancing a divine being from a destructive act—gains support from another episode in the ode. Just before narrating the Deluge Pindar explicitly distances himself from claims about gods and aggression (35-39). Granted, his comment is aimed at stories of Herakles fighting with three gods, but there could still be broader connotations having to do with immortals and violence. T. C. W. Stinton is surely wrong to assert that “no Greek of Pindar’s day thought war unworthy of gods.”<sup>115</sup> Aside from the statement’s absurd universalism (“no Greek”), and the epistemological problem of knowing what someone else is thinking, we have evidence that in fact a person in “Pindar’s day” could deem war inappropriate for gods. Xenophanes, otherwise notorious for his theological criticisms, deemed battles about Titans, Giants, and Centaurs unworthy of the symposium.<sup>116</sup> He disdained these stories as “fictions of former poets” (πλάσμα<τα> τῶν προτέρων, B 1 22). Is Pindar reflecting a similar attitude?<sup>117</sup> However that may be, the point would be hanging in the atmosphere created by the poem when Pindar comes to the Flood story: he has just pictured three gods fighting against a human being; he has claimed that such stories are blasphemous, blamed his own mouth, and directed his tongue to speak appropriately of Opous—whereupon he immediately mentions a divinity, Zeus and his thunderbolt. The question is raised: will Pindar have Zeus use this thunderbolt as a weapon like other authors of a Flood myth? The answer is no, and Pindar goes on to narrate a story in which the opposite occurs: Zeus *saves* Deukalion and Pyrrha, possibly using his thunderbolt as a sign to the couple that the Flood is over. The important point is that Zeus’ role in the

---

<sup>115</sup> Stinton 1976, 68.

<sup>116</sup> B 1 21; with Gerber 2002, 41.

<sup>117</sup> See Gostoli 1999.

story is to save the local inhabitants from further natural catastrophe and to establish the Lokrian people.<sup>118</sup>

Here we come to the part of the story that really authorizes a certain identity for Epharmostos and his fellow Opuntians. For the next few steps in the telling we refer back to the previously discussed lines in which through Zeus' decision Deukalion and Pyrrha descend Parnassos, set up home there, and establish a race with stones. I want to mention two aspects of what happens next: Lokrian history and dual lineage. Pindar's narration condenses all of Lokrian history, from the creation of people, through the Trojan War, and down to Epharmostos. The impression gained is a sense of continuity from the present all the way back to Deukalion. The rhetorical effect is both to legitimate the elite and also to obligate them to a certain ethic. Deukalion marks the very beginning. Then come the stones. From these come the "ancestors of the bronze shields." χαλκῶσπιδες (54) connotes the heroic generation, the warriors of Troy.<sup>119</sup> This is the Hesiodic *Catalogue's* version of mythic history condensed: from the Flood to Troy in a few lines. But Pindar goes back a bit more, for the Opuntians' brazen heroes are themselves descendants of both Kronos and Iapetos: Pindar gives them a deep, deep ancestry; this is the first way, albeit implicitly (i.e., through Deukalion), that the Opuntian genealogy is

---

<sup>118</sup> To the reply that Pindar assumes the audience's familiarity with the fact that it was a high god who brought the Flood as a punishment for humans—Gerber 2002, *ad loc.*, assumes that Zeus sent the flood, but we are just not told why—we may in turn reply that if that is the case, on the assumption that Pindar is a careful designer of songs, then in addition to what we said above about σθένοϋς with the genitive and theology, the additional absence of a *personal divine* motive may amount to a positive statement. In other words, Pindar's Zeus does not punish humans with natural forces. Instead, Zeus overcomes those forces for the benefit of humankind.

<sup>119</sup> Pindar uses this elsewhere to refer generally to martial prowess (*Ol.* 10.15, 13.23). Pindar may be correcting for Homer's assertion about the Lokrians' weaponry, including their lack of brazen helmets. My interpretation is fueled by a fundamental connotation, and not dependent on further details; see Gerber 2002, *ad loc.*

rooted in divine beings.<sup>120</sup> The line of kings, stretching from the deepest past were autochthonous until eponymous Lokros. He was childless. Zeus once again intervened for the Lokrians, impregnating an Epeian princess and giving her to Lokros in marriage. This is the second way that the Opuntian genealogy is rooted in a divine being, and the second of the two strands of Opuntian genealogy: they have an autochthonous strand from the stones and an explicitly divine strand from Zeus. The Epeian princess functions on the geo-political level, too, since a connection to Elis, as the site of the prestigious Olympian festival, would grant Opous fame. Or is it the other way around? –does (better: does Pindar’s poem make a case that) a Lokrian Opuntian connection grant prestige to the Epeians?<sup>121</sup> Hellen, after all, is from Lokros, not from Elis. Lokros granted rule to this child, eponymous Opous: he is an Opuntian paradigm of physical beauty (65), actions (66), and civic responsibility (67). Here is the history summarized:

Flood  
|  
Deukalion & Pyrrha  
|  
stones & “stoney race”  
|  
autochthonous kings (including heroic generation)  
|  
Lokros (childless) + Epeian Opous’ daughter (impregnated by Zeus)  
|  
Opous (adopted, granted reign)

This dual lineage gives the Lokrians the best of both worlds: not only are they autochthonous (and so can fully claim their land and sovereignty), but they are also

---

<sup>120</sup> It should be noted, however, that the Greek of the original is unusually dense. See Gerber, who calls it “the most difficult passage in the ode” (2002, *ad loc.*).

<sup>121</sup> See Fowler’s genealogic “what if” above.



descended from Zeus himself; this makes the Opuntians divine. Beyond this ancestry their early history shows multiple moments of Zeus' intervention on their behalf.

In terms of their fellow Greeks, Pindar's poem shows the Opuntians as an ethical elite group. For after Opous takes over, foreigners come from places such as Argos, Thebes, Arkadia, and Pisa (lines 67ff.); and this list climaxes with the Homeric hero Patroklos who can claim Opountian heritage through his father Menoitios, as in Homer's *Iliad* 18.326.<sup>122</sup> Opous is thus the polis' eponymous and ethical hero. Giovan D'Alessio shows how Pindar constructs these various mythic episodes—including possibly “correcting” a version of the Lokros-Opous father-son tale in which they are quite at odds—in such a way that Opous' history is “part of a providential and benign divine design,” all traces of past family quarrels has been removed, Opous' links to Elis “preconfigure” Epharmostos' Olympic victory, and Opous as a city is granted panhellenic appeal.<sup>123</sup>

By way of summary, like the Deukalion of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, Pindar's Deukalion is specifically localized in northern Greece and coupled with Pyrrha. Moreover, Pindar even manages to allude to Prometheus as Deukalion's father with the patronymic Ἰαπετιονίδος (55), since Iapetos is Prometheus' father; thus his flood narrative operates genealogically at several levels. But while the genealogically-structured *Catalogue* gives us genealogy and Hellenic identity in Deukalion the father of Hellen, Pindar's genealogy gives us genealogy *and ethics* in Deukalion the flood survivor (thanks to Zeus) and founder of the (ethically elite) Lokrians. The Flood myth and the Elis connection also ground Opous' well-being in Zeus' planning on their behalf. Zeus

---

<sup>122</sup> Hornblower 2004, 314 refers to the way Pindar connects Patroklos to Opous as a “Homeric climax.”

<sup>123</sup> D'Alessio 2005, 220-226.

ended the Flood with his *technai* and also planned for the continuance of Lokrian autochthonous reign by bringing them an heir. This not only fundamentally gave life to the Lokrians, but also provided them with the reknown brought by Deukalion and his Flood myth—importance, as we saw in the *Catalogue*, for its identity-forming capacity. And Zeus brought a child to Lokros, whose childlessness threatened both the autochthonous heritage of the Lokrians as well as their aforementioned self-sufficiency. Thus, Deukalion and the Flood brings an end to Opuntian anonymity. In this respect the episode functions for the Opuntians much like the Hesiodic *Catalogue* functions for the Hellenes. We can formulate the analogy like this:

Olympian 9 : Opuntians :: Hesiodic *Catalogue* : Hellenes

Neither poems show any concern for what came before the Flood. Instead, the myth is exploited for its capacity to provide a people with collective identity. We saw how Deukalion does this for Hellenes, but Deukalion and the Opuntians are a special case. By participating in the Panhellenic narrative, Pindar's Flood myth procures some of the Panhellenic reknown for the Opuntians. Their genealogical ownership of Deukalion, as it were, is a significant cultural asset given the important role of the broader discourse about identity via the Flood survivor. We can think of this dual schema as having a macro and a micro level, and it gains some distinction when we consider that Noah and his Flood, for example, could only function at the macro level due to the homogenous nature of the biblical peoples, homogenous *with respect to the Flood*. Finkelberg's points about the mutli-ethnic nature of Greek identity are relevant here. Deukalion brings together numerous independent communities, many of which have their own origin myths, but one

of which claims Deukalion's in particular. This community of course keeps their myth when all the Greeks take it on, and in the process actually gains prominence through its widespread appreciation. But we have seen that the Thessalians, who might have "persuaded" the other Greek population groups to call themselves Hellenes, had the most to gain from the moniker. In this way, we see how the genealogical identity formation may work from the inside, as it were—I may call this "intra identity." Yet Darshan's work suggests that there might have been, to use the analogous phrase (which is totally mine), "inter identity." So, Hellenism is a message to all those who have the potential to call themselves Hellenes (whether they choose to or not), but is also a message to those who are not permitted (for whatever reason) to do so. Here, the distinction between Hellenes and Israelites is significant for its Mediterranean-wide implication. Again, we see these peoples putting themselves on the map based on a common Flood hero.

### **(c) Epicharmos of Sicily**

Against the moral seriousness of, for example, the Babylonian Atrahasis of *Atrahasis* and the biblical Noah of *Genesis*, the Greek Deukalion of the *Catalogue* and Pindar, Deukalion explicitly *as a flood survivor* makes his second literary debut on the comic stage of Sicily.<sup>124</sup> Among the hundreds of fragmentary notices of the Sicilian comic playwright Epicharmos are those associated with a play variously titled *Prometheus*, *Pyrrha*, *Deukalion*, or some combination of these, although Epicharmos might have changed Deukalion's name to Leukarion (more on the possible significance of this

---

<sup>124</sup> According to our *extant* evidence of course. I say "second literary debut" recognizing that we cannot date Epicharmos' play in such a way as to place it before or after Pindar *Olympian* 9; see Rusten 2011, 59-78.

change below).<sup>125</sup> As for the play's contents, we have only a half-dozen or so fragments to go on; they are all one-liners except two, which consist of about ten lines each (both are from a papyrus of the second century AD). Let us try to piece together a picture of Epicharmos' Deukalion from this data, and then to ask if Epicharmos' plot can be said to be an end-time scenario in any sense.

Instead of Deukalion's stemma, Epicharmos is concerned with Prometheus' role in the Flood myth. In one of the extended fragments Deukalion and Pyrrha seem to be engaged in a back-and-forth conversation about preparing for the Flood.<sup>126</sup> After Deukalion finishes describing what might be Prometheus' instructions to Deukalion for building an ark (λάρναξ, lines 2, 6, and 9) of sufficient size to contain an unknown "you" plural (4) and a month's supply of food (5), Pyrrha expresses fear that this is really a trick on the part of Prometheus (and Deukalion?) to steal all their stuff. While voicing her suspicions she puns on Prometheus' name (12): ὁ Προμα[θεὺς. . . ]ήσθαι προμαθεούμενος "that Prometheus. . . the pro-methodical."

This is but one instance of word play in the extant fragments. Epicharmos's fun with words shows up again in a scholium on Pindar, *Olympian* 9.70, in which the scholiast informs us that in this play Epicharmos says that the people whom Deukalion and Pyrrha make with the rocks after the flood are called *laoi* "people" after the *laes* "rocks."<sup>127</sup> We know nothing however of where this might have come in the play, but can recognize echoes of the pun in Pindar's ode. More word play seems to have centered on the names

---

<sup>125</sup> For Epicharmos I cite the recent volume of Greek comic fragments edited by Rusten 2011; Epicharmos is the subject of Chapter 2.

<sup>126</sup> Fr. 113.

<sup>127</sup> Fr. 120.

of Deukalion and Pyrrha. One fragment gives us a clue that Epicharmos used the name Leukarion for his Deukalion.<sup>128</sup> If so, he might have been playing with an opposition between the meanings of the names of two of his main characters, for if Deukalion is named Leukarion, and if Leukarion is based on the Greek root *leuko-* in *leukos* “clear, white,”<sup>129</sup> then Deukalion and Pyrrha becomes Leukarion and Pyrrha—“White Guy and Red Girl.”<sup>130</sup> Or, perhaps more fully, “Pale White Guy and Fire Red Woman.” Still conjecturing, this could have been nice if Epicharmos played on the fact that Deukalion lost all the color in his skin after being in the dark ark for a month. But, again, we are musing here.

These name-based puns might have worked in tandem with a theme about Prometheus and civilization. Relevant in this regard is Pyrrha’s name and the connotations of “fire” and “red,” based on the other extended fragment.<sup>131</sup> In this section someone seems to be complaining (or just comparing?) about what life is (was?) like without *fire*. There is something about bread (241) (possibly that there was no bread before fire?), about roasting meat in the sunlight (243) (instead of over a flame?), about drying animal skins in the moonlight (245), and about hot baths (252-53) (they are not possible without fire, ἄνευ πυρός). These lines could be part of a theme throughout the play of fire, with possible connection to Prometheus’ role as the giver of fire to humans.<sup>132</sup> Perhaps the play featured a tension between these two things: on the one hand,

---

<sup>128</sup> Fr. 116.

<sup>129</sup> Watkins 2000, entry ‘leuk-’.

<sup>130</sup> Rusten 2011, 71 says that “Epicharmos seems to have preferred Leucarion (whitey), to contrast with Pyrrha (red).” On the root *\*leuko-*, see

<sup>131</sup> Still part of fr. 113.

<sup>132</sup> Reference might also have been made to Prometheus as a bringer of various aspects of civilization more broadly. This is intriguing given (a) Rusten’s claim (2011, 59-60) about Epicharmos’ influence on tragic

Prometheus and his arts (like fire) make life easier; on the other hand, recalling the fragment in which Pyrrha fears that Prometheus intends to steal her stuff, Prometheus is a thief. Audiences would of course recognize Prometheus as a thief from the Mekone and fennel stalk episodes. Conjecturing further, after the Flood Leukarion and Pyrrha were destitute high on the mountain (if there was a mountain, Mt Etna in Sicily?), pale skinned and bereft of the dear flame; Prometheus then might have played some role in helping them begin again. And that theme in turn may be reflected on the names of Leukarion and Pyrrha.

Traces of one final noteworthy (and comically rich) element comes from Athenaios, *The Learned Banqueteers*, when one of the diners supposedly quotes from Epicharmos' "*Pyrrha and Prometheus*."<sup>133</sup> The topic of conversation in *The Learned Banqueteers* is clams, and the quotation from *Pyrrha and Prometheus* is "Look at the size of the clam, the sea snail, the limpet!" Based on this quotation are we to imagine that at some point in the play, the characters (Deukalion/Leukalion, Pyrrha, and others?) find themselves *under water* during the Deluge looking at the sea creatures around them? Or do the characters look out from the ark during the Flood—but how then could they see bottom feeding creatures? Or, better yet for humor, is the *ark under water*, in a kind of (accidental) proto-submarine vessel? They could also be viewing things destroyed by the

---

playwrights and in particular Aischylos, and (b) that Aischylos' Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound* professes to be a bringer of culture, broadly understood (see for example his discussion with the chorus at 442-506). It should be noted however that Aischylos' authorship of the tragedy has been questioned (Griffith 1983, 31-35).

<sup>133</sup> Fr. 114. Note the title that the character gives: in this account the side characters of Pyrrha and Prometheus seem to take center stage; another way of construing this title based on the connotations of Pyrrha's name would be *Prometheus and Puros*, or *Prometheus and Fire*, which of course would pick up some of the themes mentioned above.

Flood, which is nicely paralleled by Xenophanes' comment about fossils.<sup>134</sup> Here too we are guessing, but we can at the very least get some sense of the play's humorous aspects through these traces.

In sum, Epicharmos' Deukalion seems to have built an ark under the guidance of Prometheus, and to have gathered himself and his wife Pyrrha in it for a rainy period of about a month. The play depicted the characters under water. We do not know about the role of *place*, however: is Epicharmos' Deukalion and his flood merely a local Sicilian story? how universal is the flood and, if included, the creation of humans and Prometheus' giving of culture? And what about Deukalion's relationship with Prometheus—is it of a distinctive nature, perhaps rooted in Deukalion's exceptional piety as in the case of Atrahasis and Noah? While there is much that we cannot know at this point, we can nevertheless see some of the ways that Epicharmos plays with elements of the hero and his Flood to quite humorous effect. Moreover, given some of the elements about Prometheus and the concurrent interest in Prometheus in Aischylos, we glimpse a conversation about the rise of human society in which, perhaps, Deukalion played some role. By way of contrast, this seems not to be the Deukalion of the genealogical-historic genre looked at so far. And whatever else we can take away from Epicharmos' Deukalion, he gives evidence of the broad association of Deukalion with the Flood by at least the mid-fifth century.

---

<sup>134</sup> KRS 176-78.

The texts looked at so far have all been poetry. With these we can mention one last poetic allusion to, not Deukalion and his Flood specifically, but at least the Myth of Destruction in which the high god destroys humankind: Aischylos, *Prometheus Bound* 231-3. The text is concerned with the Prometheus/Zeus/fire episode, which belongs to a tradition of thinking about the beginnings of human civilization and the ongoing role of technology in it. Since it does not deal with the world's end by water, however, I will leave it at that and turn to prose authors of the archaic and classical periods.

Along this route, interest in Deukalion and his Flood divides: one road continues the genealogical-historic tradition, and one considers Deukalion and his Deluge as one flood among many other floods and natural occurrences. This latter road is that of philosophy, which I save for the final section. For the remainder of this section I take a look at prose authors. Deukalion remains primarily an ancestor, and his Deluge a story of beginnings.

#### **(d) Early Greek Mythography**

The early Greek mythographers as well as Herodotos and Thucydides give further evidence to Deukalion in his role as ancestor in the genealogical-historic tradition, each carrying over Deukalion as ancestor into their respective discursive modes. The fragmentary evidence of the early mythographers do not give us much to go on, which is unfortunate because, had we more texts, we would stand to learn much about how different local communities responded to Deukalion as a national ancestor;<sup>135</sup> as it is, the only explicit references to Deukalion in the extant fragments are Hellanikos (fr. 117a)

---

<sup>135</sup> On this local vs pan-Hellenic tension, see Fowler *EGM* 2, xiii, §1.7.7.



and Andron (fr. 8).<sup>136</sup> That said, they do represent important examples of non-narrative discourses as modes of talking about the Flood myth. The Flood itself, as a potential narrative event, has ceased to matter. Deukalion is all that is left—no demigods, no impiety, no signs of human destruction, or avenging and saving gods. But that is just as well, because the task of specifically “Hellenic” identity has to some extent succeeded, even if we recognize that texts make a bid for reality, rather than simply communicating what is already the case.

In this role, the early mythographers are—I don’t want to say “precursors” because that would be to privilege other authors unduly, so I’ll say—helpful context for Herodotos and Thucydides. Given my focus on the Flood myth for its capacity to narrate the end of something, it is simply not worth the effort to wade through the fragments of the mythographers, since none seem to have made anything of Deukalion other than what the *Catalogue* and Pindar already had (i.e., a genealogical figurehead), albeit more systematically and claiming a different epistemological certainty. This latter element, i.e., their rationality, is an important difference. And these two elements combined—a rational systemization—is, after all, the mythographers’ project: to investigate and pull together the vast, heterogenous body of Greek myth. Robert Fowler puts it like this—consider his description in light of what we have seen in the *Catalogue* and Pindar; his comments are of course relevant for Herodotos and Thucydides, too, although these two are not considered mythographers:

The first writers to turn a critical eye on the inherited conglomerate [of what we call Greek mythology] were Hekataios of Miletos and Akousilaos of Argos, working at the end of the

---

<sup>136</sup> References according to *EGM* 1.

sixth century. The poets were inquisitive and sage, to be sure, but they were constrained by many considerations, not least the desires of those for whom they were composing. And the poet's product was a package: not just a text but a text, a song, a dance, a performance, a ritual. From the beginning, historiography took the form of a simple text, scrutinizing the record and presenting itself in turn for scrutiny. The emphasis was entirely on discovery and criticism. There was, moreover, no Muse to inspire the flow, no pretence that the message passed through the receptive poet from heaven to earth: there was only the native wit of the author.<sup>137</sup>

Under the critical eyes of the mythographers, Deukalion remained an ancient ruler in Thessaly, initiating a line of descendants. We are still in the realm of genealogy, but have added a new epistemological grounding: the human researcher. Note, however, that “rational and systematic” does not preclude “religious.” The mythographers as a whole had no qualms about divine agents.<sup>138</sup>

Herodotos and Thucydides continue the project of the mythographers, subsuming Deukalion into their own, now historiographical, discourse. And here too, Deukalion is the primeval ancestor of the Hellenes, but not in a religious story. There are no divine ancestors and no Flood, let alone angry gods out to destroy all of humankind. Instead, he was just a man—albeit an elite man—ruling in Thessaly, and one of his sons, Hellen, rose to local, then regional, prominence. The means for this rise were material, and thus quantifiable. Herodotos and Thucydides further provide evidence of just how cemented Deukalion's place in the Greek ethnic imagination was. Despite the fact that other genealogies went back further than the Lokrians—the Argive is the longest<sup>139</sup>—those who pushed “Hellenism” won, notwithstanding. In other words, the archaic genealogical-historic project worked. The poets' rhetoric, with its religious gloss, furnished later

---

<sup>137</sup> *EGM* 2, xii.

<sup>138</sup> Fowler 2010, 328-29.

<sup>139</sup> *EGM* 2,

analysts with the story. Since we have more material in the case of Herodotos' and Thucydides' Deukalion than for the mythographers', I want to consider their episodes further.

**(e) Herodotos, *The Histories***

Herodotos' Deukalion is primarily a chronological tool used in a discussion about the distant origins of various groups which are manifest in Herodotos' own day: Pelasgians vs Hellenes, Dorians vs Ionians.<sup>140</sup> As Herodotos plots the wanderings of those who came to be called Dorians, one of his temporal markers is the reign of Deukalion. It is significant that it is specifically the Deukalionids whom Herodotos uses, and not some other genealogy, for it illustrates the success of the Hellenic project.

The broader narrative context in Book 1 is the question of whether Kroisos, the Lydian king, ought to attack the Persians. He wants to know not only if he should do so, but also whom he ought to take with him as allies (1.53). He also wants to know how long his own reign will last (1.55). Based on some less than keen interpretations of the Delphic priestess' answers to his questions, Kroisos assumes that he will in fact defeat the Persians, and thus that his own empire is safe. As a result he goes looking for friends among the Greeks (Ἑλλήνων, 56). Two populations stand out: the Lakedaimonians of Doric race (γένος) and Pelasgian *ethnos*, and the Athenians of Ionic race and Hellenic *ethnos* (56). While the former have never left their original home land, the latter are wanderers (πολυπλάνητον, 56). Herodotos goes on to tell of where and when the people

---

<sup>140</sup> On the passage (1.56-58) see McNeal 1985 and *EGM* 2, 90-94. On the Pelasgians generally see *EGM* 2, §2.1.

of the Hellenic *ethnos* have lived over time, and it is in this context that he mentions Deukalion (1.56.11-14):

For when Deukalion was king they inhabited the land of Phthiotis, and in the reign of Hellen's son Doros the land called Histiaia around Ossa and Olympos.

Just as in Hesiodic and Pindaric poetry, here too Deukalion is associated with a region of Thessaly.<sup>141</sup> But he is not just an “early” king: he is the *earliest* king in Thessaly, and that is one of his distinctive characteristics. His reign represents the deepest past that Herodotos knows. Note, further, that Deukalion is useful in this function independent of any association with a cataclysmic event such as a Flood, and hence as a surviving remnant of that event. Deukalion here is not the Greek equivalent of Noah (except as a common ancestor); nor is he the initiator of the mythic period of demigods. He is simply a very early local ruler.

But Herodotean Deukalion's association with one limited area of Greece points to an underlying tension, which we have seen already. On the one hand, he is only a local ruler. On the other hand, his story was told by some as the foundation narrative of all “Hellenes”—and in some sense Herodotos' own use of “Hellenes” attests to a certain degree of success on the part of the Deukalionid-Hellenic genealogical project in this respect too. The Greeks in Herodotos' *Histories* are, after all, Hellenes. His work will feature the deeds of two main groups of people: τὰ μὲν Ἑλλῆσι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι (“the Hellenes and the barbarians,” 1.proem). And later, when Kroisos goes to inquire about which Greeks are most powerful, the “Greeks” are Hellenes:

μέτα δὲ ταῦτα ἐφρόντιζε ἱστορέων τοὺς ἂν Ἑλλήνων δυνατωτάτους ἔοντας προσκῆσαιτο φίλους.

After this, he [Kroisos] began to investigate which **Hellenes** were most powerful in order to add them to his own forces as friends and supporters.

(trans. A. L. Purvis)

---

<sup>141</sup> I stick to basic points of geographical reference; for a more detailed discussion of Herodotos' reporting of places in this passage, see Asheri et. al. 2007, *ad loc.*

Kroisos' own investigating (ἱστορέων) looks similar to Herodotos' own information-gathering process (Ἡροδότου Θουρίου ἱστορίας ἀπόδεξις ἦδε, 1.proem).<sup>142</sup> When one does this, one finds that one can plot the histories of certain peoples (here, the pre-Dorians) along the historical axis of the reign of Deukalion, Hellen, and Doros. Even *historiē* yields Hellenism.<sup>143</sup>

While Herodotos is not interested in Deukalion's myth as the originary tale of the Hellenes, his use of Deukalion shows another familiar plot element, namely that there is nothing before Deukalion. We have seen this over and over: given the evidence at our disposal, in the archaic and classical period we just do not see Deukalion and his Flood myth as an end scenario for anything but Hellenic identity. Herodotos' episode is another one of this type, except his shows the success of the earlier mythic and religious discourse and the attendant tension.<sup>144</sup> Stripped of the Muse and her artful uses, without Zeus and Prometheus, impiety and salvation, pebble-people and propaganda, under the critical eye of the historical investigator Deukalion is an all-too human figure. Except that he is not. For what evidence could someone like Herodotos find for Deukalion's existence? The religious cipher worked. The fact that Herodotos does not here follow one

---

<sup>142</sup> On Herodotos' characters mirroring his own investigative habits see Fowler 2010, 333; Hollmann's 2005 exploration of the phenomenon of sign manipulation in the *Histories* by Herodotos himself and his characters is relevant too in point of mirrored activities Herodotos and his characters (even though Hollmann does not categorize the activity of *historiē* as sign vocabulary).

<sup>143</sup> But whose ἱστορέων yields Hellenism—Kroisos' only, or can we go back to Herodotos? How significant is it that this is in the mouth of Kroisos? Is there anything about this character that we should attend to in analyzing his treatment of Greek migrations and Hellenic time-keeping? Or, no, it's not a big deal—just what everyone (including Herodotos as author) knew?

<sup>144</sup> I do not mean to imply that Herodotos' work is non-religious; his is a case where simple dichotomies such as religious vs non-religious do not work. On this see Fowler 2010.

of his usual methods of giving all available sides to an issue,<sup>145</sup> may further suggest this.<sup>146</sup>

**(f) Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War***

The same tension applies to the Thucydidean Deukalion. Here we have a non-religious discourse that incorporates Deukalion without the Flood and the mess of impious demigods.<sup>147</sup> And yet we have Deukalion. And we have Hellenes: Thucydides states that this war is the “greatest movement for the Hellenes” (κίνησις γὰρ αὕτη μεγίστη δὴ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐγένετο, 1.1). From the standpoint of collective identity, the war is best thought of as a Hellenic civil war.

The Thucydidean Deukalion, moreover, is explicitly tied to the formation of Hellenic identity, where Herodotos’ was more of a chronological tool. In Book 1 Thucydides discusses evidence for the greatness of the current war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, as compared to anything—martial or otherwise (1.2)—in the past. The first consideration is that in the past people groups were constantly moving from place to place and as a result could not amass the kind of resources that both the Athenians and the Peloponnesians bring to the current contest. We saw this notion of restless motion in the Greeks’ past connected in the end with Deukalion and his sons in Herodotos too, and even the theme of scarcity as a result. The second consideration is that until the Trojan

---

<sup>145</sup> Fowler 1996, 77.

<sup>146</sup> Of course it may not, since the argument is from silence. But the fact that Herodotos lines the history up with Deukalion in particular is significant: that the Deukalionid line gives the temporal axis suggests that they own the times.

<sup>147</sup> On religion and Thucydides see Hornblower 1992 and Furley 2006.

war, “Hellas clearly did not undertake any work in common” (1.3). What is more,

Thucydides says, the “Hellenes” were not even “Hellenes”:<sup>148</sup>

δοκεῖ δέ μοι οὐδὲ τοῦνομα τοῦτο ξύμπασά πω εἶχεν ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν πρὸ Ἑλληνος  
τοῦ Δευκαλίωνος καὶ πάνυ οὐδὲ εἶναι ἡ ἐπὶ κλησις αὕτη

I am inclined to think that the very name was not as yet given to the whole country,  
and in fact did not exist at all before the time of Hellen, the son of Deukalion

Thucydides’ research, like Herodotos’, yields Deukalion and Hellen as watershed figures  
in Greek collective identity. Here Deukalion is the father of Hellen, the eponymous hero  
of the Greeks as a people, nothing more and nothing less. But Thucydides goes on to give  
an account of how Hellen’s name achieved its eponymic status. The following statement  
includes a few more bits about Deukalion’s tradition as reflected in Thucydides (1.3):

κατὰ ἔθνη δὲ ἄλλα τε καὶ τὸ Πελασγικὸν ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀφ’ ἐαυτῶν τὴν  
ἐπωνυμίαν παρέχεσθαι, Ἑλληνος δὲ καὶ τῶν παίδων αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ Φθιώτιδι  
ἰσχυσάντων, καὶ ἐπαγομένων αὐτοὺς ἐπ’ ὠφελίᾳ ἐς τὰς ἄλλας πόλεις,  
καθ’ ἐκάστους μὲν ἤδη τῇ ὁμιλίᾳ μᾶλλον καλεῖσθαι Ἑλληνας, οὐ μέντοι πολλοῦ  
γε χρόνου ἐδύνατο καὶ ἅπασιν ἐκνικῆσαι.

The different tribes, of which the Pelasgian was the most widely spread, gave their  
own names to different districts. But when Hellen and his sons became powerful in  
Phthiotis, their aid was invoked by other cities, and those who associated with them  
gradually began to be called Hellenes, though a long time elapsed before the name  
prevailed over the whole country.

Thucydides imagines a time before the Greek collectivity, when local tribes stuck to  
themselves. Hellen and his sons are one of these tribes, inhabiting Phthiotis, just as  
Herodotos’ Hellenic *ethnos* did when Deukalion was king. This notion is also a  
chronological point for Thucydides, being the first moment when a group of “Greeks”

---

<sup>148</sup> The text is the Oxford Classical Text of Jones & Powell 1942, the translation Jowett’s with slight  
modification.

begin working together. The cooperation however neither is inspired by nor follows on any divine help, as we saw in the case of Pindar's poets and athletes. Instead, Thucydides' Deukalion is fully taken up into an ultimately materialist discourse about the rise of land and sea power solely based on quantifiables such as population size, revenues, ship numbers, and city walls.<sup>149</sup> Accordingly, Deukalion is not a god-preserved survivor of a non-naturally ended disaster (like Pindar's Zeus-saved Deukalion), nor is he the figurative progenitor of humans from rocks, which would be absurd in a materialist account. He is rather a merely *human* father of a merely *human* son. Moreover, what distinguishes this son from any other in Greece at the time is that this one happens to have been the first to acquire more material possessions than those around him—and which he did of course without the aid of “divinity” like Pindar's Epharmostos. A basic point here is that Thucydides too tailors his characters, no matter their storied pedigree, to fit his discourse. As Walter Connor points out, that discourse is “consistent with many of the dominant tendencies in contemporary intellectual life—an unsentimental, unheroic view of the past and an emphasis on the drives for power, self-protection, and self-interest;” moreover, these initial chapters of the work are “not so much a description of early Greece or a chronicle of events of early times as the establishment of a way of looking at the past.”<sup>150</sup> Thucydides' very human Deukalion is no exception. In fact, his son Hellen, being the first individual to amass any kind of

---

<sup>149</sup> Much of the discourse of the *archaeology* is predicated on materialism, manifested partly in accounting for human endeavors solely in terms of things one can measure; see for example 1.2, 5, 7, 9, 14, 15. Connor 1984, 20-32 is a nuanced reading of the *archaeology*—its rhetoric and concerns. On the topic of materialism in particular, see Foster 2010, who discusses aspects of Thucydides' discourse and possible connections to Periclean policies of imperialism, which have in turn been linked with a kind of materialism; she ultimately argues that Thucydides “wrote the *History* partly in order to show the price of Periclean materialism and imperialism” (3).

<sup>150</sup> Connor 1984, 26.



material power, is an important paradigm for this phenomenon: he does it through human effort alone.

One final, comparative, note about Thucydidean Deukalion. Hornblower has drawn an implicit comparison that might be helpful here. I have already mentioned that Hornblower discusses Pindar's Deukalion in the context of colonizing myths; that discussion in turn is part of a larger project in which he shows ways that Thucydides' *Histories* echo Pindaric elements. Here we are concerned with paradigm myths and characters in Pindar and the analogous excurses in Thucydides, of which the *Archaeology* is one.<sup>151</sup> We expect these storied elements to contain some kind of eternal truth, ethical message, or to otherwise make some point—as we analyzed king Lokros in *Olympian* 9. Near the end of analyzing Pindar's ninth *Olympian* ode, Hornblower brings in Thucydides' *Archaeology*, pointing out that Deukalion enters as the patronymic of the first mythical character mentioned in the *Archaeology*: Hellen. As I just suggested, however, Deukalion and Hellen are important Thucydidean “firsts” in another, programmatic way.

Deukalion stands at the beginning of a paradigm myth in Pindar and the beginning of an antiquarian excursus in Thucydides. Given their analogous positions in these analogous narrative devices, we can understand both better. Pindar's Deukalion stands at the beginning of Opuntian history, told genealogically and with a strong ethical focus. Thucydides' Deukalion stands at the beginning of history, told annalistically and with a strong ethical focus, of the Greek people. But while Opous's history proceeded with

---

<sup>151</sup> The analogy is Hornblower's; see 2004, chapter 9 *passim*.

Zeus's benevolent involvement at several steps (ending the Flood; bringing king Lokros an heir), and the notion of more than human help is a general concern in the song for Epharmostos, Hellas' history as told in the *Archaeology*, I pointed out, is entirely material (even the mythical characters of Minos and Agamemnon are taken up into this mode).<sup>152</sup> Thucydides accordingly glosses any non-natural elements such as a divinely-caused Flood, an original human couple, anthropogenic stones, and Zeus's hand in arranging marriages and hospitable connections. Deukalion in both represents a turning point in history, one more local and one more pan-Hellenic. But Thucydides presents the history of Hellas as a history always hinging on material advantage. If readers are looking for the "point" of this excursus, it may lie in these two modes of narrating the causes of events in human phenomena. A basic point still remains, though—and that is the apparent success of the archaic genealogical-historic tradition, whose persuasive project echoed for centuries and infiltrated various discourses.

### **(g) Final Remarks on Deukalion**

By way of final remarks on Deukalion's Deluge in the archaic and classical epochs, I'd like to begin by observing that, save Epicharmos, in all of these texts Deukalion is a figure of ethnic identity, the progenitor of the Hellenes. The distinctiveness of this characterization can be appreciated not only by the previous discussion but also if we ask,

---

<sup>152</sup> Moreover, not only is a character like Minos taken up into this discourse, but in the character of Minos particularly at this early point in the "origin" of the Greek people, as Connor notes, Thucydides chooses not the heroic Theseos or "some other legendary civilizer" but "a name that to an Athenian or Ionian Greek would have been one of the most savage in Greek history," who becomes "prototype of Aigean imperialism" (1984, 24). Herodotos too characterizes Minos as a naval imperialist prototype, this time for the Samian tyrant Polykrates (3.122).

what is Deukalion *not*? First, he is not a paradigm character for a certain religious ethic. Compare him in this regard to Atrahasis and Noah, both of whom have a special connection to a divinity, a connection which has a role to play in their being the specific human person who survives the Deluge. Related to this, Deukalion is also not the sole righteous human being of an otherwise evil generation, as Noah is. Second, Deukalion is also not (in the main) a culture hero, a bringer of human technologies. On the biblical side Noah plays this role to an extent. On the Greek side I can mention the human figure of Phoroneus and the divine figure of Prometheus. Finally, Deukalion's Deluge is not a model for a future event—at least we have no evidence for archaic and classical Greeks using the Flood in a “like the beginning—so too the end” scheme. For an example of this, consider the much later Christian Gospel of Matthew (24.36-42). First constructing Noah's Flood as a sudden, unforeseen catastrophe, it then draws an analogy between the suddenness of the Flood and the suddenness of the coming of the Son of Man: “for as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” We have nothing like this ethically-based analogical construction in the early Greek material, which probably reflects, or at least further enforces, the view that Deukalion and his Deluge in this period seems to have been relatively free from religiously framed ethical questions.

This section has illustrated that the primary way that Deukalion's Deluge was received in the archaic and classical periods was through what Darshan recently identified as a genre of literature, but which I am extending to a general tradition, namely the genealogical-historic trend. The Hesiodic *Catalogue* and Pindar's ode are religious, Muse-inspired works that simultaneously make a bid for “Hellenic” cooperation and

construct their own version of “Hellenic” in the act, undoubtedly privileging a certain group. The mythographers’ claims about and use of Deukalion simultaneously rests on religious grounds and also (an important innovation) each investigator’s own researches. Based solely on their own human capacities to know, Herodotos and Thucydides also know the genealogical-historic Deukalion. Their notices of him also show important structural similarities such as an association with the end of Greek-wide migrations, the consolidation of power by Hellen, the furthest stretches of the knowable past, and a basic chronology featuring the Deukalion—Trojan War—Present Age axis. What has stood out in this inquiry is just how successful the project of genealogical-based identity was in the Archaic eastern Mediterranean.<sup>153</sup>

#### **IV. Natural Flood Catastrophes & the End of Civilization**

As a point of departure, I want to focus on the word “primeval” in the title of Joshua Chen’s book, *The Primeval Flood Catastrophe*. The adjective primeval suggests that some floods are primeval and some, whatever else they may be, are not. The Primeval Flood marks it in terms of a temporal frame of reference: it occurred in a primeval time. And I have already observed that there are floods, and there is the Flood. The Primeval Flood, then, is one distinctive flood among many, and this multiplicity can be plotted on different axes. But the Flood is a singular, even unique, event. This singularity gives way when Greek philosophers talk about floods; these authors see Deukalion’s Deluge as one among innumerable floods and other natural catastrophes. They recognize Deukalion and

---

<sup>153</sup> In all this talk of success, I do not of course mean to imply that it was somehow a one time, all-encompassing, universal victory. Surely such contestations of identity are eternal, never fixed, essential entities. And yet, the land came to be called “Hellas” and both Herodotos and Thucydides know its people as “Hellenes.”

his Deluge, but they also speak of other floods—and conflagrations, epidemics, and earthquakes. These catastrophes can, do, and have destroyed entire civilizations, and therefore become epoch-making watersheds.

Here I look at floods and the Flood in Plato and Aristotle. The major “end” theme to come out of these instances is the end of local civilizations (as distinct from the totalizing destruction of all humankind in, e.g., *Atrahasis*). Moreover, there is emphasis on imagining diluvian catastrophes in service of thought experiments (as distinct from the identity-forming use in, e.g., the Hesiodic *Catalogue*). For Aristotle, Deukalion’s Deluge stands out as a supremely illustrative example of localized destruction—supremely illustrative both because flooding as a cause of destruction fits his current topic and also because the Thessalian Deluge in the time of Deukalion was so widely known. He wants to help his readers understand his claims about the causal role of flooding in wet and dry areas, so he uses Deukalion’s Deluge as a recognizable image. Plato’s Athenian Stranger and Kritias, on the other hand, see fit to bring up the Flood in discussions with political ends. In theorizing the best polity and its citizens, it is good to imagine an unreal, but plausible state of affairs, and if one wants to begin this discussion at the beginning of civilization, then it helps to start at cultural zero. The Flood gets us there by erasing all civilization before it—then the thought experiment can begin. I take Plato first, then Aristotle. Among the Platonic texts—*Laws* and *Timaeus-Critias*—I look at *Laws* first, then *Timaeus-Critias*.<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> I follow Catherine Zuckert in looking at the dialogues in the order of their dramatic dates: *Laws* in ca. 460-50, and *Timaeus-Critias* in 409-408; see Zuckert 2009, 1-19.

**(a) Plato, *Laws***

The Athenian Stranger in Plato's *Laws* uses the Flood and its civilization-ending capacities as the spark for a thought experiment on the development of human civilizations. Pulled out of the box of destructive catastrophes in general, Deukalion's Deluge is not only an example of an outstanding natural catastrophe, but one with particular relevance for *Greek* interlocutors for the way that it fits into their imagined chronology: Flood—development of societies—Trojan War—Returns of Heroes—Re-returns of Heroes (i.e., Dorians). Erasing all human technologies with the Flood, the Athenian Stranger then builds a civilization along the Greek historical axis, overlaying it with other general economic and political developments such as pastoralism, agriculturalism, dynastic rule, and so on. The result is fascinating because of its combination of traditional mythic elements (the Floody myth, after all, is thousands of years old at this point) used in yet another novel way (the distinctive features of fifth-century Greek intellectualism). What does the Flood end that makes it a worthwhile scenario for the Athenian Stranger?

At the very beginning of the third book of the *Laws*, the Athenian stranger raises a new topic, wondering about the origin of politics (πολιτείας 676a). A discussion continues about the causes of the changes in size and goodness and badness of cities (τῶν πολιτειῶν γένεσιν καὶ μετάβασιν 676c), as well as the circumstances which give rise to the need for laws and law-givers (680a). To begin their search for such origins the

Athenian stranger asks a question about certain ancient stories (Kl. is an abbreviation for Klinias, another interlocutor) (677a):<sup>155</sup>

- AΘ. Ἄρ' οὖν ὑμῖν οἱ παλαιοὶ λόγοι ἀλήθειαν ἔχειν τινὰ δοκοῦσιν;  
ΚΛ. Ποῖοι δῆ;  
ΑΘ. Τὸ πολλὰς ἀνθρώπων φθορὰς γεγονέναι κατακλυσμοῖς τε καὶ νόσοις  
καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς, ἐν οἷς βραχὺ τι τῶν ἀνθρώπων λείπεσθαι γένος.  
ΚΛ. Πάνυ μὲν οὖν πιθανὸν τὸ τοιοῦτον πᾶν παντί.

- Ath. Then what view do you both take of the ancient legends? Have they any truth behind them?  
Kl. Which legends might you mean?  
Ath. Those which tell of repeated destructions of mankind by floods, pestilences, and from various other causes, which leave only a handful of survivors.  
Kl. Oh, that kind of story must be perfectly credible to any man.

The notion that there are stories “out there” in the vague entity that is the collectivity of mankind or the Greeks (or at least in the minds of certain Platonic characters) reminds us of the generic third person plural “they say” with which Pindar introduces his Flood narrative (line 49). But here we see something new: the Flood story is itself a *genus* of the *species* of tales about the destruction of human beings en masse. Some stories feature floods (κατακλυσμοῖς) as the cause of the destruction, some diseases (νόσοις), and some many other things (ἄλλοις πολλοῖς). This passage is interesting first of all because it gives us a window into a world of stories circulating in the ancient Mediterranean whose distinctive feature is large scale devastation, and second of all for the consciously reflective nature of the way these accounts are talked about.

Such self-conscious investigation about the world underlies the philosophic endeavor. In this endeavor, moreover, there is an assumption that the world is orderly—reflected in the term *kosmos*—and so can be explained. Such explanation of the mechanics of the

---

<sup>155</sup> The text is the OCT of Burnet, the translation of A. E. Taylor.

apparent orderliness of various aspects of the world is at play here in *Laws*, except the aspect under consideration is human society. Since human beings are part of an ordered world, their existence too must be orderly. And if there is some fundamental rationality to human collective life, then its mechanics ought to be discoverable and explainable. Assuming this, the Athenian Stranger will trace the *logical* development of human civilization; if he thought it random, he would not undertake to try to explain it. This idea of a thing that develops on rational principles further underlies the Greek concept of “nature.” Nature is the Latin analogue of the Greek term *physis*, which literally means “growth.”<sup>156</sup> The Greek concept of nature, therefore, is built on a metaphor taken from biology: that which is born, matures, and dies does so in an orderly, and therefore predictable and studyable, way. A question arises: are human phenomena natural in this sense? Can we study human beings and human civilization in the way that we can study other, non-human, phenomena in the world such as the placement of rivers and the sun’s rising and setting? The Athenian Stranger’s discussion presumes so.

Given this rationality, the Athenian Stranger knows that if one is going to begin human civilization anew, then one must have human beings alive at the beginning to repopulate the community. He therefore is not merely interested in stories of human destruction, but those in which a tiny human remnant are left. And this is another facet that leads him to the Flood. His choice of legends, then, is not random, despite the off-handed way that he seems to bring them up. Having gained assent of his interlocutors’ knowledge of these tales, he goes on (677a-b):

---

<sup>156</sup> Gerson 2006, x-xi; Naddaf 2005, 11-35



- ΑΘ. Φέρε δὴ, νοήσωμεν μίαν τῶν πολλῶν ταύτην τὴν τῷ κατακλυσμῷ ποτε γενομένην.
- ΚΛ. Τὸ ποῖόν τι περὶ αὐτῆς διανοηθέντες;
- ΑΘ. Ὡς οἱ πότε περιφυγόντες τὴν φθορὰν σχεδὸν ὄρειοί τινες ἂν εἶεν νομῆς, ἐν κορυφαῖς που σμικρὰ ζώπυρα τοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων διασσωμένα γένους.
- ΚΛ. Δῆλον.
- ΑΘ. Καὶ δὴ τοὺς τοιούτους γε ἀνάγκη που τῶν ἄλλων ἀπείρους εἶναι τεχνῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν τοῖς ἄστεσι πρὸς ἀλλήλους μηχανῶν εἰς τε πλεονεξίας καὶ φιλονικίας καὶ ὅπόσ' ἄλλα κακουργήματα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐπινοοῦσιν.
- Ath. Very well, let us suppose one of those various exterminations, that which was once affected by the Flood.
- Kl. And what is the point you would have us observe about it?
- Ath. That the few who then escaped the general destruction must all have been mountain shepherds, mere scanty embers of humanity left unextinguished among their high peaks.
- Kl. Why, obviously.
- Ath. And of course men like these were bound to be unfamiliar with the crafts at large and, above all, with the tricks of town dwellers for overreaching and outdistancing one another and the rest of their devices for mutual infliction of mischief.

The remnant is explained not due to the exceptional piety of a particular individual but due to the role of high ground in times of flooding: only shepherds high on mountains who are then ignorant of arts (ἀπείρους τεχνῶν) and certain urban vices (πλεονεξίας “greed,” φιλονικίας “contentious rivalry”) survive. The depopulation caused by a flood and the societal situation that results gives occasion to talk about exactly what these Platonic interlocutors are after: the origin and development of politics and laws.

The Flood does not merely take the lives of many human beings. More important for the Athenian Stranger are the technologies (*technai*, 677c) and other human phenomena that it ends: cities, constitutions, and legislation (πόλις, πολιτεία, νομοθεσία, 678a); means of land and sea travel (678c); arts of metalworking (678e); war (678e); richness

and poverty (679b); lawgivers, laws, and alphabets (680a). These external circumstances consequently bring an end to bad morality: violence (ὑβρις), injustice (ἀδικία), rivalry (ζῆλοι), and envy (φθόνοι) (679c). The result is a kind of Golden Age—naturalized. This Age is a time *before* now, a time in which intellectual naivete and moral innocence go hand in hand. The shepherd remnant do not know much—but neither do they cause trouble. I use the general present tense here because, although the Age in the thought experiment is decidedly in the past, the Athenian Stranger’s notion is that these catastrophes can recur, and that every time a flood happens, things begins again. There is, then, a general claim being made. Each time, given time, the group gains technologically but also declines morally. The Age just before the Deluge and the Athenian Stranger’s own, he says, are times in which humanity has progressed to the point where the age is full of war and strife (679d).<sup>157</sup>

This notion of a Golden Age beginning and a trajectory of moral decline is comparable to the *logos* of the races in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, especially the first, Golden, race. There too humans are blessedly ignorant of the arts of farming and of the evils of war; there too humans digress, although not linearly<sup>158</sup> and certainly not predictably. But these elements of linear and predictable development across time are fundamental to the Athenian Stranger’s account. The Flood catastrophe as a natural event in an orderly world is the circumstantial cause of a naturalized Golden Age; things

---

<sup>157</sup> See Zuckert 2009, 73-80 on how this episode generally fits into the conversation of the *Laws* so far, and in particular for how the trajectory in the thought experiment comes to dovetail with the history of the ethnic Dorians represented by the interlocutor Megillus. In my efforts to describe the Athenian Stranger’s particular intellectual approach, I do not mean to imply that he is somehow an objective, unbiased researcher (which however does not exist); but even if his mode has a perspective and a persuasive goal, that does not mean that we have to cry ideologue. Zuckert’s analysis helps with this.

<sup>158</sup> Clay 2003, 81 (with 81-99 generally).

progress from there in a predictable manner. Indeed, the underlying natural character to all this, as I've said, is precisely what makes it knowable.

As for the Flood, note that there is a main Flood event, but without Deukalion. The Athenian Stranger has no use for the Hellenic genealogical hero. For, while he is interested in chronology insofar as he imagines humans existing in the passage of time, he is not fundamentally trying to construct the identity of a particular people (as the *Catalogue* and Pindar); nor does he attempt to establish *when* the Flood happened or to use the event to *measure* other phenomena (as Herodotos and Thucydides<sup>159</sup>). Instead, the story is useful to him for its potential to *imagine* an abstract but accessible realm. This abstraction allows the interlocutors to theorize in a way that is applicable to all humans everywhere, not just the Greeks specifically. This is a difference between the genealogical-historic tradition and the philosophic.

Could the Stranger not have chosen *any* tale of destruction? This is where the Flood narrative is particularly useful, for the Flood always leaves a remnant on high ground, but an illiterate one (giving opportunity for development and education). Once those of the illiterate remnant become educated and then far advanced culturally, they destroy one another—and the cycle begins again. In terms of the Platonic Sokrates and his philosophic ethos, the fact that the Athenian Stranger, as a philosopher, begins a thought experiment on politics with a famous Flood myth instead of the question of what is good

---

<sup>159</sup> Although, just to highlight some notions and themes that we see here and in Herodotos and Thucydides, later in the discussion we see a chronology that begins with the flood, followed by a long period in which humans gain skills in arts and warfare, then the Trojan War, after which the warriors of that expedition flee their own homes under the leadership of Doros and settle in Lakedaimonia (682e). The chronology is comparable to that of the *Catalogue*, and the notions of movement ending with Doros into the area of Lakedaimon is seen in Herodotos and Thucydides.

for a citizen or what is justice and then moves to interrogate his fellows about *their* answers to the questions shows that his efforts take place before Sokratic philosophizing.<sup>160</sup>

**(b) Plato, *Timaeus-Critias***

Kritias, as a character in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*, also fits into the Greek philosophical (better: sophistic) tradition. And he also discusses floods and the Flood in a conversation about politics. His myth of Atlantis is of course famous—Diskin Clay calls it “the most notorious of Plato's myths” and “the most impressive philosophical fiction ever written”<sup>161</sup>—but it is not my purpose here to interpret the myth itself, which will gain my attention as a story of the world's end by war in the next chapter. Instead, I just want to give enough context to answer the question of what Kritias says about the world's end by water.

Kritias' comments occur in both dialogues of the *Timaeus-Critias* pair. These two dialogues, which each feature lengthy uninterrupted speeches by a single speaker, are the second and third contributions to a conversation that began on the previous day (when Sokrates gave his portion). Yesterday's discussion was about educating citizens (in particular, the guardians) from an abstract perspective, in a fashion somewhat akin to the conversation in Plato's *Republic* itself. For today, Sokrates requests that his interlocutors animate his abstract entities by showing the city at war. The plan is for Timaios of Lokri,

---

<sup>160</sup> This is not surprising when we consider the dramatic date of the dialogue, namely the two or three decades after the battle of Plataia in 479, which puts the Athenian Stranger in the context of pre-Sokratic philosophical inquiry. For issues of dating and the Athenian Stranger as a character representing an attempt to do political philosophy in Athens before Sokrates, see Zuckert 2009, 31-33 and 51-63.

<sup>161</sup> Clay 2007, 222.

who is an expert in Greek natural science (precisely in the sense defined above), to give a cosmogony and anthropogony.<sup>162</sup> Kritias, who is an Athenian statesman, will then give life to Timaios' human beings by combining Sokrates' abstract political notions with a story about ancient Athenians.<sup>163</sup> There is another interlocutor, Hermokrates of Syracuse, but while Sokrates gestures toward his speech to take place after Kritias', we are neither told what it will be about nor given a version of it.<sup>164</sup> It is important to note that all three of these characters are practiced politicians in their respective hometowns (Lokri, Athens, and Syracuse), that they represent enemies of the Athenian democracy in the late fifth century, and that the dramatic date of their symposium is 409-408. The effect of this is to give the meeting the air of a possible conspiracy to overthrow the Athenian democracy and to replace it with a more oligarchic regime.<sup>165</sup>

We hear of floods from Kritias twice. In the *Timaeus*, he gives a precis of his *logos* about Atlantis for the purpose of evaluating its suitability for Sokrates' task (20d-26e). In the *Critias*, he then gives this *logos*, providing a picture of the ancient Athenian citizens at war with the Atlantians (113b-121c). Importantly, Kritias distances himself from the tale. Both times—in precis and actual telling—he claims to be giving a version of a story that ultimately comes from the mouth of an Egyptian priest, but also passed through the eminent Greek politician and poet Solon. Here is the line of transfer: the priest told Solon; Solon told Kritias' great grandfather Dropides; Dropides told Kritias' grandfather (also named Kritias); Kritias' grandfather told him; and Kritias now tells Sokrates,

---

<sup>162</sup> On Timaios, see Zuckert 2009, 36-39 and 429 with n. 21.

<sup>163</sup> On Kritias, see Zuckert 2009, 429 with n. 24, which has extensive bibliography on whether this is Kritias the grandfather or Kritias the tyrant.

<sup>164</sup> On Hermokrates, see Zuckert 2009, 429 with n. 23.

<sup>165</sup> Zuckert 2009, 429-30.

Timaios, and Hermokrates.<sup>166</sup> A simpler way to think of the transmission is that the priest told Solon, who passed it on the Kritias' *family*; and Kritias now passes it on to his elite interlocutors:

**Table 2: Transmission of Kritias' tale in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*.**

Egyptian Priests tell -->	Solon tells -->	Kritias' family; Kritias himself tells -->	Sokrates Timaios Hermokrates
------------------------------	--------------------	--	------------------------------------

A few fundamental points. First, there are epistemological puzzles regarding Kritias' account. For example, why is he so at pains to emphasize the tale's truth, to persuade his auditors that he did not just make it up? And what is the role of Solon and these Egyptian priests in its legitimization? Kathryn Morgan persuasively argues for a reading of Kritias' speeches as an attempt at a new charter myth for the Athenians, which accounts for various aspects of this puzzle, and it is her reading that I will follow below.<sup>167</sup> A second fundamental point involves Solon in Egypt. In Kritias' story Solon traveled there, where he had a discussion with an Egyptian priest about ancient history.<sup>168</sup> When Solon tells the priest his version of ancient Athenian history, the priest responds by saying that he knows an account that goes much farther back in time and includes some very noble actions on the part of the ancient Athenians that the Athenians have in the meantime forgotten. This Egyptian knows more Athenian history than the Athenians themselves because the

<sup>166</sup> Davies 1971, 325-26 suggests that Kritias actually drops out a generation in the line of transfer; this "telescoping" of the accounts has the possible effect of making his tale "less implausible" (326).

<sup>167</sup> Morgan 1998; on the epistemological puzzle see especially pp. 102-4. Compare Johansen 2004, 38, who further concludes that Kritias' history "is carefully composed to allow for a reading that takes Kritias' history as constructed in the act of telling it." Further on Kritias' motivations for doing so, see Zuckert 2009, 431, n. 26 where she suggests that Kritias possibly "fabricated the story to glorify his own city and family," which is plausible to an extent, but, since Zuckert seems not to have considered Morgan's argument, is of limited value.

<sup>168</sup> Actually, Solon talked with priests plural. But for simplicity I refer to the priest in the singular.

Egyptians have records stored in their temples, records that unlike those of other people are immune to destructive catastrophes. The result is that the Egyptians have access to knowledge about other peoples, in this case the Athenians, that those other peoples do not themselves have.<sup>169</sup> In their conversation, Solon gives his account of Athenian history, then the Egyptian priest corrects it. Kritias, in the dramatic present, shares all this in the *Timaeus-Critias*.

Why? Why, to address my concerns here, does Kritias talk about the Flood? The answer, in short, is that this Platonic Kritias, too, is involved in a project of identity, insofar as he is attempting to craft a new charter myth for the Athenians.<sup>170</sup> I have demonstrated above the prominent tradition of basing collective identity in the Flood's survivor. The charter myth, while not totally equivalent in means and ends to the project of genealogical-based group identity, does impinge on a group's collective self-understanding: the question, "who are we?" is being asked and answered. By charter myth, I mean, adapting Christoph Auffarth's formulation,<sup>171</sup> a storied account that legitimizes a group's institutions by presenting them as having been established in this way either from a paradigmatic historical moment (however constructed by the myth) or by a founding hero. For example, the story of liberation from slavery under the Egyptians functions as a charter myth of group autonomy for the Hebrews,<sup>172</sup> and the story of the return of Herakles' descendants to the Peloponnese can be seen as a charter myth

---

<sup>169</sup> On why it is through the Egyptians in particular that we hear of Atlantis, see Johansen 2004, 39: for Kritias, while "the Egyptians are not the oldest nation as such (that honor goes to the Athenians). . . they are the only known nation whose culture has survived intact *ab initio*." A similar view of the Egyptians' extreme antiquity is found in Herodotos (2.15), where the opinion is that the Egyptians have always existed since the origin of humankind.

<sup>170</sup> Morgan 1998.

<sup>171</sup> Auffarth 2006.

<sup>172</sup> Raaflaub 2005.

legitimizing the Dorian geo-political map.<sup>173</sup> We happen to have a specific Platonic analogue for Kritias' "charter myth," namely the *Republic's* Noble Lie, also known as the Myth of the Metals (*Rep.* 414b-415e).<sup>174</sup> There, the idea is floated of crafting a tale to legitimate the division of labor in the city—to explain who ought to rule, who ought to fight, who ought to farm, and so on. The interlocutors do not think that the first generation will believe it, but that later generations could. Picking up on this, Morgan asks, "is this not the situation at the beginning of the *Timaeus*?", and then elaborates:

Solon has been given a charter myth for Athens from the Egyptians, conveniently fetishized as preservers of accuracy about the past. He tells this story to Critias' grandfather, and the tale is passed down the stamp of Solon's authoritative truth on it. This tale has not yet been made available to the citizens of Athens at the dramatic date of the dialogue. . . but it has already persuaded Critias, and it shows every sign of having persuaded Socrates, Timaeus, and Hermocrates in advance. Of these four, three have been described as being suited to share in politics and philosophy and are in fact of some political importance in their respective cities. If the aim of the charter myth is particularly to persuade the rulers, the myth of Atlantis has made an excellent start. The truth of the tale must be acknowledged by the interlocutors because a successful noble lie does not make its fictional status transparent. This does not, however, mean that its status cannot be transparent to the reader. These parallels with the *Republic* may indicate that one aspect of the Atlantis myth is Plato's invitation to observe a Noble Lie in action and to speculate upon the possibilities of didactic mythologizing.<sup>175</sup>

To construct a charter myth—rooted in the deep, almost primeval, past—a Hellene such as Kritias will have to go back to Deukalion, for it is he who, standing at the primeval origin of identity, ended "Hellenic" anonymity. To replace, or "trump," this conventional primeval past in service of a new collective identity, a Hellene such as Kritias would have to find a way to go beyond, but still account for, the Deluge. This is exactly what Kritias' Egyptian priests do for Solon.

---

<sup>173</sup> Diodorus Siculus 4.57-8; Apollodorus 2.8; Parker 2005.

<sup>174</sup> Morgan 1998, 104.

<sup>175</sup> Morgan 1998, 104.



Kritias' tale of Atlantis changes the Flood's role in group identity. Kritias accounts for, and redeploys, the Flood in both his tale's precis (in *Timaeus*) and in the tale proper (in *Critias*). But it does not erase it. In both instances Kritias cites Deukalion's Flood as one among many. In this way, he pays homage to the widely recognized origin of the Hellenes, while also giving his interlocutors a new group origin.

Kritias' Solon starts out with the "standard" account of Greek identity, rooted in the genealogical tradition, and fleshed out in various ways especially by the mythographers:

καί ποτε προαγαγεῖν βουλευθεῖς αὐτοὺς περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων εἰς λόγους τῶν τῇδε τὰ ἀρχαιότατα λέγειν ἐπιχειρεῖν, περὶ **Φορωνέως** τε τοῦ πρώτου λεχθέντος καὶ **Νιόβης**, καὶ μετὰ τὸν κατακλυσμὸν αὖ περὶ **Δευκαλίωνος** καὶ **Πύρρας** ὥς διεγένοντο μυθολογεῖν, καὶ τοὺς ἐξ αὐτῶν **γενεαλογεῖν**, καὶ τὰ τῶν ἐτῶν ὅσα ἦν οἷς ἔλεγεν πειρᾶσθαι διαμνημονεύων τοὺς χρόνους ἀριθμεῖν

And on one occasion, when he wished to draw them on to discourse on ancient history, he attempted to tell them the most ancient of our traditions, concerning Phoroneos, who was said to be the first man, and Niobe; and he went on to tell the legend about Deukalion and Pyrrha after the flood, and how they survived it, and to give the geneology of their descendants; and by recounting the number of years occupied by the events mentioned he tried to calculate the periods of time.

(22a-b, trans. B. Jowett)

In Solon's view the most ancient things (τὰ ἀρχαιότατα) are represented by the Argive figures of Phoroneus and Niobe. Then there seems to be a break caused by the Flood, which Deukalion and Pyrrha, as a couple, survive; and then come the Greek genealogies. While Phoroneus was the first human, after the bottle-neck effect of the Flood, Deukalion and Pyrrha become the most ancient ancestors for the Greek people as a whole, seen in the fact that Solon counts the generations starting with them. These characters stand at the beginnings of Solon's streamlined tradition about the first generations of humans. Kritias implies that Solon had designs of crafting a charter myth for the Athenians, but

missed his opportunity because of factional wrangling in Athens at the time (*Timaeus* 21c-d). If Solon had had the chance to use this singular narrative as a charter myth, then the chronology would be quite simple: First Man --> Flood --> “Hellenes.” We can recognize this Deukalion and his tale as the one popularized by the archaic genealogical-historic genre and broader tradition.

But this genealogical tradition is not the one that Kritias implies that Solon was going to use. Instead, it was the one that the Egyptian priest gave him:

If Solon had only, like other poets, made poetry the business of his life and had completed the tale which he brought with him from Egypt, and had not been compelled by reason of the factions and troubles which he found stirring in his own country when he came home, to attend to other matters, in my opinion he would have been as famous as Homer or Hesiod, or any poet.

(21c-d, trans. B. Jowett)

Note the implications that (a) poets craft these tales, (b) Homer’s and Hesiod’s function as foundational texts for the Athenians; and (c) Solon’s would have replaced Homer’s and Hesiod’s. The new myth, then, will be an updated version of the standard account, and, as I mentioned, will skillfully manage to account for and go beyond the Deluge.

The priest gives a general theory of recurrent catastrophes, applies the theory to Athens, and then corrects Solon’s history of Athens. On catastrophes and history, the priest claims that it is wrong to believe that mankind has been destroyed by a flood (i.e., the Flood) only once in the past. The truth is that (a) there have been many destructions (φθοραὶ), (b) they have been of various causes (κατὰ πολλὰ), they will continue to happen in the future (καὶ ἔσονται), (d) the greatest are caused by fire and water (πυρὶ καὶ ὕδατι), and (e) the lesser catastrophes have myriad other causes (μυρίοις ἄλλοις) (22c).

Building on this dichotomy of cataclysms from fire and water, the priest then rationalizes Greek narratives that pivot on these types of events. Thus, the story about Phaethon driving his father's chariot ineptly, and consequently not only setting fire to the earth (τά τ' ἐπὶ γῆς συνέκαυσεν) but also being struck himself by a thunderbolt and dying, is a storied embellishment of a simple fact: the earth is repeatedly destroyed by a conflagration (γιγνομένη τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς πυρὶ πολλῷ φθορά)(22d). This is natural science, and what we seem to have so far in the Egyptian priest is a kind of scientific expert—an Ionian-style natural philosopher. Thus far, I assume, his charter myth would appeal to the Athenian intelligentsia of the late fifth century—which it must, since that is the time period of Kritias' tale.

With this causal framework the priest can—and does—explain the remnant, again furthering his fire and water theme. It can all be easily accounted for: when a conflagration destroys mankind, those high on the mountains suffer more than those in the lowlands near rivers and the sea, for instance the Egyptians. Because of this, the Nile is seen as a savior (σωτήρ) who saves (σώζει) the priest and his people—not only does the priest rationalize stories, but here we almost have a naturalized version of a god. Recall how, in Pindar, Zeus responds to an otherwise natural occurrence in order to save Deukalion and the other local inhabitants. Here the Nile, as nature responding to nature, saves the people. This seems in keeping with the priest's rationalized (and here, even naturalized?) approach.

On the other hand, when there is a flood, those who live in the mountains are saved, Hence: shepherds. This idea is familiar from the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*, and has

indeed been latent in the Deluge myth all along, just waiting for a rationalized account. But here is the Egyptian priest's twist. Not only do he and his people survive conflagrations; they *also* survive floods. And this can further explain a number of things. First, the priest accounts for the fact that the Egyptians preserve the earliest historical records: their land, people, and material artifacts are never destroyed by these catastrophes. Second, this explains why the human remnants of floods are always the illiterate shepherds: living on mountain slopes and peaks above the rising water, they survive in the meantime. Third, we now know why the Egyptians are so far culturally advanced as compared to the Athenians: while , while the Athenians are regularly having to start over with their uneducated hill-dwelling remnant, the Egyptians can keep progressing since they are never destroyed. These constitute the priest's corrections about Solon's understanding of the first man and the survivors of the Flood. Again, notice how he manages to keep the old view and go beyond it.

Before moving on to the priest's critiques of Solon's genealogies, I want to pause on the priest's worldview. So far I have pointed out rationalizing tendencies in his explanations. What about gods, though? In addition to his rationalized claims about general catastrophes and mountain-dwelling survivors of the Deluge, he includes personal agents, a motive, and a simile—all of which seem to go beyond purely rational causation, doesn't it? Consider this passage:

ὅταν δ' αὖ θεοὶ τὴν γῆν ὕδασι καθαίροντες κατακλύζωσιν. . . καὶ πάλιν  
δι' εἰωθότων ἐτῶν ὥσπερ νόσημα ἔκει φερόμενον αὐτοῖς ῥεῦμα οὐράνιον καὶ τοὺς  
ἀγραμμάτους τε καὶ ἀμούσους ἔλιπεν ὕμῶν. . .

And when, on the other hand, the gods purge the earth with a flood of waters. . . and when, after the usual interval of years, like a plague, the flood from heaven comes sweeping down afresh upon your people. . .

(22d and 23a-b, trans. B. Jowett)

The gods do the flooding (θεοὶ κατακλύζουσιν)—contrast this with the impersonal “strength of waters” in Pindar’s myth and the absence of imagery in the genealogical traditions. The priest further gives their motivation: the gods “purify the land with waters.” This is reminiscent of accounts in which divine persons consciously flood the earth as some sort of punishment or corrective response to humans, for example in *Atrahasis* and Genesis. This idea shows up again in the priest’s language where he figuratively speaks of the flood as a “heavenly flow” likened to a “plague.” Again, the priest does not elaborate on the ethical and religious motivations and implications, but instead simply hints at a world of tellings quite different than what we have seen so far in the genealogical tradition. But these parallels are not the main reason I bring this up.

Instead, I want to make three points. First, the priest is not a materialist. If he had not mentioned the gods purifying the land, one might have justifiably concluded so. But there can be more than human personal agents at work in his cosmos.

Second, this does not mean that he can’t be thought of as a Hellenizing natural philosopher, for the *rationalizing* approach of early Greek philosophy does not preclude gods. Moreover, I have been careful with my terms, such as “rationalizing” or “natural.” *Rational* ought not to be confused with *natural* ought not to be confused with *materialistic*. These are not synonymous. This goes back to the point I made earlier about the Greek philosopher and the Greek *kosmos*. Consider Lloyd Gerson’s remarks on this topic:

It would be a serious mistake to leap to the conclusion. . . that the beginning of philosophy coincided with the complete rejection of unseen powers within and ‘beyond’ nature. On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of ancient Greek philosophers found that *as philosophers* they were compelled to recognize such powers as essential to explaining nature. And they generally had no difficulty in designating one or more of these powers as ‘divine.’ But what set philosophers apart was the idea that nature’s orderliness was no fluke. Nature (*physis*), they thought, was a *kosmos* (a unified and orderly arrangement of parts with a *logos* (a rational account, including an explanation of its orderliness)).<sup>176</sup>

The priest’s ideas about the gods punishing humankind with fire may seem odd in the Greek context,<sup>177</sup> but his combination of (a) rational and (b) personal divine agents in his explanations need not.

Third, this combination seems powerful. And this is especially true in the context of designing a Noble Lie. If you can manage to give an account (narrative, otherwise, or both) that includes both a rational, even natural or historical, element *and* a religious one, then you are well on your way to convincing many people. Wowed by the scientific (even if pseudo) and awed by the religious, people will believe. The priest’s tale may stand a chance after all among the Athenian audience.

Returning to the priest’s corrections of Solon. He also critiques Solon’s genealogies. This too is connected with how one understands natural catastrophes and Athenian history. Solon’s genealogy goes back only to *one* surviving couple of *one* Flood: the priest says that this really does not differ from children’s tales (παίδων μύθων, 23b). He then goes on to reiterate that there have been many floods in the past and that the Athenians survive from one little remnant of a particularly great deluge, but that Solon and his contemporaries do not know about this because those past Athenians died before

---

<sup>176</sup> Gerson 2006, xi.

<sup>177</sup> What is odd is not the notion of purification, nor purification by fire, but the idea that the gods would destroy an entire batch of human beings for the sake of purifying the land. See Burkert 1985, 75-84.

the Greeks knew writing. The priest wants Solon to know this because before this greatest deluge (τὴν μεγίστην φθορὰν ὕδασι) the *polis* that is now constituted by those known as Athenians was (a) the most excellent in war, (b) the most lawful in all other respects, (c) known for the most beautiful actions, and (d) the most beautiful polity out of all those under heaven which the Egyptians had ever heard about (23c). The Athenians themselves, moreover, are descended from a small remnant seed of the most beautiful and best race of humans (23b). This of course turns out to be the race of Athenians who defeat the aggressive inhabitants of Atlantis, but die in the ensuing natural catastrophes (25d). The priest trumps not only the traditional understanding of the Deluge, but also the Athenians' traditional understanding of their own autochthony (based on Erichthonios). The new Noble Lie is taking shape.

With these critiques, the priest overrides Solon's "standard" Greek charter myth. He sidelines a version centered on the mytho-genealogical Argive figures of Phoroneus and Niobe and Hellenic figures of Deukalion and Pyrrha, and instead offers one that, while also happening to include these, is a broader rationalized understanding of the catastrophic turning points that gave rise in story form, he claims, to certain important narrative junctures. And apropos of the Greek endeavor to organize the myriad local tales into one universal Greek story, the priest goes well beyond the (also rationalizing and sometimes religious) mythographers to present an Athenian people based not just on an ancestry going back to an individual but to an organic concept of "race" (γένος, 23b). This race is realized in both cultural institutions as well as material "seed" (σπέρματος, 23c). There is a strong materialist trend to the priest's discourse, which for us is

important to note since that is the framework in which his account of Deukalion and the flood will occur.

While it is obviously outside the scope of this study to analyze the *Timaeus-Critias* as a whole, we can nevertheless note that in terms of the work's structure the priest's account of these catastrophes is a prelude to the one great deed that he wants Solon to know about, that is, how those ancient Athenians repelled the Atlantians, as well as the fact that Solon himself and his Athenian fellows are descended from these great Athenians. After Kritias finishes his precis and the interlocutors judge it fitting, the speakers agree that Timaios will first give his cosmogony and anthropogony, which takes up the rest of the *Timaeus*. Picking up where Timaios' account leaves off, Kritias will then animate Sokrates' abstract entities of the previous day as well as Timaios' newly created humans. Kritias will show the Athenians at war with the narrative framework of the Egyptian priest's ancient Athenians and their contest against the Atlantians. Aside from some initial dialogue, his speech constitutes the *Critias*.<sup>178</sup> Kritias also mentions the Flood and other floods there, too, and I turn there now.

The question of why Sokrates et. al. had to evaluate the "suitability" of Kritias' account in the first place (*Tim.* 20d) is answered with the charter myth/Noble Lie view.<sup>179</sup> Kritias' precis of the account in the *Timaeus* passed the test, and in the *Critias* he gives a fuller version of it, i.e., the charter myth itself. In doing so Kritias mentions floods three

---

<sup>178</sup> Zuckert 2009, 430-31 points out that one effect of Kritias' two accounts of the prehistoric Athenians bracketing Timaios' own cosmology is to remind readers of the political context, and in particular the "political purpose" of Timaios' account.

<sup>179</sup> This is no ordinary symposium in which the participants give extemporaneous speeches about a given subject, as in, e.g., Plato's *Symposium*. The meeting of *Timaeus-Critias* are, rather, meetings of minds intended to design a revolution.



times: when talking about the names of the Athenians' first rulers (109d-e), the condition of Attic soil (111a), and the state of the Akropolis (112a). In his summary version he showed a way past the genealogical Flood, which poses an impasse for anyone wanting to reconstruct Hellenic identity. With that approved, in the fuller version he will show his expanded view of natural catastrophes at work. There have been numerous of these, Deukalion's Flood being but one. Every time, however, civilization was destroyed and the remnant had to begin again. Kritias tale will, supposedly, show the Athenians how to do so. End and beginning continue to go hand-in-hand.

In the first mention of floods, the priest explains that after the gods divided the earth's lands among themselves to rule, and after Hephaistos and Athena together chose Athens, the two of them produced good men from the soil (ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς αὐτόχθονας) and set in their minds the arrangement of their polity. But while the Athenians over time have preserved the *names* of certain of these first Athenians (e.g. Kekrops, Erechtheos, Erichthonios, and Erysichthon, 110a), their *deeds* are forgotten. And the reason that the Athenians have forgotten is precisely the destruction of the original men's successors (διὰ τὰς τῶν παραλαμβάνόντων φθορὰς, 109d), the passage of time, and the illiterate nature of the remnant of each catastrophe (109d). We have seen all these elements of the priest's version before in the *Timaeus* and from the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*. The priest does not explicitly mention Deukalion's Deluge as the cause of these destructions, but that it is at least one of the catastrophes is implied from the fact that the remnant that survived did so precisely in the mountains (109d).

In the next mention of floods the priest adds another detail. Floods not only wipe out entire civilizations, but can also effect more limited areas. At the very beginning of his tale, he indicates that the ancient Athenians' battle against the Atlantians takes place 9000 years ago (108e). After his account of the founding of the Athenian race by Hephaistos and Athena, and why these first men's deeds are forgotten, he then describes the natural environment of ancient Attica (110e-111d). When discussing the soil in particular he says that originally Attic soil was incomparably good—sufficient to support an entire army without its (i.e. the army) having to engage in agriculture (110e). The current soil is itself a remnant of this original stuff. And the priest has a natural explanation: on account of the many and great cataclysms through the years (πολλῶν γεγονότων καὶ μεγάλων κατακλυσμῶν), much of the rich and soft Attic soil has washed away into the sea. In this regard the priest likens Attica to a body wasted away by disease (οἶον νοσήσαντος σώματος ὅστ' ἄ), where only the bare bones remain (111b). And again his rationalistic explanations and medical references—all focused on material bodies whether of the earth or of the human—remind us of his tendency toward scientific expertise.<sup>180</sup> This makes sense: the more he can ground his myth in a mechanistic world, the more his “myth” will seem necessary—and the more “suitable” it will be.

When the priest mentions floods for the third time, he has moved on from talking about the physical environment of Attica (its soil, water, and climate) to the city proper.

---

<sup>180</sup> In the *Timaeus* (24c) Kritias says that Athena chose Attica in part for its natural environment, on the assumption that the temperate climate would result in intelligent humans. This causal claim about Attica's climate shows up elsewhere too: Euripides, *Medea* 826-29; the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places* 5; and Aristotle, *Politics* 1327b.

Several floods, including Deukalion's, have ended a once more glorious Athenian Akropolis. He begins with the following claim:

πρῶτον μὲν τὸ τῆς ἀκροπόλεως εἶχε τότε οὐχ ὥς τὰ νῦν ἔχει. νῦν μὲν γὰρ μία γενομένη νύξ ὑγρὰ διαφερόντως γῆς αὐτὴν ψιλὴν περιτήξασα πεποίηκε, σεισμῶν ἅμα καὶ πρὸ τῆς ἐπὶ Δευκαλίωνος φθορᾶς τρίτου πρότερον ὕδατος ἐξαισίου γενομένου

In the first place, the Akropolis, as it existed then, was different from what it is now. For as it is now, the action of a single night of extraordinary rain has crumbled it away and made it bare of soil, when earthquakes occurred simultaneously with the third of the disastrous floods which preceded the destructive Deluge in the time of Deukalion.

(112a, trans. A. E. Taylor)

Just like the soil, Attica's most famous structure has declined. The cause is natural, and includes the traditional mythology. A super-storm of earthquake and rain crumbled much of the towering Akropolis. The "single night" that the priest refers to is probably the one after the Athenians successfully repel the attacking Atlantians in which the entire island of Atlantis is sunk and all but the smallest remnant of the Athenian citizens perish (*Timaeus* 25d). We have seen that the priest holds a general theory of recurrent catastrophes in which once in a while there occurs a flood that is greater than the others (e.g. *Timaeus* 23d, above). Here he connects this theory with the character of Deukalion, and does so in a curiously specific way: he is able to *count* the destructive floods and to align the one in the time of Deukalion in that reckoning. This is another moment of his accounting for "traditional" Greek chronology while going past it in time and also approaching it with an alternative epistemology: while the traditional view takes Phoroneos or Deukalion as the starting point and is content with a vague notion of when this was, the priest goes back to the gods creating humans from the soil and claims

comparatively precise knowledge. As an account, designed to be a “suitable” Noble Lie for an Athenian revolution, the combination of traditional, local tales (universalized) plus the rational framework is particularly striking for its effectiveness at outdoing *both* other simply local, mytho-genealogical accounts (e.g., that of the Lokrians and their Deukalion story) *and also* other rational, even natural or historical, discussions of history, geography, or climate (e.g., the causal effects of hot and cold winds on a city’s inhabitants in *Airs, Waters, Places* 4).

### **(c) Final Remarks on Plato**

To conclude this discussion of the world’s end by water in Plato. The Athenian Stranger in the *Laws* and Kritias in the *Timaeus-Critias* give us a glimpse into the kinds of stories that circulated in Plato’s time about natural catastrophes. Both characters give evidence of beliefs in recurring disasters with various causes, the Flood being one. They also show us that the Greeks could talk about floods, or even the Flood, with or without Deukalion, and with or without a specific locale in mind. Indeed, the Flood in Deukalion’s reign might be considered one among numerous floods that were thought to be somehow greater than others. Also, both emphasize the idea of a remnant—and add that its distinctive feature is its illiterate and uncultured character. The remnant becomes a crucial group since the stories mostly narrate both the end and beginning of a civilization, and have an explicit concern with political organization. Moreover, aside from the priest mentioning a notion of gods bringing the flood to purify the earth, these floods and other catastrophes seem to be simply natural events, not instruments of human correction or

punishment; nor is Deukalion a paradigm character of human excellence in some regard (e.g. piety). Finally, from a literary and intellectual standpoint, at a very fundamental level these characters show us several different approaches one might take to Deukalion as a character or to the Flood as an event. The Athenian Stranger knows many civilization-ending destructions but chooses the Flood specifically as an opportunity to discuss the origin and development of polities in a rationalizing manner. Kritias (via the priest) advances an epistemologically-complex discourse to serve as a new Athenian charter myth. Regardless of the epistemologies at play, all the characters involved—the Athenian stranger and his interlocutors and Kritias et. al.—share one basic assumption: the Deluge is well-suited for imagining a civilization’s end. These characters may be seen as representing certain intellectual trends of Plato’s time, for instance a tendency toward rational explanation of even human phenomena. Even the Athenian Stranger’s discourse has a naturalistic logic to it, since both the impersonal world of floods and also the personal world of polities develop and cycle on predictable patterns. Plato’s most famous student, Aristotle, also appropriates Deukalion’s mythic Deluge in an intellectual environment, but returns the Flood hero to his original, limited locale.<sup>181</sup>

#### **(d) Aristotle, *Meteorologica***

The last problem that Aristotle addresses in Book 1 of his *Meteorologica* concerns why the same parts of the earth (οἱ αὐτοὶ τόποι τῆς γῆς) are not always either wet (ἔνυγροι) or dry (ξηροί) (351a19). He observes that the same locale can at one time be sea and at

---

<sup>181</sup> On the Flood in Aristotle, see Verlinsky 2006.

another dry land, and wonders why. In order to answer this question, he posits a few fundamental assumptions. First, the changes follow some order and cycle (κατὰ τινὰ τάξιν καὶ περίοδον, 351a25-26). Second, the origin and cause of these changes is that the interior of the earth itself undergoes growth and decay (i.e., has a cycle of maturation in which it peaks and then declines), just like the bodies of plants and animals (351a26-28). And third, except, while plants and animals grow and decay as a *whole*, the earth experiences change in its *parts only* (351a30-31). Finally, he points out that these changes take so long and occur so gradually that a person cannot observe them from beginning to end (351b8). In fact, Aristotle says, entire ethnic groups perish and are destroyed by various causes (e.g., war, pestilence, or famine) in the meantime; the result is that, first, there is no one around to record the changes and, second, that peoples may not know that the dry land that they now inhabit was at some distant point in the past actually a sea. With these premises and initial observations, Aristotle makes a variety of arguments about, for example, rivers, underground caverns, and seasonal rains.

I am concerned with a passage in which he is addressing, not any of these particular phenomena, but a more general proposition. Some suppose, says Aristotle, that the cause of particular regions undergoing changes of state such as becoming wet and fruitful from having been dry and barren is connected to the earth's own coming-to-be as a whole (352a17-19). His reply is that, while we can observe such regional changes, it is unreasonable to conclude that there is a single, earth-wide cause behind them. Instead, the answer is that there are cycles of more or less wet and dry periods, just as there are cycles of seasons of the year (352a28-31). But even within a wetter season, for example, there

are smaller regional variations. To illustrate this point, Aristotle mentions the flood in Deukalion's time:

αὕτη δὲ οὐκ αἰεὶ κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς τόπους, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ὁ καλούμενος ἐπὶ Δευκαλίωνος κατακλυσμός. καὶ γὰρ οὗτος περὶ τὸν Ἑλληνικὸν ἐγένετο τόπον μάλιστα, καὶ τούτου περὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα τὴν ἀρχαίαν. αὕτη δ' ἐστὶν ἡ περὶ Δωδώνην καὶ τὸν Ἀχελῷον. οὗτος γὰρ πολλαχοῦ τὸ ρεῦμα μεταβέβληκεν. ἰῶκουν γὰρ οἱ Σελλοὶ ἐνταῦθα καὶ οἱ καλούμενοι τότε μὲν Γραικοὶ νῦν δ' Ἕλληνες.

But this excess does not always occur in the same place. The deluge in the time of Deukalion, for instance, took place chiefly in the Greek world and in it especially about ancient Hellas, the country about Dodona and the Achelous, a river which has often changed its course. Here the Selloi dwelt and those who were formerly called Graikoi and now Hellenes.

(352a31-b3, trans. E. W. Webster, adapted)

While among the Platonic characters we moved away from one specific Flood, or at least accounted for Deukalion's extraordinary Flood in a comprehensive rationalized scheme, with Aristotle we have oscillated back to a specific Flood event. And it is connected both with Deukalion and also a particular region of Greece. Aristotle uses the reference as an example of a natural phenomenon in a scientific argument. He is accordingly not interested in Deukalion as a *person*: he is neither concerned with his personal relationships, such as his ancestry, his father, his wife, or his children (as the *Catalogue* and Pindar are), nor with him as a moral agent (i.e., with his justness, piety). Nor is he interested in Deukalion as a *Hellenic* figure, imagined or real, connected to some national history (as the *Catalogue*, Pindar, and Plato's Kritias are). Nor, finally, is Deukalion chronologically useful for Aristotle as he is for Herodotos and Thucydides. Instead, he is noteworthy because of his association with an outstanding water-related phenomenon that

occurred in his own land of Greece and that can be put to use as a piece of evidence in a particular argument.

And yet—Aristotle is concerned with *Deukalion*. This shows how prominent a place in Greek culture Deukalion and his Deluge occupied.<sup>182</sup> After all, Aristotle, assuming that his readers will know about the myth, employs it in a thought-experimental kind of way to illustrate why the same locale can be a wetland at one point in time and a dry plain at others. Imagining Dodona's end by water must not have been too much of a stretch for Aristotle's audience for him to ask them to make of it a specific example of a more general phenomenon. At the very least, the Deluge is once again tailored to fit a particular epistemology and project. Yet, while the Flood myth may "not have in Greek tradition the central place it has elsewhere,"<sup>183</sup> nevertheless it still has a place, as authors from Homer and Hesiod, on up to Aristotle demonstrate—and one with particular importance, bound up as it is with the Greeks' own self-identity.

## V. From Water to War

This chapter has traced the motif of the world's end by water among the archaic and classical Greeks along three routes: the Diluvian echoes of the demigods' demise in Homer's *Iliad* 12, the genealogical-historic tradition centered on Deukalion, and the philosophical tradition mainly in Plato and Aristotle. For all that these traditions have to offer in projects of imagining the end of the heroic race, Hellenic anonymity, and a civilization, and then building them back up again, compared with the world's end by

---

<sup>182</sup> I owe this point to Anthony Kaldellis.

<sup>183</sup> Scodel 1982, 45.



water, the world's end at Troy took center stage in the Greeks' cultural imagination. It was the Trojan War, after all, in which Achilles' rage killed so many "heroes," i.e., demigods (Homer, *Iliad* 4), including his best friend Patroklos. I turn to the question of the world's end by war in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3: WAR

### I. Introduction: The World's End by War

In the previous chapter I left the Demigods in the lurch. Having opened with a look at their wall's watery demise in *Iliad* 12, I went on to consider other variations on the world's end by water, found mostly in genealogical and philosophical contexts. It is time to return to the heroes and their more common mode of destruction in the Trojan War. My concern will be on the cataclysmic aspects of this War, to be highlighted in two ways. First, by tracing the motif of Zeus' Plan for the War in Greek materials; here, there is a multiplicity of views—although not an infinite range. Second, by comparing it to the cataclysmic war in Plato's myth of Atlantis, the eschatological battle in 1QM, and the myth of destruction in Babylonian *Atrahasis*. In the analysis I compare with respect to the motif of god's plan for the war and other relevant cataclysmic features. Drawing together these texts because of a basic similarity—i.e., divine planning for warfare—will end up revealing other basic differences in terms of temporal orientation, the possibility of personal freedom, and the reason for imagining the world's end by war.

## II. Troy: Zeus' Plans & Heroic Ends

Probably based on the historical upheavals throughout the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean in the late Bronze Age (ca. 1200 BC),<sup>184</sup> the Trojan War dominates the storied thought-world of the early Greek tradition. Assuming that the War is based on an actual event—or any number of discreet events, variously remembered, misremembered, and just plain made-up—does not allow us to conclude that it is unique. The Trojan War may be a distinctively Greek myth, but Greek authors writing about it draw on many ancient motifs, plots, and tropes as they interpret it. The result is a motley mix. So knowledge of older, non-Greek motifs can help make sense of some of the Greek evidence; this is obvious in, for example, the theme of the overpopulated earth, discussed below.

In the Trojan War a coalition of Greek islanders and main-landers band around the brothers Agamemnon and Menelaus and travel to northwest Asia Minor in order to take down the city of Troy. Their ultimate aim, of course, is to retrieve Menelaus' wife Helen. The Greeks of the archaic era developed a tradition of storytelling centering not only on the conflict itself, but also the events immediately preceding and following it: its origins and preparations, and the Greeks' homecomings (*nostoi*). The tradition of stories exploring the events from the war's origins to its consequences is commonly referred to as the Epic Cycle.<sup>185</sup> In fact, we have traces of *two* cycles, one for the Trojan War and one for an earlier Theban War. My concern here is the war in Troy, mostly in archaic Greek

---

<sup>184</sup> On which see Finkelberg 2005, especially pp. 167-76, and *Classical World* 91.5 (1998), a special issue devoted to the topic.

<sup>185</sup> On the Epic Cycle generally see Davies 1989 and the introduction in West 2003. Burgess 2001, 7-46 and 132-171 is a more detailed exposition on the questions of the Epic Cycle generally and its relationship to Homer, respectively.

epic poetry, because the narrative of this war and its combatants, the Greek heroes, became connected to an older Mediterranean and Mesopotamian storyline of widespread human destruction by various means.

In terms of sources, the two most famous poems which partake of—and build on—this tradition are of course the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer, the *Iliad* taking place at Troy in the tenth year of fighting and the *Odyssey* featuring one Greek hero's challenges to arriving home. Hesiod too mentions the Trojan War, briefly in his *Works and Days* where the divine race of heroes perishes at war in Thebes and in Troy (156-173). Additionally, the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, as I pointed out in my exploration of Deukalion in the previous chapter, ends with reference to the Trojan War as the instrument of the demigods' demise. Finally, we also possess many fragments of a subset of the Greek Epic Cycle dealing with the Trojan War; as I just said, these are referred to as the Trojan Cycle. I am most interested in one poem from that group, the *Cypria*, because it narrates the events that sparked the war up to where Homer's *Iliad* begins. These epic poems of Homer, Hesiod, and the Cycle will constitute the bulk of the evidence for this section on the Trojan War.

To focus the inquiry, I would like to direct our attention to one phenomenon in these narratives: a conversation about Zeus' role in the war's origin. The discussion can be further focused with reference to the phrase Διὸς βουλή, "Zeus' plan." The basic idea, with variations of course, that Zeus aimed for widespread destruction of mankind by means of the Trojan War fits the general scenario of, to adopt Walter Burkert's

formulation, “a catastrophe of mankind, wrought by the decision of the ruling god.”<sup>186</sup>

And yet the idea that Zeus caused the Trojan War, it seems likely, is not at the forefront of most Classicists’ thinking on the myth. It is much more common in this regard to mention the Judgment of Paris. But it is not that the topic has gone completely unnoticed; in fact we have important studies of Zeus’ Plan, which I draw on below.<sup>187</sup> Yet we must be aware of the prevalence of myths about human destruction specifically at the hands of the high god in the relevant earlier literature, combined with the archaic Greeks’ familiarity with some of it.<sup>188</sup> Such comparative awareness can deepen our understanding about what is distinctive about the Greek texts, since a number of them (all?) meld together motifs from these older, mostly Mesopotamian stories, with the more recent, and Aegean-centered, reflexes of the Late Bronze Age crises. Now, Edith Hall has suggested that crucial elements of the plot of the Trojan War may come from an intra-Greek story line.<sup>189</sup> However that may be, we again and still have the productive tension of ancient mythological stories and recent historical cataclysm—for the Greek evidence at hand subsumes the Trojan War into broader Mediterranean and Mesopotamian themes. This need not surprise: artists and thinkers use what resources they have at their disposal, either since that is simply what they know or for the sake of their audience’s understanding, to interpret their experience. The crises of the late Bronze Age were real, the suffering likely great. Artists then go to work framing, interpreting for their own purposes.

---

<sup>186</sup> Burkert 2004, 39.

<sup>187</sup> Clay 1999 is now the signature piece, Heiden 2008 a recent in-depth study.

<sup>188</sup> See, e.g., Burkert 1992, 2004 (especially p. 48).

<sup>189</sup> Hall 1989, 22-23.

There still remain important differences, however, between the two productively-tense elements, Greek plot of a besieged city and high god annihilating humanity. For example, in two of the most important Near Eastern comparanda, the Babylonian *Atrahasis* and the Israelite Genesis, what is at stake is humanity at large. The divine apparatus sets out to annihilate human beings as a general group. But in the Trojan War, what is at stake are the lives of a specific sub-group of human beings, the demigods. Secondly, added to this idea of destruction designed for a limited group, are notions of both ambiguity about the what the plan is (or if there is a pre-meditated plan at all) and also divine relent before carrying out the plan. These two ideas are distinctive in the Greek material insofar as the evidence goes. So, and again I stress that there are variations, but the Trojan War seems generally to have been conceived as a potentially total cataclysm diverted. The key words here are “potentially total” and “diverted.”

I discuss the sources in three groups: Hesiod, the Epic Cycle, and Homer. Hesiod includes the *Works and Days* and the *Catalogue*. The Epic Cycle includes the *Cypria* and a slew of texts that fall outside of the temporal frame of this study; none of these texts are what we could consider full literature, but their testimonies about Zeus’ Plan are worth mentioning not least of all for comparison with the fuller, more artful and influential accounts. Finally, Homer includes the *Dios boule* of *Iliad* 1.5. I should be clear in my intent here: I do not aim to uncover some hidden essential version of the Trojan War; none exists, of course. I aim instead to highlight cataclysmic aspects of the scenarios. And yet, variations are not the only reality. To draw an analogy from poetry, one of the underpinnings of the art is repetition with variation. Without the repetition—those

predictable aspects—the variations are meaningless; in fact, without repetition there can be no variation. Just so for myths. There must be some predictable aspects to the Trojan War as a story. What about Zeus’ Plan and the notion of a total cataclysm in this regard?

## **II.1. Zeus’ Plan in Hesiodic Poetry**

### **(a) *Works and Days*: Zeus’ Plan for a “More Just” Race and a Lazy Brother**

The *Works and Days* of Hesiod does not mention the Plan of Zeus but it does mention the Trojan War and the heroes. The cataclysmic aspects of their martial demise are downplayed in favor of a focus on their blessed afterlife. In the *logos* of the five races (γέννη), the heroes are the fourth race, inserted into an otherwise metallic scheme (with races of gold, silver, bronze, and iron).<sup>190</sup> These heroes are to be admired, as I will show, given the context of a poem broadly constituting a discourse about means, ends, and results crafted for Hesiod’s brother Perses—who instead of working hard to obtain the good things he desires is stealing them from Hesiod.<sup>191</sup> The poem gives this impression through explicit epithets, by mentioning the reason that the heroes go to war, and Zeus’ actions on their behalf as a result. In the following discussion I will briefly mention those three aspects: how the heroes are designated, why they went to war, and how Zeus responded. Again, Hesiod’s version of the Trojan War does not feature what will become the enigmatic “Plan of Zeus” to destroy the demigods; if anything, Zeus’ Plan in Hesiod’s

---

<sup>190</sup> Vernant 1983 (English translation of the 1956 French original); West 1978; Woodard 2007, 112-50.

<sup>191</sup> Compare other approaches to the *logos* of the Races, e.g., Ballabriga 1998, 333-34, who sees a critical interplay between the Prometheus story, which represents an aristocratic ideology, and the myth of the races, which functions as a critique of that ideology; Koenen 1994, 2-10 sees the story’s function as follows: “Hesiod explains the deplorable state of the present day world,” (6); Clay 2003, 81-99 approaches the passage as if “the origins of mankind” constitute its focus (81); Woodard 2007 is the most up to date statement on the question of Hesiod and the Near East; and West’s commentary (1978) is still fundamental.

*Works and Days*, insofar as there is one, is to save at least certain of the heroes—many die, but some are rescued to a far away island. This version is fitted into Hesiod’s thematic concerns in the poem.

Hesiod is explicit in his comparison of the heroic race to the previous races. Here is how we are to refer to this race:

αὐτίς ἔτ’ ἄλλο τέταρτον ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ  
Ζεὺς Κρονίδης ποίησε, δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον,  
ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος οἳ καλέονται  
ἡμίθεοι, προτέρη γενεὴ κατ’ ἀπείρονα γαῖαν.

Zeus, Cronus’ son, made another one [race] in turn upon the bounteous earth,  
a fourth one, more just and superior,  
the godly race of men-heroes, who are called demigods,  
the generation before our own upon the boundless earth.  
(157-60, text and trans. G. Most)

This race is first described as “more just and better,” but compared with what? On analogy with the way that the silver race is compared to the golden (“much worse,” 127), and the way that the bronze is compared to the silver (“not equivalent at all,” 144), we may justifiably assume that we are to compare the divine race of heroes to the previous bronze race. The particular respect in which we are to compare them will be addressed in a moment. For now, I want to observe that for the divine race justice and goodness are relevant ways of being. Glenn Most’s translation of “superior” for ἄρειον (158) perhaps conceals its ethical connotation. The race is “more just” and, if you will, “more good” (or, to modify Most’s translation, “superior with respect to goodness”).

The next significant epithet, perhaps the most significant, is θεῖον (159): the race is “divine.” But in what respect? They are certainly divine from a genealogical standpoint, since they are born partly from gods (ἡμίθεοι “half-gods”, 160). But as I discussed in the



previous chapter, this literal understanding does not exhaust the semantic range of *hemitheoi*.<sup>192</sup> Thus, here there is an ethical connotation, seen in the previous epithets “more just and better,” and also for the reason that they go to war, which I will discuss in a moment. First I highlight the significance of the epithet θεῖον. The other races are χρύσεον (“golden,” 109), ἀργύρεον (“silver,” 128, and πολὺ χειρότερον “much worse,” 127), χάλκειον (“bronze,” 144), and σιδήρεον (“iron,” 179). All these epithets are of course metals—impersonal and not even human. Against this, the fourth race, of heroes, is more-than-human, for they are divine. On the other hand, the fifth race, of contemporary humans, are left with a choice—to live up to their impersonal and ethically less-than-human epithet (“iron”) or to transcend their material nature. They (i.e., Perses) can do this, presumably, by heeding Hesiod’s advice. Even from these basic observations, it is clear that the fourth race, as divine, is something special.

The race’s special status, however, is indicated by more than these adjectives, as significant as it is to be “divine.” This has to do with the reason that the heroes go to war. The divine race of Heroes is noteworthy, compared to the other races, because they fight on behalf of other persons in response to a specific wrong, and because their cause is personal justice rather than baseless violence. Consider the other races. The golden race had all good things without working for them (112-13, 116-18), distributed these good things willingly (i.e., without fighting) (118-19), and were dear to the gods (120). Dying naturally and painlessly, after one generation they were gone. The silver race violently attacked each other as soon as they hit their prime (132-35) and did not attend to the gods

---

<sup>192</sup> Drawing especially on the work of Bremmer (2006) and Van Wees (2006).

(135-37). Zeus responded by doing away with them (138-39). The bronze race cared only for war (145-46) and killed each other as a result (152). More just and better than these heartless, impersonal warriors, the divine race of half-god heroes, fights two specific wars: a war at Thebes on behalf of Oedipus' flocks (162-63) and a war at Troy on behalf of Helen (164-65). While the heroes still die fighting, they at least do so on behalf of fellow human beings. At Thebes they die to help Oedipus with his flocks and at Troy they die helping Menelaos obtain Helen (although Menelaos is not mentioned specifically). Far from fighting to obtain someone else's stuff for their own, these wars are fought to help other persons with their "possessions" (broadly conceived). Thus, in contradistinction to, on the one hand, the golden race who do not face problems of possession at all and who seem to be the consummate cooperators (although how challenging is it to share when there is no such thing as scarcity?), and, on the other hand, the silver and bronze races who cannot keep their hands off each other in acts of pure violence, the heroes actually cooperate with one another in a competitive environment.<sup>193</sup> Their wars, moreover, come into view only insofar as they represent collective action on behalf of persons. The wars are particular responses to specific acts of injustice. These cooperative efforts earn the divine race its ethically superior designation as "more just and better."

The fourth race's special status is signalled by its epithet, its motive for warfare, and, finally, by Zeus' granting it a toil-free afterlife. Upon those heroes who did not die in the fighting at Thebes and Troy,

---

<sup>193</sup> Compare Clay 2003, 92-93.

Zeus the father, Cronus' son, bestowed life and habitations  
far from human beings and settled them at the limits of the earth;  
and these dwell with a spirit free of care on the Islands of the Blessed  
beside deep-eddying Ocean—happy heroes, for whom  
the grain-giving field bears honey-sweet fruit  
flourishing three times a year.  
(167-73)

Some of the heroes do not die, due to either their unique relationship with the gods (i.e., the heroes are the gods' offspring) or their own merit, or both. Instead, Zeus himself gives them a home and a life free from toil.<sup>194</sup> Part of what makes their lives trouble-free—and a major point in Hesiod's pedagogical discourse aimed at his lazy and deceitful brother—comes in the final lines of Hesiod's description of this race (172-73): the field produces (sweet) fruit three times a year on its own. In other words, the heroes will not have to work to eat. Hesiod uses the notion that some of the Greek warriors were granted a blessed afterlife to persuade his brother to work: the heroes lived justly, and Zeus blessed them with a trouble-free life. You too, Perses, the message seems to go, ought to work honestly, in the hope that Zeus will bless you. This is not the place to elaborate further on this particular work of literature; suffice it to say that looking forward in the vignettes of the *logos*, the divine race of the heroes and their cooperative efforts are to be admired by the "iron" race of contemporary, labor-weary, yet ethically responsible men.

As for the Trojan War, it is presented in this vignette entirely as a human endeavor. There is no mention of a larger Plan of Zeus, violence against Gaia (Mother Earth), the role of Themis (Sacred Law), or heroic disrespect—all motifs we will see in other strands of the tradition. Moreover, considered as a specific act performed by specific characters

---

<sup>194</sup> For a discussion on the tricky question of which heroes Zeus sends where in lines 166-73, see Koenen 1994, 5n12.

in the *logos* of the races, and even in the *Works and Days* more broadly, the war is seen as an ethically positive event. In a scheme in which the races of mankind are metal, and thus not even human, the divine race of the heroes represents something to aspire to. Hesiod imagines the Trojan War as part of his educational program for his brother primarily in order to highlight its cooperative and therefore just nature.

Margalit Finkelberg has referred to this account of the destruction of the race of heroes as the “standard” one.<sup>195</sup> I begin with it because it does seem to be, if this is possible, unconnected with specific plot lines of other myths of destruction.<sup>196</sup> From here on out, though, we see the heroes’ end via the Trojan War interwoven with and variously dependent on older motifs.

### **(b) Hesiodic *Catalogue*: The End of Miscegenation & the Persistence of Divinity**

In the previous chapter I introduced the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* as a document of national identity. Following the historic establishment of Dorian hegemony on mainland Greece,<sup>197</sup> it privileges and argues for a genealogical notion of Hellenism based in (i.e., with a father figure from) northwest Greece. Presumably beginning with the Flood, the poet then weaves together a vast amount of local myths, assigning status and hierarchy, and generally “mapping” myriad Greek communities into one whole. Notwithstanding the extremely fragmentary state of the text, we can nevertheless assert with some confidence that the Trojan War is the climax of this work. The divine race of heroes will cooperate to help Menelaos. But the *Catalogue*’s War in Troy, as a plot motif, is framed

---

<sup>195</sup> Finkelberg 2004, 12.

<sup>196</sup> Except, of course, the basic motif of the metallic races of human beings. See above.

<sup>197</sup> Finkelberg 2005, 169.

as one part of Zeus' deliberate plan to end divine-human miscegenation. In this respect it fits the motif of the high god separating the divine race of gods and a race of heroic human beings, attested also in Genesis 6.1-4. Yet while the Jewish tradition drew on Flood motifs to end this miscegenation, the Greek tradition overlaid their own Trojan War myth. The war spells the end of the divine race of half-god men and the sexual unions which give rise to such a race—but not, according to the *Catalogue*, to the notion of divine humanity.

The poet sets out to sing, in a Muse-inspired discourse, of that group of women who were the best (ἄρισται) and fairest (κάλλισται) and who sexually united with male deities (μισγόμεναι θεοῖσιν) (fr. 1.1-5). Such intercourse is possible because the poet imagines a time when gods and humans shared feasts (δαῖτες) and councils (θόωκοι); in other words, gods and men lived together (fr. 1.6-7).<sup>198</sup> These humans, moreover, while perhaps not living *forever* like the gods—the poet assigns them the epithet καταθνητοῖς, 'mortal'—seemed to have lived longer than they do now; we cannot be sure due to the fragmentary nature of the passage. But what matters more than the question of human immortality at the time is the simple phenomenon of divine and human togetherness. Since the divine characters feel the force of sexual attraction, it makes sense that they desire certain women, divine and human. And this poet weaves such tales from around the Greek world into one over-arching narrative in which the favorite heroes of Greek locales spring from, and extend for their descendants, a divine nature.<sup>199</sup>

---

<sup>198</sup> On this era, with special considerations on how it compares to the Golden Race in Hesiod's *Logos* of the Five Races in *Works and Days*, see Clay 2003, 166-67.

<sup>199</sup> For a more historicizing approach, based on the phenomenon of marriage practices in which elites married their daughters to other elites see Finkelberg 2005, 65-108; but see also the critical remarks of Beckman 2008,

In terms of individual women, the poem seems to end with Helen.<sup>200</sup> The fifth, and final, book opens with long lists of men suing for her hand in marriage, the best men born from the genealogies and human-divine unions which have formed the back-bone of the poem so far (frr. 154a-e and 155.1.1-23). Bringing us out of the list of suitors, the poet has Helen's father, Tyndareos, ask the suitors to swear an oath that none will take her by force—for we are to assume that they are all gathered at Tyndareos' house—and that all will unite to exact punishment against any who do so (fr. 155.40-47). In rapid succession, the suitors agree, Menelaos wins the bride, though Achilles would have, we are told, if he had been old enough at the time, and Hermione is born unexpectedly (ἄελπτον) (fr. 155.47-57). Both the commentary on the fact that Achilles would have won if old enough (since, presumably, it would be fitting for the best Greek man to marry the best Greek woman) as well as the enjambment of the word used to describe Hermione's birth (ἄελπτον) point to tensions with the way things have turned out. And indeed, the very next thing to come in the poem is:

ἄελπτον. πάντες δὲ θεοὶ δίχα θυμὸν ἔθεντο  
 ἐξ ἔριδος, δὴ γὰρ τότε μήδετο θέσκελα ἔργα  
 Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης, μείξαι κατ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν  
 τυρβάξας, ἥδη δὲ γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων  
 πολλὸν αἵστῶσαι σπεῦδε πρόφασιν μὲν ὀλέσθαι

60

---

who suggests that the epic stories of marrying into thrones throughout Greece may also, like the ideological construct of a unitary Hellenic identity that the *Catalogue* forges, be imaginative constructions not necessarily rooted in actual social practice. It is of course possible that an interpretation of the poem could stop here, but the Muse-inspired framework, as a signifier of *art*, always invites deeper reflection. Nevertheless, the interpreter of this poem in particular is in difficult straits due mostly to the broken state of the text, but also due to the tension of polar opposing approaches: is it “just” ideology, reflecting the attempt of Northwest Greek rhetorical dominance, no matter how imaginative? Or is it about “deeper” things, e.g., the possibility for human beings to rise above their “mere” humanity hinted at in the very idea that human women could be the object of divine desire? There is much work on the former (see the essays in Hunter 2005), but I have seen nothing on the latter. My comments here gesture mostly toward possibilities in the latter approach, although this study is not the place to explore them fully.

<sup>200</sup> West 1985, 114-21; Clay 2003, 169.

ψυχὰς ἡμιθέων

unexpectedly. All the gods were divided in spirit  
in strife. For high-thundering Zeus was devising  
wondrous deeds then, to stir up trouble on the boundless earth;  
for he was already eager to annihilate most of the race 60  
of speech-endowed human beings, a pretext to destroy  
the lives of the semi-gods  
(fr. 155.57-62, text and trans. G. Most)

And then a few fragmentary lines later:

ἀλλ'οἱ μὲν μάκαρες κ[.....]ν ὥς τὸ πάρος περ  
χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων βίοντες καὶ ἦθε' ἔχουσιν 65  
τῷ θῆκε ἀθανάτων τε ἰδὲ θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων  
ἀργαλέον πόλεμον, τοῖς μὲν τεῦχ' ἄλγος ἐπ' ἄλγειν  
Ζεὺς

But that the ones blessed [ ] as before  
apart from human beings should have life and habitations. 65  
Hence he established for immortals and for mortal human beings  
difficult warfare: for the ones he made pain upon pain,  
Zeus  
(fr. 155.64-68)

By the time Menelaos and Helen are married and bear their first child, the divine characters are so personally embroiled in human affairs that there is strife among them (ἔριδος, 58). In another text Hesiod formulates the notion of two Strifes: one type of competitive striving is good since it inspires individuals to *work hard* to better themselves in light of their competitors' own self-striving; but the other type of competition is bad since it inspires individuals not to work hard to fulfill their desires but to take what they desire from other persons by force (*Works and Days* 11-36). The situation at this point in the *Catalogue of Women* is one of the bad strife; the poet gives the impression that this Eris between the gods is not good—whatever their involvement with humans, such strife should not be the result.

Zeus, apparently having noticed this for some time, or perhaps guessing that things would go this way, has been making plans—so much is suggested by the imperfect of μήδετο ‘contriving’ (58) and the adverb ἤδη ‘already’ (60). His planning however is not expressed with the noun βουλή or the verb form βουλεύομαι as in the Cyclic and Homeric texts I will consider later. Instead, the *Catalogue*’s poet speaks of Zeus

μήδετο θέσκαλα ἔργα.

**devising** wondrous deeds.

We may have glimpses here of one divergent element of the Cyclic/Homeric and the Hesiodic traditions. On the other hand, it may not be significant. There is not enough evidence to go on. We can just observe that the *Catalogue*, representing a Hesiodic tradition, speaks of Zeus’ planning with μήδομαι terminology: in the line just quoted Zeus devises “wondrous deeds.” A little later in the poem this language is echoed when Zeus is characterized in his role of father “devising great things on behalf of men” (πατὴρ ἐρίσθενός μεγάλ’ ἀνδράσι μηδομένοιο, fr. 155.85; see also line 76).

Notwithstanding these variations in language, the two traditions are of course similar in that they both contain versions of the episode of Zeus dealing with the end of the heroes through the Trojan War. But how and why that happens, and how the poets express it, diverge.

Let’s take a closer look at the content of Zeus’ planning in the *Catalogue*. Lines 60-62 intimate that Zeus’ frustration is not with *all* humans, but only a certain sub-set of them: those who are the offspring of precisely those divine-human couplings which constitute the *Catalogue*’s topic. Or perhaps he is not so much frustrated with *them* and



acting on a perception of injustice—for nothing is said here about heroic disrespect—but instead simply views destroying them as a solution to some other problem. However that may be, Zeus wants to destroy the so-called *half-gods* (ψυχὰς ἡμιθέων). He will accordingly use war as a means for destroying many humans, even though it is the semi-gods in particular whom he is after. Indeed the poet uses the word πρόφασιν ‘pretext’ (61) to describe Zeus’ reasoning in this regard.<sup>201</sup>

But why? Why and how does Zeus want these semi-gods dead? The problem of the gods’ strife suggests an answer: the gods’ personal—too personal—involvement with humans.<sup>202</sup> On the one hand, this involvement is good. First of all, it is good because of what it suggests about humans, namely that they can be so excellent and beautiful that the gods would desire them. Such human excellence and beauty is, after all, the fundamental premise of the entire poem. The *Catalogue* will be a song about mortal women who were superlative in excellence and beauty. But the fact that some human beings can be ἄριστος ‘most excellent’ and κάλλιστος ‘most beautiful’ (fr. 1.3) implies that others are merely ἀγαθός ‘good’ and καλός ‘beautiful’—there is a spectrum of evaluations. The basic point however is that humans can be of such quality to attract immortals—a high compliment. Second of all, the divine involvement is good because of its results, namely that the gods’ sexual mingling with humans produces humans with a divine nature (or at least a semi-divine nature), and as these humans themselves reproduce with regular, (i.e., mortal) humans, the divine nature persists. And since, moreover, as the entire poem argues, every group of Greeks is in some way born from divine ancestors, it follows that

---

<sup>201</sup> On πρόφασιν, see Clay 2003, 170n75.

<sup>202</sup> Clay 2003, 170 speaks of “the menace such closeness can produce,” citing examples from the *Iliad* in note 73.

every Greek is divine. It is important to qualify this statement, however, based on the genealogical metaphor that drives the poem. The genealogies indicate who may be included in the “family,” indicates how they are linked, and implicitly assigns hierarchy. Add to this the fact that the stemmas go back to and include gods. Thus the poem claims: the Hellenes are one big, divine family. For these reasons, then, the deities’ interest in mortal women is a good thing.

On the other hand, there is a downside to this involvement, to wit, that since the gods, as characters in epic, naturally feel affection for their offspring, they are likely to quarrel about the interests of their own children. As I just noted in connection with line 85, Zeus, depicted as a father, is thinking up a solution to this problem. By severing the parental links between immortals and mortals, the gods will no longer be as susceptible to parochial quarreling—not only with fellow immortals but also with mortals. Are the Hellenic demigods at fault too? Nothing to this effect is evident in any of the extant fragments of the *Catalogue*. Nor would such a motif fit the ideological aspirations of the text. If—and it is a big if to my mind—the *Catalogue*’s heroes did commit some crimes warranting Zeus’ punishment, then the War could be understood in a secondary sense as a punishment for those wrongs. However that may be, this severance need not deprive the mortals of their ongoing divinity: each Hellenic community and the Hellenes as a whole can still claim divine and semi-divine ancestors, and hence their own divine nature. Moreover, there remains the possibility of human excellence and beauty, brought up at the poem’s beginning, except now it is not for the gods to desire, but for humans alone. At the very least, Zeus has not left humans alone. Indeed, in this new Zeus-led scenario,

the gods are situated in human phenomena no longer in the roles of potential lovers and literal parents, but in roles analogous to that which Zeus occupies, helpers and thoughtful planners.<sup>203</sup>

Seen from this perspective, the Trojan War and its surrounding circumstances, which somehow constitute the plans/deeds Zeus themselves (βουλή, ἔργα) or the outcomes of such planning/devising (βουλεύομαι, μήδομαι) on Zeus' part, are truly marvelous (θέσκαλα), in the sense that they are somehow incomprehensible to all but the mind of Zeus. If we imagine the mythic events of the *Catalogue*, chronologically speaking, to occur directly after Hesiod's *Theogony*, then the time is early in Zeus' reign.<sup>204</sup> There are immortals and mortals everywhere, co-mingling, sharing feasts, assemblies, and even beds. But when gods produce offspring with human beings, results are potentially bad for all involved, as we saw. Zeus, then, has many parties to satisfy in cleaning up what he perceives to be a social mess. A vast war could be an elegant solution: individual gods and humans may gain glory by their individual actions, divine-human miscegenation will end, and all involved may learn a few lessons about cooperation.

The War's purpose may be more focused on the group whose collective identity the poem constructs, however: the Hellenes. The poet makes a bid for a certain way of construing the occupants of Greece. They are to be understood as a family under father Deukalion. The poem recognizes and establishes the divine basis of each family "member" (i.e., each local stemma). The poet then gives them a reason for cooperation via their heroic ancestors' oath to Tyndareos, and an occasion to act on those oaths. With

---

<sup>203</sup> Heiden 2008, 230.

<sup>204</sup> Clay 2003, 161.

this in place, the poet obliterates the structural helps, i.e., the religious source. Like a builder who uses scaffolding to hold up the building until it can stand on its own and then, when finished, discards the scaffolding and the structure remains. So too: the story of local heroes united in a metaphorical family, with its deep, and ultimately unknowable and uncontestable epistemological basis, is a religious discourse. Here it is a tool—the scaffolding—for constructing a vision of identity. The Trojan War destroys the heroes, the specific religious tools in the job. The religious source of belonging is used and then vanishes. But the togetherness, the mythic narrative, the ideology remains.

Where does this leave us with the beautiful women of the proem, the women who suggest the possibility of divine desire for humans and, thus, a human nature somehow greater than “merely” human? In case some mortals are worried about losing their divine connection through the loss of divine and semi-divine parents, the poet of the *Catalogue* imagines a scheme in which even this is retained. Near the poem’s end (5.201ff.), we cannot tell exactly where,<sup>205</sup> is an odd passage about a snake. All the Hellenic heroes have been assigned a place in the family, and bound in oath. Menelaos has married Helen, and they have a child. The characters are set for the human spark of the Trojan War (i.e., the abduction of Helen and the Hellenic response in war). The poet has also mentioned Zeus’ Plans to stir things up, to destroy many human beings, and to send the demigods to live apart, blessed. Thus the divine spark is set too. Then the weather changes on earth: strong winds, forests bent low, crashing seas, devastated crops. This all seems to happen in the spring, signalled by mention of the snake’s life cycle (in 37 broken lines). What to do

---

<sup>205</sup> See West 1985, 119-21.

with this snake? Marting West raises the possibility, while acknowledging that there are no explicit clues in the text to verify the view, that the snake may be an analogy for the half-god heroic race: “is there some significant analogy to be discerned between the fierce snake (ὕβριστῆς τε καὶ ἄγριος) which is laid low by the power of Zeus, its soul retreating into a subterranean chamber to reappear in a younger body after a certain interval of latency, and the warlike race of demigods that Zeus has removed to a place beyond our ken? They are not really dead, they live on the Isles of the Blessed Ones. . . Will their spirit, after centuries of waiting, manifest itself again in their descendants? Does the poet of the *Catalogue* anticipate a new heroic age. . . and is the hibernating and sloughing snake his symbol of this regeneration?”<sup>206</sup> Jenny Strauss Clay also entertains the possibility that the snake is a symbol.<sup>207</sup> In her systematizing approach the snake represents both a cosmic *Zeitwende* and also a continuity to what comes after, namely, a new race of men (those of the Iron race of Hesiod’s *Works and Days*). Both of these interpretations latch onto the paradox that makes the snake so worthwhile an analogy: in shedding its skin it dies, but doesn’t—some essence remains. For West the essence points to the heroic race as a whole, which the poet anticipates rising again. For Clay the essence points to the survival of the human race after the great War. I would point to the divine desire for those “beautiful” and “best” women programmatically introduced at the poem’s beginning and featured throughout the entire text, and also to the specific end of divine-human miscengenation through the Trojan War. What the Trojan War potentially ends is the possibility of a divine aspect to humanity, an element of human beauty so

---

<sup>206</sup> West 1985, 120.

<sup>207</sup> Clay 2003, 173.

powerful that even gods take notice. Zeus' plan to end the miscegenation *seems* like it may sever this link. But the snake points to its actual persistence. For, just as the snake periodically "dies" insofar as it sheds its skin, nevertheless its "life" remains (ψυχή, 101), so too the mortals, who despite having lost a concrete social connection with the deities through the loss of divine-human intercourse, nevertheless retain their divine nature. That divine seed had already been planted in the "most excellent and fair" mortal women early in Zeus' reign—and their descendants live on down to the poet's own day.<sup>208</sup> The War ends physical interaction but human divinity persists.

## II.2. Zeus' Plan in the Epic Cycle

The Trojan War is the central event in the Epic Cycle, nearly comprising the heroes' *raison d'être*.<sup>209</sup> In this section I deal with five texts that are part of, or closely related to, the Epic Cycle: a scholium to *Iliad* 1.5, the *Cypria*, a second-century AD Greek papyrus, Apollodorus' *Library*, and Proclus' *Chrestomathy*. In some ways the *Iliad* belongs here too, insofar as it takes up themes belonging to the Epic Cycle more generally,<sup>210</sup> and can be regarded as a masterpiece in that group in terms of basic content. But it surely stands on its own for its size, quality, and influence, and so I give it its own section later. The texts covered here do not all belong to the archaic and classical period; in fact, only the

---

<sup>208</sup> Given the parallels between the Hesiodic *Catalogue* and Genesis, especially investigated by Guy Darshan, one wonders about the snake's role. In both the snake is involved in the loss of divine-human intercourse. In Genesis the snake is the trickster agent of evil persuasion; Eve and Adam trust him, eat the fruit, and are subsequently banished. Thus ends divine-human miscegenation. In the *Catalogue* the snake is a (seemingly positive) symbol for the persistence of the divine element in humanity. These are obviously different evaluations and roles, yet within a similar motif. Is there a polemic here (which of course assumes some familiarity with texts or at least the ideas expressed in them, perhaps based on oral tales or other texts)? Was the snake a contested motif?

<sup>209</sup> On the Epic Cycle see Davies 1989.

<sup>210</sup> See Heiden 2008, 228-29 (especially with n. 62).

*Cypria* does. But the other documents give a fascinating look at the multiplicity of ways of beginning the Trojan War, as well as understanding what it ended. Moreover, the survey will give extra context to *Iliad* 1.5. It is hoped that out of this one will have a sense of both continuities but also the distinctive features of each version.

One idea and extant text loom large over the motifs used here to “explain” the Trojan War: the burdened earth and the Babylonian epic *Atrahasis*.<sup>211</sup> There, humans multiply, the land feels oppressed and the high gods annoyed, and so the highest god searches for ways of annihilating mankind. Catastrophes of plague, famine, and flood are tried. Yet man survives. We need not resort to claims of direct textual interaction and thus influence in order to bring these texts together for comparison; instead, it is sufficient to acknowledge the cultural *koine* of the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean, to see the ideas in the *Atrahasis* and the following Greek texts as existing in a geographic and temporal continuum. Some Greek artists, doing whatever they were doing with the Trojan War, at some point along the way began to think of it, not in the Hesiodic terms of Zeus’ plan for the demise of the demigods, but in terms of divine planning for the end of the human race in general for reasons having to do with their multiplication, and sometimes impiety. Again, I am speaking in general terms here when I say that these texts show strong parallels with other anciently-attested myths of catastrophe. Of course, as I will show later, Homer’s *Iliad* complicates this picture with its own ambiguous “Plan of Zeus.” But first, Zeus’ plan for the end in non-*Iliadic* texts. Unlike the Hesiodic focus on the fate of the race of half-god heroes, the following texts do not show a singular concern. Some are

---

<sup>211</sup> See Burkert 1992, 100-06.

about the demise of human beings generally, some about the heroes; some feature the War as a response to human injustice, some do not. All feature, however, the notion of Zeus' Planning.

### **(a) Scholium & *Cypria*: Gaia's Suffering & Zeus' Thoughtful Response**

As an entry point to the *Cypria*, I actually want to begin with the *Iliad*, because as I just mentioned a looming question in this inquiry concerns the enigmatic clause in the *Iliad*'s proem: Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή ("and Zeus' plan was being accomplished," line 5). I call the line "enigmatic" because since antiquity there have been tensions between Zeus' plan in the *Iliad* and his plan in the Cyclical epics and in the later mythographical accounts. I do well, then, to begin with a scholium on that Iliadic line, because it also purports to quote from the *Cypria*.<sup>212</sup> This will serve as a good introduction to the challenges of thinking about Zeus' plan(s) for the Trojan War.

While discussing various interpretations of the Plan of Zeus, the *Iliad*'s scholiast says that Homer may be referring to "some account" (ἱστορίας τινὸς) in which<sup>213</sup>

τὴν Γῆν βαρουμένην ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων πολυπληθείας, μηδεμιᾶς ἀνθρώπων οὔσης εὐσεβείας, αἰτῆσαι τὸν Δία κουφισθῆναι τοῦ ἄχθους, τὸν δὲ Δία πρῶτον μὲν εὐθύς ποιῆσαι τὸν Θηβαϊκὸν πόλεμον δι' οὗ πολλοὺς πάνυ ἀπώλεσεν, ὕστερον δὲ πάλιν τὸν Ἰλιακόν, συμβούλῳ τῷ Μώμῳ χρησάμενος ἦν Διὸς βουλὴν Ὅμηρός φησιν, ἐπειδὴ οἷός τε ἦν κεραυνοῖς ἢ κατακλυσμοῖς ἅπαντας διαφθεῖρειν. ὅπερ τοῦ Μώμου κωλύσαντος, ὑποθεμένου δὲ αὐτῷ γνώμας δύο, τὴν Θέτιδος θνητογαμίαν καὶ θυγατρὸς καλῆς γένναν, ἐξ ὧν ἀμφοτέρων πόλεμος Ἑλλήσι τε καὶ βαρβάροις ἐγένετο. ἀφ' οὗ συνέβη κουφισθῆναι τὴν Γῆν πολλῶν ἀναιρεθέντων.

---

<sup>212</sup> Scholium (D) *Il.* 1.5, "Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή." The date of the best manuscript containing this scholium is the ninth century. See van Thiel 2000 for a critical edition of the D-scholia.

<sup>213</sup> The text and translation is West 2003, with slight modification. In the Greek, after the phrase ὕστερον δὲ πάλιν, where West prints τὸν Ἰλιακόν, van Thiel does not. Further discussion of the passage in Finkelberg 2004, 11-15; Nagy 2006, §58.



Gaia, being weighed down by the multitude of people, there being no respect among humankind, asked Zeus to be relieved of the burden. Zeus firstly and at once brought about the Theban War by means of which he destroyed very large numbers, and afterwards the Trojan one, with Momos as his advisor, this being what Homer calls the plan of Zeus, seeing that he was capable of destroying everyone with thunderbolts or floods. Momos prevented this, and proposed two ideas to him, the marriage of Thetis to a mortal and the birth of a beautiful daughter. From these two events war came about between Greeks and barbarians, resulting in the lightening of Gaia as many were killed.

The Earth, Gaia, is described as a character in this story alongside human beings in general, not the heroic race in particular. Humankind is harming Gaia, somehow showing a lack of respect.<sup>214</sup> That Gaia is a character who faces problems (being unjustly treated by humans) and actively seeks resolution from another character (i.e., Zeus) suggests that we are in the realm of fictional storytelling where even otherwise natural objects can be characters. The Earth herself goes to Zeus to announce the injustice and to request help. The text goes on to say that Zeus responds first by sending the Theban War, which destroyed many humans; with respect to this war, we hear of no planning on Zeus' part—he just does it. Then Zeus makes the Trojan War. According to the scholiast, it is this latter plan to send the Trojan War which is referred to in *Iliad* 1.5. A basic idea, then, is that the conflict at Troy is part of Zeus' planning. This is important in light of the scholiast's intimation of a lack of planning for the Theban War.

Indeed, the scholiast also mentions that Zeus designed and implemented this latter plan with the advice of the personified person of Momos, “Censor.” This shows that Zeus was exercising some prudent self-restraint. But restraining himself from what? The scholiast, still relating the storyline, says that Zeus was actually capable of “destroying

---

<sup>214</sup> West translates εὐσεβεία “piety,” which is the most common way; but see Mikalson 2010, 9 who argues that translations centering on “respect,” not “piety” are the best. I agree and follow Mikalson throughout.

everyone with thunderbolts and floods” (κεραυνοῖς ἢ κατακλυσμοῖς ἅπαντας διαφθεῖρην). Thus, the scholiast hints that Zeus had other options available to him, options that relied on the direct application of force through natural phenomena. Momos’ role is to “block” these (τοῦ Μώμου κωλύσαντος), and to offer non-violent alternatives. In particular, Momos suggests that Zeus (a) marry Thetis to a mortal man and (b) bring about the birth of a beautiful woman. At any rate, the scholiast says that the plan succeeded in lightening the Earth, since many men were killed. The mention of Momos and the emphasis of alternative catastrophic methods, which Zeus ultimately foregoes as part of his plan, cannot but remind of the Mesopotamian myths of destruction by various causes. The systematic attempts are one parallel between *Atrahasis* and this scholium. Beyond this, as Burkert points out,<sup>215</sup> Greek Momos may be linked with Mummu in the *Enuma Elish*, since this character also gives advice to Apsu in the context of an overpopulated earth motif. We do not know if the two are the same, however. At any rate, I do not agree with Burkert’s opinion that the introduction of Greek Momos into the decision-making process is an “awkward poetic strategy” here:<sup>216</sup> on the contrary, it may be precisely the point. At first, Zeus simply responded to Earth’s distress with the Theban War. But afterward, an advisor (i.e., Momos) stepped in to help. Zeus, though able to use sheer physical force, instead heeded the counsel. Zeus’ choice to plan is emphasized through the character of Momos.<sup>217</sup>

After these discursive-style summaries, the scholiast quotes from the *Cypria*. Note that the scholiast quotes just enough to suit his purposes: the *Cypria* is an example of a

---

<sup>215</sup> Burkert 1992, 103.

<sup>216</sup> Burkert 2004, 39.

<sup>217</sup> This also bears comparing with Zeus’ swallowing of Metis in Hesiod, *Theogony*.

text that links Zeus' Plan to the over-burdened earth motif. We do not know where exactly these lines come in the poem but they were likely near the beginning:<sup>218</sup>

ἡ δὲ ἱστορία παρὰ Στασίνῳ τῷ τὰ Κύπρια πεποιηκότι, εἰπόντι οὕτως:

ἦν ὅτε μυρία φύλα κατὰ χθόνα πλαζόμενα <αἰεῖ  
ἀνθρώπων ἐ>βάρυν<νε βαρθυ>στέρνου πλάτος αἴης.  
Ζεὺς δὲ ἰδὼν ἐλέησε καὶ ἐν πυκιναῖς πραπίδεσσιν  
κουφίσαι ἀνθρώπων παμβώτορα σύνθετο γαῖαν  
5 ῥιπίσσας πολέμου μεγάλην ἔριν Ἰλιακοῖο  
ὄφρα κενώσειεν θανάτῳ βάρος. οἳ δ' ἐνὶ Τροίῃ  
ἥρωες κτείνοντο, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή.

The story is found in Stasinus, the author of the *Cypria*, who says:

There was a time when the countless races <of men> roam-  
ing <constantly> over the land were weighing down the  
<deep-> breasted earth's expanse. Zeus took pity when  
he saw it, and in his complex mind he resolved to relieve  
5 the all-nurturing earth of mankind's weight by fanning  
the great conflict of the Trojan War, to void the burden  
through death. So the warriors at Troy kept being killed,  
and Zeus' plan was being fulfilled.  
(fr. 1)

Here, Zeus' actions are motivated by pity for Gaia (Ζεὺς δὲ ἰδὼν ἐλέησε), who, it must be kept in mind, is not an impersonal heavenly body, but a personal character in the story. And, as the scholiast indicated, the poet shows Zeus thoughtfully considering how to help her. Further, the poet skillfully echoes the Iliadic proem in the final line with mention of the "heroes" (not "Greeks and barbarians," as in the scholiast's summary) as well as exactly replicating the formulation about Zeus' plan (Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή).<sup>219</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Davies 1989, 33; Marks 2002, 6.

<sup>219</sup> The question of which came first, the *Iliad* or the *Cypria*, and in particular if the *Cypria* borrows content or even actual lines of poetry from the *Iliad* is impossible to answer. Burgess 2001 (esp. 149-57) concludes that we can best "explain correspondences between the poems of the Epic Cycle and the Homeric poems as the result not of imitation but of a shared tradition" (157); on the words Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή in both the *Iliad* and the

Overall, the impression is that Zeus' plan is a pretty straight forward ordeal: Gaia presents him with a problem (her own discomfort and a charge against the heroes), and Zeus designs a solution (the Trojan War as a means of killing the heroes).

Nothing is said in this fragment of the *Cypria*, however, about the ethical motive which the scholiast ascribes to Zeus. There, *disrespect* (*asebeia*) is the central concern (or at least a lack of respect, *eusebeia*), not just *numbers*; the difference is one of quality versus quantity. Overpopulation is a matter of mere quantity. Impiety is a problem of quality (i.e., some kind of injustice). But the qualitative ethical failures having to do with disrespect, the scholiast intimates, may somehow be causing the quantitative problems: τὴν Γῆν βαρουμένην ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων πολυπληθείας, μηδεμιᾶς ἀνθρώπων οὔσης εὐσεβείας, αἰτῆσαι τὸν Δία. What is the connection between the multiplicity of human beings and there being no respect from human beings? The link is admittedly hazy, since the clause about the lack of respect is a genitive absolute, and so we are left to specify the logic of the connection on our own. That connection is difficult to come up with. While the ethical motive makes sense, the overpopulation idea seems awkward. If the lack of respect is not causing the population problem, it is nevertheless an important part of the circumstances of Gaia's discomfort and pleas for justice.

The problem seems to be rooted in the humans not having any respect for Gaia herself. The genitive of "humans" in the phrase "μηδεμιᾶς ἀνθρώπων οὔσης εὐσεβείας" likely indicates the source of respect: here, there is no respect *coming from* human beings. So, Gaia is weighed down by a vast amount of humans because the humans, in their

---

*Cypria*, see his discussion at p. 149. We have evidence that the debate about the relationship between the two passages goes at least back to Aristarchus (Kirk 1985, *ad loc.* [*Iliad* 1.5]).

reproducing and living, fail to consider Gaia's well-being in the process. If we think of Gaia not just as the solid ground beneath our feet, but more generally as the humans' home, then one way of thinking about the humans' error here is a general lack of respect for other persons in their "home," in their midst. Hence, the problem is not the quantitative problem of overpopulation, but the qualitative issue of justice. Put differently, Gaia complains to Zeus about human immorality. Moreover, she raises an accusation that is directly related to her, but also probably related to other persons. She would then function as a figure of synecdoche. Thus, the humans in this cosmic *oikos* need to learn to have regard for other persons generally. And this is why Zeus cannot simply design a solution aimed at reducing numbers or merely separating gods and humans, but one aimed at reforming or teaching characters.<sup>220</sup> This in turn is why Zeus must actually put some thought into his solution, and perhaps why Gaia goes to Zeus before any other deity, since Zeus alone has the "mind" (the poet of the *Cypria* speaks of Zeus' πυκινᾶϊς πραπίδεσσιν) to come up with the right solution—or at least to heed the wise counsel of an advisor. Both the scholiast and the *Cypria*, as far as we can tell from these fragments, frame the Trojan War as the end of Gaia's burden.

---

<sup>220</sup> For the depopulation and separation view, see, e.g., Nagy 1999, 219-20. Mayer 1996 argues that the *Cypria* functions as an *aetion* for general human misery and wars in particular.

**(b) P. Oxy. 3829: Heroic Disrespect & Zeus' Plan**

A second-century AD papyrus from Oxyrhynchus makes the Trojan War about heroic immorality and features Zeus planning with an advisor. The text is P. Oxy. 3829 ii 9.<sup>221</sup>

Here is how it begins:

ὁ Ζεὺς ἀσέβειαν καταγνοὺς τοῦ ἥρωϊκοῦ γένους βουλεύεται μετὰ Θέμιδος ἄρδην αὐτοὺς ἀπολέσαι.

Zeus, finding the race of heroes guilty of impiety, conferred with Themis about destroying them completely.

(text and trans. M. West.)

Zeus' initial motivation is in response to what he perceives as disrespect on the part of the heroic race (γένος). There is no mention of Gaia, the overpopulation motif and its injustice, Momos, or the different strategies for dealing with the problem (i.e., the Theban and Trojan Wars). Zeus does however talk with Themis—a variation on the advisor motif. The scholiast's Momos represents "Censure" or "Reproach," which of course may connote notions of justice. But Themis, as the divine personification of sacred law closely connected with Gaia and Zeus,<sup>222</sup> more closely denotes rightness, even on a cosmic scale. And indeed, the heroes' disrespect is cosmic as it involves the very earth. This is a mythic drama in which the characters are basic, but vague, stuff in human experience: the Earth, the high god, and Right. Themis' relevance may also have a less lofty basis: some word

---

<sup>221</sup> The Papyri of Oxyrhynchus can be accessed on the website of the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents in Oxford ([www.csad.ox.ac.uk](http://www.csad.ox.ac.uk)). From the editor of this fragment (L. Käppel) we hear that "the text falls into three sections: (a) 1-7a: the end of a catechism, listing the characters of the Iliad; (b) 7b-38 a narrative of antehomeric, from Zeus' plan to destroy the heroic generation to the Judgement of Paris; (c) 39-44: the first line of Iliad 1, and a summary of the Book" ([www.csad.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/vol56/pages/3829](http://www.csad.ox.ac.uk/POxy/papyri/vol56/pages/3829), accessed Dec 24, 2013).

<sup>222</sup> Käppel 1996.

play on her name. It sounds like “Thetis,” who features so centrally in Zeus’ plan in the *Iliad*. Bringing Themis into the story results in a nice parallel as before the Trojan War Zeus plans with *Themis* and during the War (at least in the *Iliad*) he plans with *Thetis*. But this is mere conjecture. Be that as it may, καταγνούς (“condemn”) along with Themis adds to the legal tone of the summary, and the verb βουλεύεται (“plan”) recalls the βουλή which is at the center of all this. The author of this papyrus portrays Zeus as judge and decider. These texts—the scholiast on *Iliad* 1.5 with his quotation of the *Cypria* and this papyrus—see a clear connection between Zeus’ Plan and the Trojan War; a consistent feature is Zeus and Planning in one way or another.

**(c) Apollodorus, *Library*: Mythography & Zeus’ Plans (plural)**

The Epitome of the Apollodoran *Library* links the conflict at Troy with Zeus’ Plans, plural (*Library* 3.1):

αὐθις δὲ Ἑλένην Ἀλέξανδρος ἀρπάζει, ὥς τινες λέγουσι κατὰ βούλησιν Διός, ἵνα Εὐρώπης καὶ Ἀσίας εἰς πόλεμον ἐλθούσης ἡ θυγάτηρ αὐτοῦ ἔνδοξος γένηται, ἢ καθάπερ εἶπον ἄλλοι ὅπως τὸ τῶν ἡμιθέων γένος ἀρθῇ.

But afterwards Alexander carried off Helen, as some say, because such was the will of Zeus, in order that his daughter might be famous for having embroiled Europe and Asia; or, as others have said, that the race of the demigods might be exalted.

(text and trans. Frazer)

This summary, directly proceeded by the Judgment of Paris, connects Zeus’ Plans specifically with Alexander’s rape of Helen; the rape is a means to two possible ends. Either Zeus aims ultimately to honor his daughter, Helen, or Zeus wants to exalt the race of demigods (τὸ τῶν ἡμιθέων γένος). Nothing is said about respect here or the

overpopulation motif. But I would disagree with Frazer’s translation of βούλησιν, since “will” not only conveys too unilateral a decision-making process, but also obscures the noun’s connection with its singular version (βουλή) and the verb form which we have already seen (βουλεύω). The idea is that there is planning, plans being made, Zeus deciding on courses of action, not top-down enforcement of a singular wish. There is a question about ἀρθῇ too. Frazer translates ὅπως τὸ τῶν ἡμιθέων γένος ἀρθῇ as “that the race of the demigods might be exalted.” Apollodorus’ statement that the Trojan War features the race of demigods is of course nothing new; but his idea that the War is intended to “exalt,” rather than destroy them is striking. Finally, while the text does not mention an ethical motive, nevertheless this passage shows us more interpretive possibilities about Zeus’ Plans, including a few that we have not seen, i.e., honoring his daughter and exalting the heroes.

**(d) Proclus, *Chrestomathy*: Zeus Plans with ‘Sacred Law’ Herself<sup>223</sup>**

Proclus’ summary of the *Cypria* begins precisely with Zeus’ plan, which suggests its close connection with the Trojan War:

Ζεὺς βουλεύεται μετὰ τῆς Θέμιδος περὶ τοῦ Τρωϊκοῦ πολέμου.

Zeus plans with Themis about the Trojan War.

While P. Oxy. 3829 claims to contain actual lines of the *Cypria*, this is not a line of poetry, but Proclus’ idea about what ought to be mentioned first about the *Cypria*’s contents in his own prose summary of the poem. The extant fragments of the *Cypria* do

---

<sup>223</sup> On Proclus, his *Chrestomathy*, and the Epic Cycle, see Burgess 2001, 12, with notes 29 and 30; Marks 2002.



not include Zeus planning with Themis, but the evidence of the papyrus and Proclus' summary give us reason to think that it did. The Cyprian fragment quoted above does feature the overburdened Earth motif, which Proclus does not include. Other recurrent elements are the notion of planning seen in βουλεύεται. But Proclus does not include the heroic race's disrespect and Zeus' subsequent juridical response. Why? How much are we to make of the omission? On the one hand, we do not expect Proclus to include *everything*, not only because that would be impossible, but also because, like any writer, we would expect him to have his own reasons for including what he does. But the idea of conscious omission only makes us more curious, especially in this case due to its overtly ethical nature. Why would Proclus overlook the disrespect of the Greek mythic heroes? Is he whitewashing the story? for whom? <sup>224</sup> At the very least, one thing that we can conclude from these few passages is that Zeus does not take the Trojan War lightly: he *thinks* about it (βουλή, βουλεύεται) and does so with help from Right, personified (Θέμις).

### **II.3. Zeus' Plan in Homeric Poetry**

#### ***Iliad*: Zeus' Ambiguous and Changing Plan(s)**

The *Iliad* of Homer fits into this broad milieu of ideas about the Trojan War as a cataclysmic event intended, in some way, to annihilate the race of heroes.<sup>225</sup> And the *Iliad* too features the βουλή of Zeus. But, just as in the case of the Hesiodic and Cyclical texts

---

<sup>224</sup> If he writes in a milieu in which authors of different traditions are attempting to lend authority and justification to their own views, and if Proclus' text is to function somehow as an apologetic for the Greek tradition, then he may have something at stake in what he says about Greek heroes and Greek stories.

<sup>225</sup> Scodel 1982; West 1997, especially 334-401; Nagy 2006, §§44, 58-65.

we have looked at so far, Homer adapts the Trojan War-Zeus' Plan motif for his own purposes. In the case of the *Iliad* we are obviously dealing with a complex, not to mention lengthy, work of literature, and so all I can hope to do here is to raise some introductory comments.

A basic take away point from this analysis of the *Iliad* will be that the *Iliad* diverts attention away from a *Plan of Zeus*, understood statically, towards *Zeus as a Planner*, where the act of planning is a dynamic process undertaken by an agent of responding to other agents and events. In this Muse-inspired discourse, the *Iliad* takes the world of the Greek heroes and their era as a kind of fiction laboratory for human readers to think with. As Zeus struggles to respond to the problems posed to him, especially by Achilles, readers get to think with the Greek literary tradition's best planner: Zeus himself.<sup>226</sup> Scholarly discussion about the βουλή of Zeus in the *Iliad* tends to focus on the proem and the beginning of book 12. In the previous chapter I analyzed *Iliad* 12 in terms of its Diluvian echoes, highlighting the possibility that Homer may be drawing on and/or alluding to the motif of the divine apparatus destroying humanity with water. The occurrence of Zeus' Plan in the proem—indeed its prominence—raises questions about what Zeus' Plan is in the *Iliad* as a whole.

To begin, I return to the text with which I started, the D-Scholium on *Iliad* 1.5. Recall that it contains several interpretations of Zeus' *boule*, as well as an excerpt from the *Cypria*. In the passage quoted above in the discussion of the *Cypria* I said that the scholiast talks about the *Cypria* as an example of one text that interprets the plan of Zeus

---

<sup>226</sup> Heiden 2008.

in the *Iliad* as referring to the story about the heroic generation burdening Earth. The scholiast summarizes the plot and then quotes the *Cypria* (probably the opening lines). But before addressing this particular interpretation, the scholiast actually mentions two other ideas. Here is the beginning of the scholium, including a short lead-in to the part that I have already looked at:<sup>227</sup>

‘Διὸς βουλὴν’ οἱ μὲν τὴν εἰμαρμένην ἀπέδοσαν, ἄλλοι δὲ ἐξεδέξαντο δρυὶν ἱερὰν μαντικὴν τοῦ Διὸς ἐν Δωδωναίῳ ὄρει τῆς Θεσπρωτίας, ὡς αὐτὸς Ὅμηρος λέγει ἐν Ὀδυσσεΐαι: ‘τὸν δ’ ἐς Δωδώνην φάτο βήμεναι ὄφρα θεοῖο ἐκ δρυὸς ὑψικόμοιο Διὸς βουλὴν ἐσακούσῃ.’ ἄλλοι δὲ ἀπὸ ἱστορίας τινὸς εἶπον εἰρηκέναι τὸν Ὅμηρον, φασὶ γὰρ τὴν Γῆν βαρουμένην. . .

‘Zeus’ plan’ — some claim that it is pre-determined, others that it refers to Zeus’ sacred tree of mantike in Dodona of Thesprotia as Homer himself says in the *Odyssey*: ‘but he (Odysseus) had gone to Dodona, he (Phidon, kind of Thesprotia) said, to hear Zeus’ plan from the tall tree.’ Even others say that Homer was speaking based on some story, for they say that Gaia, being weighed down. . .

The scholiast considers three options: predetermination, Dodona, and overburdened earth. The first option is that Zeus’ plan has already been decided (‘allotted’). But since the scholiast does not elaborate, it is difficult to know the scope of Zeus’ plan. Just the events of the *Iliad*? All the events of the Trojan War? The totality of human and divine existence? Moreover, it is unclear who the deciding agent is in such a scenario, if a personal agent is the causal source, or what force would be behind it, if a kind of impersonal mechanism is imagined. Another option links the *Dios boule* of the *Iliad* to the *Dios boule* at Dodona. This possibility seems to gain credit from the fact that Homer himself shows an awareness of Zeus’ oracle there, as well as the mechanism by which Zeus’ *boule* is accessed (i.e., the leaves of the sacred oak) (*Odyssey* XX.327ff.). More

---

<sup>227</sup> The text is van Thiel 2000, the translation mine (there is no published translation for these scholia).

than that, it is not just any character, but Odysseus, who speaks of using the oracle.<sup>228</sup> But like the first option, the scholiast does not elaborate on how Zeus' oracular pronouncements at Dodona might be relevant to the *Iliad* in particular. Instead, he moves on to the Burdened Earth story and, as we saw above, goes into some detail.

While the first two interpretive options may not leave us with much to go on, a basic point emerges: readers of the *Iliad* have been debating what this *Dios boule* is for many centuries. Another point, which is the cause of the multiplicity of interpretations, is that, especially compared to other texts that feature Zeus' Plan, there is a fundamental ambiguity to the *Dios boule* of the *Iliad*. Perhaps trying to nail down the specific, singular idea is fundamentally misguided.

There are, moreover, even more interpretive options. In an important article Jenny Strauss Clay advances our thinking on this issue in a number of ways. First, she discusses the most prominent rival interpretations. There are four, and it is worth quoting Clay's summaries:<sup>229</sup>

1. The plan of Zeus refers specifically to the promise Zeus makes to Thetis to honor Achilles by precipitating a Greek defeat and thereby demonstrating to the Greeks and above all to Agamemnon the cost of dishonoring him. This...is the "orthodox" view.
2. The plan of Zeus aims at, and is fulfilled by, the destruction of Troy. At Aulis, years before, an omen had already revealed that Troy would finally fall in the tenth year of the war.
3. The plan of Zeus is to bring an end to the age of the heroes (*Cypria* motif).

---

<sup>228</sup> In that part of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is telling one of his fictions to Eumaios, which is why Odysseus himself is a character in the story, but spoken about in the third person.

<sup>229</sup> Clay 1999, 40-41; see her discussion and notes for extensive bibliography on each position. Compare also Finkelberg 2004, 1-15.

4. The plan of Zeus is not a concrete plan at all, but a vague expression of the divine will or “Fate.”

We have already seen the fourth possibility in the D-Scholium on *Iliad* 1.5; as Clay points out, it vaguely connects Zeus’ plan with a kind of determinism. This interpretation is easily dismissed on several grounds, including the difference in Homer between βούλομαι, “I plan,” with (ἐ)θέλω, “I want,” a difference between wishing and planning.<sup>230</sup>

The second way that Clay advances the problem is by demonstrating that the other three options—that the plan refers to Zeus’ promise to Thetis, the ultimate destruction of Troy, and the end of the heroes—are *all* acceptable interpretations of Zeus’ plan. But they are not merely acceptable. In fact these plans (plural) of Zeus are “constantly operative throughout the *Iliad*” and “their intersections and tensions define the form of the poem as we have it—and point beyond its narrative by integrating it into the larger epic tradition.”<sup>231</sup> Thus, Homer, showing an awareness of the several traditions at play here, combines them to suit his own purposes. While this is an advance, nevertheless the result is still a bit of a paradox: in the *Iliad* Zeus’ plan is everywhere, but it is nowhere. Consider the comment of Malcom Davies, that the phrase “and Zeus’ Plan was being accomplished” “seems calculated to convey a rather complex effect, impressive but slightly mysterious, potentially reassuring but also potentially disturbing.”<sup>232</sup> This ambiguity and the mutual exclusivity in Davies’ “reassuring/disturbing” formulation

---

<sup>230</sup> See Clay 1999, 41–42 and nn5–7.

<sup>231</sup> Clay 1999, 43, demonstrated *passim*.

<sup>232</sup> Davies 1989, 33.

leaves us wanting. Sure, we expect complex works of art to be in some sense interpretively boundless, but can the Plan of Homer's Zeus be *that* boundless?

Moving beyond this basic, but important, observation that the *Iliad*'s action comprises multiple plans of Zeus, Bruce Heiden has shown that of all the characters in the story Zeus' choices "most affect the action narrated inside the temporal frame of [the] *Iliad*."<sup>233</sup> From this, Heiden goes on to demonstrate that, thematically, the *Iliad* evinces a trajectory in the way that Zeus makes decisions (i.e., plans) in response to problems.<sup>234</sup> As the *Iliad* progresses Zeus' problem-solving becomes more and more creative and elicits more and more cooperation from his divine counterparts.

The relevance of this analysis for a consideration of the *boule* of Zeus is that the *Iliad* comes to be less about *what* the Plan of Zeus is, than about the distinctive *way* that Zeus as a fictional character does his planning—the shift that I mentioned at the beginning of this section, from a static object to an active process. On this view, Zeus' plan is the act of cooperative planning. Moreover, as I will discuss shortly, the shift from a Plan of Zeus to Zeus the Planner is significant in light of a related theme in the Near Eastern literature about the level of divine cooperation among the gods in initiating the flood as a cataclysmic event.

Before making that comparison, let me review these claims about the *Iliad* by looking at its opening lines.

Μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος  
οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρ' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,  
πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν

---

<sup>233</sup> Heiden 2008, 230; the point is demonstrated at pp. 23-36.

<sup>234</sup> See especially Heiden 2008, 161-185 and 204-210.

ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν  
οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή,  
ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε  
Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

The wrath sing, goddess, of Peleus' son, Achilles,  
that destructive wrath which brought countless woes upon the Achaeans,  
and sent forth to Hades many valiant souls of heroes,  
and made them themselves spoil for dogs and every bird;  
thus the plan of Zeus came to fulfillment,  
from the time when first they parted in strife Atreus' son,  
king of men, and brilliant Achilles.

(1-7, trans. A. T. Murray)

The Plan's referent is not made clear. Plan for what? What's the problem that warrants a planned solution? Nor is there any discreet traditional motif such as the overburdened earth or the demise of the Greek heroes. Homer takes the dramatic setting of all these traditions to tell his own story. Yet readers are not without guidance from these lines. The proem announces the agenda: it will feature an angry character, Achilles, and a planning character, Zeus. A main plot line then will be Achilles being angry and Zeus responding. Why would this be so compelling? This is where the standard account of Zeus planning the heroic generation's demise with the Trojan War may be relevant. If ancient audiences were familiar with the idea that Zeus planned their demise with the Trojan War and intended to use Achilles as a central agent, then Achilles' raging and quitting may put into question Zeus' success in this regard. So maybe readers are thinking that the *Iliad* is about one episode in the larger plot of Zeus accomplishing his Plan. And yet readers of the *Iliad* know that the story comes to be more about the decisions of these two great plot-movers, their back and forth, Zeus responding always keeping one step ahead of Achilles. In the *Iliad*, with its particular thematic interest in Zeus' planning, by book 24 Zeus is leading the gods in complex cooperative efforts on behalf of humankind. This is

focalized by the singular difficulty which Priam's in-person visit to Achilles' camp would otherwise pose.<sup>235</sup> And yet, with Zeus and the lessons he has learned about planning throughout the story, it is possible that even the most physically frightening of all men (Achilles) would concede to returning the body of his most hated enemy (Hektor) to that enemy's very father (Priam). This is a feat of staggering significance in a story that begins with Agamemnon refusing to return even a slave girl to a fellow Achaean king, and the individual gods acting on their own to change human events, not to mention Zeus himself compelling other gods to obey him through the threat of physical force.<sup>236</sup>

One final point. No matter how other texts construe Zeus's Plan and heroic demise, in the *Iliad* at the general level Zeus' Plan does not cause their deaths. Achilles' anger does. This is a curious kind of cause, though—a kind of negative one. But it points to the person behind the rage, and perhaps tells the end of the heroes as the end of friendship and personal cooperation. Or, if anger spells the end of rational thought (rage blinding reason's vision)—heroic demise caused by the end of thoughtful planning.

### **III. Atlantis: Where the Athenians End, Revolution Begins**

In the previous chapter I picked out the bits of Kritias' speeches that contained references to the world's end by water. These clustered around the figure of Deukalion in the mode of genealogical thinking about the Hellenes' common past—or the past at least imaginatively constructed as common. I now want to look at the motif of the world's end by war in Kritias' speeches. Since I already reviewed some of the basic information about

---

<sup>235</sup> Heiden 2008, 208.

<sup>236</sup> Planning as an important theme in epic may not be original to the *Iliad*. The Babylonian *Atrahasis* also shows this theme—I pick up this point in my concluding remarks to the chapter.



the text in the last chapter, here I will cover only those fundamental aspects that pertain to the current topic. It is well to note that I continue to frame Kritias' speech acts in terms of their capacity to be used as an "ancestral constitution" or "charter myth."<sup>237</sup>

Contextualized within Plato's fictional universe, Sokrates and Kritias differ in their understanding of what philosophy is.<sup>238</sup> In Plato's *Timaeus-Critias* Sokrates thinks the conversation is an abstract discussion of political philosophy. He asks Kritias to show the citizens of the ideal state, which Sokrates described on the previous day, in action, i.e., at war. Kritias leaves the world of abstraction that Sokrates was discussing and instead purports to give a historically-true story: he calls it a *logos*. Kritias' version of philosophy is decidedly anti-Socratic. Rather than the means to raise citizens up to a life of critical reflection so that they can guide their communities down the right paths, Kritias views philosophy as another means of coercing citizens. Accordingly, he gives not a theoretical account of an ideal citizenry in action but a new charter myth for the Athenians—appropriately glossed as a "true" account when in fact he himself makes it up. The symposium of three politically and intellectually elite men thus has the air of a conspiracy to overthrow the current Athenian government and to impose their own. It is frightening that Kritias was historically part of a cruel regime.<sup>239</sup> Plato's text can justifiably be regarded as giving a glimpse of some political tyrants at work behind closed doors making the myths that will "persuade" the citizens' assent to their rule.

---

<sup>237</sup> Again, following Morgan 1988.

<sup>238</sup> See Flores 2013, 32-94. Philosophy's definition—who does it? what is it?—was an object of much contestation in Plato's time; see Nightingale 1995.

<sup>239</sup> See, e.g., Aeschines, *Against Timarchus* 173 (" . . . Kritias, one of the Thirty who destroyed the *demos*.")

In Kritias' myth, war is a divinely-planned, totalizing cataclysm that ends the collective life of the ancient Athenians, and it functions as an ethical paradigm of group action. Kritias first handles the "standard" accounts of the past which currently act as social glue holding Athenians and Greeks together. These accounts are the ones found, for example, in the Hesiodic *Catalogue* and other genealogical-historic texts (the first man, the Flood and Deukalion, and all their descendents) and myths of autochthony (Athenian Erichonius et. al.). Kritias imagines an Egyptian priest giving an earlier account to trump these traditional charter myths. In the new version the ancient Athenians excelled in warfare and many other respects (*Tim.* 23c); this has a plausible historical model in the Athenians' own actions in the Greeks' repelling the Persians in the early fifth-century.<sup>240</sup> One of the greatest feats of the mythic Athenians was to defeat the invading power of Atlantis, which threatened the freedom of Athens and the other Greeks (*Tim.* 25b-c). Kritias alludes to the conflict in his precis in *Timaeus* but does not get to it in the fuller account in *Critias* before the text breaks off. We can see, however, that he draws on the motif of the high god planning devastation as punishment. Kritias would have the Athenians believe that their ancient enemies, the Atlantians, once virtuous, became degenerate and so attracted the punishing designs of Zeus (*Crit.* 121c). The texts ends there. But we know from elsewhere in Kritias' accounts, that he envisioned the Athenians defeating the Atlantians, followed by devastating natural disasters (earthquakes and floods) which killed the entire Athenian force and sank Atlantis (*Tim.* 25d).

---

<sup>240</sup> See, e.g., Vidal-Naquet 1986; Broadie 2012, 140 ("Critias' story re-enacts both Persian and Athenian imperialism.").

Plato's fictional Kritias thus shows one way of writing a myth of martial destruction and one function for that myth. If Plato's *Timaeus-Critias* deliberately reflects, and likely parodies, broader early fourth-century trends of Athenian political rhetoric,<sup>241</sup> then the text can be seen as a powerful critique of such rhetorical techniques as constructing identity and authorizing power based on a past, heroic deed. The text demystifies the charter myth. Far from containing universal, unalterable, more-than-human truth, the story is merely a human product. Its religious gloss is shown to be just that: a gloss. Kritias wanted his Athenians to believe that the glorious end of their ancient ancestors was the beginning of their current solidarity. If he could get them to believe this, effectively spellbind them with claims to historical veracity—authorizing everything on Egyptian mystique and their beloved Solon<sup>242</sup>—then he could likely continue the myth up to his own rule.

And poignant confirmation of Bruce Lincoln's argument that myth is "ideology in narrative form."<sup>243</sup> Such political use of myth by ancient Greeks was not limited to the context of fourth-century Athens, however. Consider Jonathan Hall's comments to this effect about the applicability of Lincoln's ideological definition of myth to Greek politics in general:

"Through the dynamic dialectic between narrator and audience, traditional materials could be reconfigured and modulated to stake claims about the natural order and to advance partisan interests, and it is precisely myth's ideological character that made it so effective in the practice of Greek politics. There is also, however, another feature of Greek myth that made it particularly apt for the politically fragmented landscape of the Greek world. Individual myths may have sought to express ideological messages

---

<sup>241</sup> Demonstrated by Morgan 1988.

<sup>242</sup> Flores 2013, chapter 2 ("Solon, Critias, and the Tale of Atlantis").

<sup>243</sup> Lincoln 1997, 147.

in narrative form, but they derived their authority and legitimacy from the fact that they drew on a relatively stable repertoire of symbolic resources. . . myth was most effective not when it was invented *ex nihilo* but when it represented itself as a modulation of a preexisting theme.”<sup>244</sup>

One of the preexisting themes at play in Kritias’ myth is the end of a heroic generation, with deeply resourceful reservoirs of characters, images, and symbols in both the myth of the Trojan War and, by Kritias’ time, the mythic struggle between Persia and Hellas. He can deploy these, weighted with their own authority, and add the prestige of Egyptians and Solon to further authorize his revolutionary charter myth. That is the fictional Kritias in the fictional dialogue—a tour de force of mythmaking in its own right. But the text itself opens a different possibility for its Academic readers: the end of faith in such mythmaking.<sup>245</sup>

#### **IV. Qumran: Yahweh’s Coming War & the End of Darkness**

In this section I want to draw a text into the discussion for comparison, a task which I undertake not on the grounds of literary-historical association but as a deliberate juxtaposition based on thematic content issuing from my choice.<sup>246</sup> The war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness in Dead Sea Scroll 1QM bear comparison with respect to the role of the high deity in its planning.<sup>247</sup> It does, however, have further, more fundamental, relevance to this study insofar as it aims to be a contribution (even if an oblique one) to the debate about eschatology: this text definitely features an

---

<sup>244</sup> Hall 2007, 332-33.

<sup>245</sup> If Sokrates is any guide, readers are not to believe it: after all, he doesn’t. See Flores 2013, 90-91, rightly disagreeing with Morgan [1988, 104] on this point.

<sup>246</sup> Heeding Smith 1990.

<sup>247</sup> Further on eschatology and warfare see Grabbe 2000.

eschatological scenario. The comparison will highlight distinctive features of god's decisive (i.e., decision-making) role in the combats.<sup>248</sup>

1QM, also known as the War Scroll, is a document found in the remote caves at Qumran in the Judean desert and grouped among the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>249</sup> Other Dead Sea Scroll texts feature similar martial material,<sup>250</sup> leaving us with the question of the uniqueness of 1QM: is it a singular text, one of a body of texts, or simply one variant composition found in different forms? We do not know.<sup>251</sup> Nor can we be certain about its date or detailed circumstances of its production.<sup>252</sup> At the very least, due to its dependence on Daniel, the latest parts of which were composed around 165BC, 1QM must be later than the mid-second century BC. For my purposes it suffices to emphasize that it falls outside the typical range of this study, and is related to the emergence of Jewish sectarian groups in Palestine in the first and second centuries BC. A central feature of these groups is nationalistic opposition (often framed religiously) to Hellenistic and Roman rule.<sup>253</sup>

1QM frames this nationalistic opposition in religious, indeed cosmic, terms, imagining a future war in which God utterly destroys Israel's enemies; this follows a line of thinking seen also in, for example, Ezekiel 38-39 and Daniel 7-12.<sup>254</sup> Giving instructions for the human participants in the war, the War Scroll describes a forty year battle, with seven stages, between the godly Children of Light and god's angels, and the

---

<sup>248</sup> I say "distinctive" rather than "unique," again with Smith 1990 in mind, this time for his devastating critique of claims of "uniqueness."

<sup>249</sup> Basic introduction to 1QM and its war: Davies 2000.

<sup>250</sup> For example, 4Q491-497; 4Q471; 4Q285; 11Q14.

<sup>251</sup> See Duhaime 2004, 12-44 for the manuscript evidence.

<sup>252</sup> Detailed analysis of dating can be found in Duhaime 2004, 64-101; see also Davies 2000.

<sup>253</sup> See Portier-Young 2011.

<sup>254</sup> See Collins 2000.

demonic Children of Darkness and their evil leader called Belial. Despite setbacks (the forces of Light will retreat in certain stages), there is no question of the war's outcome: in the end God will annihilate the forces of Darkness. In fact, every single event of the war, down to throwing javelins and taking casualties, is a pre-determined drama.<sup>255</sup> 1QM is Israel's script. Lester Grabbe points out that such stereotyped event planning is not unique to the War Scroll: "Timing is very important to eschatological warfare. It is often assumed that God has a particular prearranged schedule of events to which he works, and a variety of schemes can be found in the surviving apocalyptic literature."<sup>256</sup> In this vein, the War Scroll leaves no ambiguity about God's plan: the enemy's destruction will be total and predetermined.

The War Scroll does not feature any phrase analogous to the Greek "Plan of Zeus" (Διὸς βουλή) that I have been discussing in much of this chapter. After all, in 1QM there is nothing to deliberate about. On the contrary, the text's author is at pains to claim that God, in his singularity, determines everything. Consider the following passages, which do not exhaust every instance of divine determinism in the text (the "Kittim" are likely historical Romans but can also stand for god's cosmic enemies generally)<sup>257</sup>:

---

<sup>255</sup> See Weitzman 2009, 230 on this point, and the psychological, and thus tactical, advantages of such detail.

<sup>256</sup> Grabbe 2000.

<sup>257</sup> It is broadly affirmed that the Kittim are the Romans, but there is still debate and the issue becomes extra complicated because identifying the Kittim gets linked with dating the document (which is controversial, as mentioned above). Davies 2000 summarizes the state of the question ("Certainly, most scholars now see the *Kittim* in the War Scroll as Romans, whose status as a major power in the Levant dates from the early-middle 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. The composition of the War Scroll itself should probably be assigned, then, to the late first century BCE or early first century CE"). Yadin 1962, 244-46 had advocated the Roman identification (i.e., Kittim = Romans). Eshel 2001, 29-44 suggested a compromised position on the Greek or Roman question (Kittim applied to both Greeks and Romans—perhaps Greeks first then transferred to Romans). Grabbe's (2000) summary is helpful: "The enemies named at various places are traditional enemies and could be reapplied to represent a particular historical enemy."

The dominion of the Kittim *shall come to an end and iniquity shall be vanquished*, leaving no remnant; [for the Sons] of Darkness *there shall be no escape*.  
(1.5, italics mine)

[The sons of righteous]ness shall shine over all the ends of the earth; they shall go on shining until all the seasons of darkness are consumed and, *at the season appointed by God*, His exalted greatness shall shine eternally to the peace, blessing, glory, joy, and long life of all the Sons of Light.  
(1.5, italics mine)

On the day when the Kittim fall, there shall be battle and carnage before the God of Israel, *for that shall be the day appointed from ancient times* for the battle of destruction of the Sons of Darkness.  
(1.10, italics mine)

To the God] of Israel belongs all that is and shall be; [He knows] all the happenings of eternity. *This is the day appointed by Him* for the defeat and overthrow of the Prince of the kingdom of wickedness.  
(17.5, italics mine)

For *thou didst know the time appointed for us* and it has appeared [before us] this day.  
(18.10, italics mine)

This predetermined scenario further reduces world inhabitants into stark, all-encompassing, religiously-defined dichotomies: one is either part of God's Israel (the Children of Light) or part of Satan's company (the nations, Kittim, the Children of Darkness). These categories are of course invested with a core moral evaluation: not just good and bad—they are Good and Evil. The following passage shows this dichotomy, its attendant evaluations, and the multiple ways of referring to the enemy (which I have italicized):

For this shall be a time of distress for Israel, [and of the summons] to war against *all the nations*. There shall be eternal deliverance for the company of God, but destruction for all *the nations of wickedness*. All those [who are ready] for battle shall march out and shall pitch their camp before the *king of the Kittim* and before the *host of Satan* gathered about him for the Day [of Revenge] by the Sword of God.  
(15.1)

Further, while God does not do any planning per se, since it's all an act of his singular will, he does participate in the fighting and knows the appointed time. In fact, he *must* fight. The war proceeds in seven stages (for textual evidence for this scheme, see the quotation below): in stages one through three, the Children of Light prevail; in four through six, the Children of Darkness prevail; but in stage seven, God decisively intervenes. At this time God is envisioned as, borrowing Grabbe's formulation, "the supreme divine warrior, commanding angelic hosts."<sup>258</sup> But God does not need fancy armor. The text draws power from the metaphor of God's "hand," perhaps in ironic opposition to the advanced martial technologies of the historical enemies:<sup>259</sup>

[In the seventh lot] when the great hand of God is raised in an everlasting blow against Belial and all the hosts of his kingdom. . .  
(18.1)

[At that time, on the day] when the hand of the God of Israel is raised against all the multitude of Belial. . .  
(18.5)

(Thou hast shown us) Thy mighty hand in [a stroke of destruction in the war against all] our enemies.  
(18.10)

For Thine is the power, and the battle is in Thy hands!  
(18.10)

---

<sup>258</sup> Grabbe 2000.

<sup>259</sup> In a different context, Lincoln (2003, 16-18) points out such ironic juxtaposition in relation to the 9/11 hijackers and their objects of attack. With only a few small knives and box cutters, a meaningful sign of "technological impoverishment," Mohammed Atta et. al. attacked the Pentagon and the World Trade Towers, which can be thus understood as "central emblems of American military and economic might" (16). The goal would have been more "sign value than use value:" the point was "to demonstrate that, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, they possessed a power infinitely superior to their adversary's and of an entirely different order" (17). I introduced this note with the phrase "in a different context," but among the contextual differences are important similarities: other scholars have drawn instructive comparisons between various aspects of the War Scroll and the events of 9/11; see Weitzman 2009, 239-41.



But the author also uses the metaphor of God's sword, again drawing on the juxtaposition of God's singularity and the many enemy. Yet things are easy for God (see also passage 15.1 above):

And in the morning {they shall go to the place where the formation stood before the} warriors of the Kittim fell, and the multitudes of Assyria, and the hosts of all the [assembled] nations {to discover whether} the multitude of stricken are dead {with none to bury them}, those who fell there under the Sword of God.

(19.10)

Finally, the destruction of the enemy will be total. I have already cited a passage that emphatically proclaims the Kittim's "end." As if that is not enough, it then goes on to say that there will be "no remnant." And as if that is not enough to communicate the depth of the Kittim's evil, it then says that there will be "no escape."

In the following passage, found near the document's beginning, the war's inevitability, participants, phases, and outcome are summarized:

On the day of their battle against the Kittim [they shall set out for] carnage. In three lots shall the Sons of Light brace themselves in battle to strike down iniquity, and in three lots shall Belial's host gird itself to thrust back the company [of God. And when the hearts of the detach[ments of foot soldiers faint, then shall the might of God fortify [the heart of the Sons of Light]. And with the seventh lot, the mighty hand of God shall bring down [the army of Belial, and all] the angels of his kingdom, and all the members [of his company in everlasting destruction].

(1.15)

In keeping with the rough idea of a divine plan for a war, I have pointed out the determined nature of the eschatological war of 1QM, as well as the fact that God himself comes to be the most important combatant. But there is another fundamental aspect to this war that is perhaps so obvious as to go unnoticed. But I cannot omit it, because it is an important difference: its future orientation. That is, the war will happen in the future,

at some appointed time—an *eschaton*, if you will. This is what allows scholars to classify the war as *eschat*-ological. The author of 1QM envisions some time in the future when there will be a special season and series of events, including a decades-long war.

Whatever the nature of the author's present crisis, his end-time war will be part of its resolution.<sup>260</sup> Moreover, this resolution is part of his understanding of God's plan for the true Israel—the plan is not a subject of debate but is vatically (because anonymously) proclaimed with the *text itself*. Put differently, the text claims to speak God's plan by simply doing the speaking.<sup>261</sup> The text, from its desperate position, proclaims a world of necessity, where the only real change can come from a transcendent source: "Yhwh." The text's authority is implicit, built-in. History's trajectory is ordained. The world must end in war. The war, in turn, must end all that is not of Israel's god—all that is "Dark."

Emically speaking, the end of Darkness can only mean the beginning of hope.

Etically speaking, however, in this religio-ideological dimension, 1QM as mythmaker of a cosmic conflict resembles Plato's *Kritias*: both have a war story to tell, one past, one future, but a story crafted to claim itself as un-crafted, and therefore the very ground of reality. Both mythmakers may claim the cliché that *desperate times call for desperate measures*—one desperate to throw off the rule of others, one to claim it for himself.

---

<sup>260</sup> The question of "which crisis?" raises the broader question of the text's genre, function, etc., on which see Duhaime 2004,

<sup>261</sup> In terms of genre, the War Scroll is best understood as a military handbook (see Weitzman 2009). Whatever its generic affiliations, we can still inquire about the text's speaking voice. Compare the similarly vatic beginning of Genesis: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was. . ." By omitting reference to a human author, the text aims to furnish itself with a more-than-human authority. After all, if there is no person or persons behind the text's construction, then with whom can one argue about its content?

## V. Babylon—Troy—Qumran: Mythic Cataclysm & the Question of Planning

In this penultimate section I want to sum up the analysis so far, then take it one step further by bringing the *Atrahasis* deeper into the discussion. In the next, and final, section I will ask about implications.

I began this chapter with a survey of Greek texts interpreting Zeus' Plan for the Trojan War. In Hesiodic literature the Trojan War is explicitly framed as the dramatic end to the heroic generation. The *Works and Days*, not featuring an explicit "Plan of Zeus," uses a minimalist strand of this version in one of its vignettes designed to persuade the poet's brother Perses to work hard for a living rather than to steal: "look at the demigods—they cooperated in life and were rewarded by Zeus in death," says the poet. The Hesiodic *Catalogue* envisions the Trojan War as the means of the demigods' demise, explicitly designed by Zeus to end their lives. The text, however, is too fragmentary for us to know, for example, the details of how the war went and if it contained the notion (in *Works and Days*) that Zeus spared some of the heroes and gave them a blessed afterlife on the Isles of the Blessed. However that may be, the *Catalogue*'s motif of a divinely-sent cataclysm to end divine-mortal miscegenation has an important parallel in Genesis (where the cataclysm is the more traditional Flood, not a war). And in fact the *Catalogue* and the post-Diluvian Table of Nations in Genesis seem to have similar functions in their respective archaic communities: mapping relationships among peoples—the function of group identity.

In the Cyclical and later mythographical tradition the War is imagined also as the end of the heroes but is embellished or embedded in other ancient scenarios, with important earlier parallels especially in the Babylonian *Atrahasis* tradition. These motifs include

charges of general impiety (cf. mankind's evil imagination in Genesis) and an overburdened earth (cf. man's multiplying in *Atrahasis*). Since there is no single text or canon of texts to work with in the Greek material, we see a variety of interpretations of Zeus' Plan and the Trojan War. Many of these notices are found in documents too fragmentary or otherwise of such a nature to preclude interesting interpretation.

In Homer's *Iliad*, on the other hand, obviously a complex work, we can see that the notion of Zeus' Plan is toyed with. The poet at once gestures toward many other configurations of Zeus' Plan while also fashioning his distinctive contribution to the "conversation." I have suggested that this contribution is to shift emphasis from the static object to the dynamic process, from the plan to the Planner: Zeus' Plan becomes more about how Zeus as a personal character responds (i.e., plans) to the problems confronting him than to a once-and-for-all decision about mankind.

Moving from Troy to Atlantis, Plato's fictional Kritias proposes a myth of past martial destruction, framed as Zeus' Plan, in what looks to be a charter myth, or ancestral constitution, justifying a new regime in Athens. The text breaks off in the crucial place, but Kritias seems to be using the dual epic format of a divine assembly and a human theater to tell his war. *Critias* ends "and Zeus said" (121c).

I then drew the eschatological war of the Qumran War Scroll into the discussion. Images of such a struggle at an *eschaton*, played out on earth by human combatants as well as in "heaven" by gods and angels, have their most explicit origin in the Jewish milieu of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and have endured for millennia<sup>262</sup>—thanks

---

<sup>262</sup> See Collins 2000.

not least of all to the Christian Apocalypse of John with its striking images of mythic contestants. Followers of Jesus were born into a thriving discussion of future time scenarios, some of which included a war to bring down Israel's enemies. Yet, as with any imaginative creation, we must suppose a range of opinions and responses in terms of an eschatological war's facticity. However that may be, the war both reflects and inspires a certain view of the world, a manner of thinking that has been referred to, for modern heuristic purposes (i.e., this is an etic, not emic, category), called the "apocalyptic worldview:"<sup>263</sup> the constant struggle of the good against the bad; the perception of enslavement; the belief, however strained at times, of one god who will decisively act on behalf of the victims; the hope of an end to evil through a violent—and cosmic—fight. Moreover, we must also suppose a variety of functions for these narratives, but one is conspicuous: hope.<sup>264</sup> The experience of oppression in the present and the expectation of freedom in the future has for a long time been a profound source of hope for the somehow enslaved. One reason, then, that an artist who holds to a bona fide eschatological view of history (i.e., holds some view of an *eschaton*) might imagine a war in the end times is to inspire hope.<sup>265</sup>

---

<sup>263</sup> Collins 1997; Vermes 2003.

<sup>264</sup> Eschatology and hope are frequently linked—in emic and etic contexts. Consider, as examples, the titles of these works: (1) Brian Daley's *Hope of the Early Church; A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Baker Academic, 2002 [orig. 1991]), (2) Gerhard Sauter's *What Dare We Hope? Reconsidering Eschatology* (Trinity Press International, 1999), and (3) John Polkinghorne's *The God of Hope and the End of the World* (Yale University Press, 2002). A topic not to be investigated here is the question of whether these works constitute etic or emic discourses. Again, I present them simply to illustrate the connection between eschatology and the concept of hope.

<sup>265</sup> Not that I would suggest this is the only reason, just that it is salient, at least on the psychological level. Compare the following statement by J. J. Collins (1984, 42): "The function of the apocalyptic literature is to shape one's imaginative perception of a situation and so lay the basis for whatever course of action it exhorts." We need not suppose a distinction between knowledge that is utilitarian in nature (i.e., gives specific tasks to carry out in specific circumstances) versus knowledge that is merely figurative (i.e., provides some sort of psychological resolution in the circumstances); see Weitzman 2009 which explores—frustrates, really—the

Certain aspects of the Plan of Zeus from the texts I considered bears comparison with 1QM's eschatological war. But in terms of the time reference and ultimate outcome, there is a fundamental difference, to wit, that the end-times war is imagined as a future event on an inevitable trajectory (and thus knowable and predictable, with revelatory help from the mind of god), while the Trojan War happened in the past and the outcome is variously conceived in its necessity.

Nevertheless there are a few noteworthy similarities, which, however, may in the end point to more contrasts. Three similarities that I want to mention here are the dual theaters of earth and heaven, the role of god and gods in human phenomena, and the presence of warfare.<sup>266</sup> In the dual theater scenario, the basic idea is that there is quarelling on both earth and also in heaven. This admits however of variations: in the eschatological war, (good) god fights (evil) god and human fights human (except when god himself intervenes to slaughter the human enemy). In the Greek epic tradition, on the other hand, the gods are portrayed as mingling with the humans in the fight at Troy while also arguing among themselves on Olympus. Indeed, this mingling is part of the problem that Zeus must address with his Plan.

The basic presence of a god with a plan for the war is another similarity. In the case of Zeus and the Greek tradition, we saw that the Plan of Zeus was, and has been, a source of debate for some time. And yet while we have numerous archaic and classical Greek texts that feature the Plan, most of them are not of such a nature to admit close analysis of

---

simple dichotomy between fact and fiction in the interpretation of the War Scroll—a document constantly stuck in either rough reality or high-floating fantasy.

<sup>266</sup> For the Greek material, of course, we may assert that this is part of the genre of epic; see Burkert 2004, 24-28 for a basic discussion with helpful input from Mesopotamian literature. On the question of Jewish “epic” literature see Doak 2012, esp. 31-45.

this element, while others seem not really to have explored deeply the idea of the plan at all or of Zeus and the other gods as planners. The one text that did is precisely one that became a central text in the Greek tradition: the *Iliad* of Homer. Thus, if we pose the same question of function here that we posed about the eschatological war (i.e., why imagine it?), one answer that we would come up with is, to talk about the process of human decision making. Yet, while a theme such as this could in principle apply to any human capable of making decisions, the theme in epic seems to apply especially to those whose decisions carry the most weight or can otherwise have the deepest affect on a given community.

Taking up this latter point, I want to look even further back in time at one more text, and to suggest that the *Iliad* as an ancient epic is not alone in its thematic concern with human planning. The dualistic scheme in the *Iliad* and the rest of the Greek tradition, in which narratives take place on earth and on Olympus or some other “heavenly” realm, are a powerful way of imagining various communities facing problems and making decisions in response. Moreover, the myth of destruction as a setting for this theme is appropriate because it involves a high stakes decision: the potential annihilation of many, many humans—possibly all of them—not to mention sorrow and personal frustration on the part of deities. To show that the *Iliad* is not alone in this use of the myth of destruction, I want to look at the post-Diluvial narrative in the Babylonian *Atrahasis*.

In a much-cited article, which I myself have cited several times in this study, Ruth Scodel established a firm ground for this comparison, showing that the Trojan War as a myth of destruction is analogous to the Flood myth in Near Eastern and Mesopotamian

traditions, with respect to its function of destroying the heroic generation and marking an important temporal divide.<sup>267</sup> I want to point out further that (1) the *Atrahasis* resembles the *Iliad* in its dualistic narrative frame, (2) shows the gods arguing about their intervention in human affairs, and (3) even focuses on the decisions of the high god in particular. These observations will serve to suggest a theme of planning in ancient epic literature, with the myth of destruction as one vehicle for its exploration.

We join the action of the *Atrahasis* during the Flood.<sup>268</sup> The winds and waters are raging, and the earth is covered in darkness. Nintu, the mother of the gods, looking on the devastation of the humans, weeps and screams:

However could I, in the assembly of the gods,  
 Have ordered such destruction with them?  
 Ellil was strong enough to give a wicked order.  
 Like Tiruru he ought to have cancelled that wicked order!  
 I heard their cry levelled at me,  
 Against myself, against my person.  
 Beyond my control, my offspring have become like white sheep.  
 As for me, how am I to live in a house of bereavement?  
 My noise has turned to silence.  
 Could I go away, up to the sky  
 And live as in a cloister?  
 (III.iii)

In these lines Nintu emphasizes her role as a member of the decision-making assembly of the gods. She admits her role in deciding on the flood, but also notes that there is precedent for the divine assembly rescinding an order. Since she is the one who, along

---

<sup>267</sup> Scodel 1982, *passim*, but see especially p. 40; her text of departure is *Iliad* 12.1-35. A crucial observation and link is the term *hemitheoi* used to denote the heroic generation. Hendel 1987 ought to be mentioned in this context, because it did for Genesis 6.1-4 what Scodel did for the Iliadic passage and the Trojan War. Doak 2012, though focused on the figure of the giant in biblical materials, is an important update to this conversation; see especially pp. 119-52.

<sup>268</sup> The translation is Dalley 1989.



with Enki, actually created humans (*Atrahasis* I.iv-vi), she also laments in her role as the mother of mankind. She speaks metaphorically: her children have been slaughtered as sheep. Moreover, what had been the original source of the gods' frustration with humans, i.e., their "noise" (the first infraction is at I.vii), now becomes a kind of psychological punishment for Mami in the phrase "my noise has turned to silence."<sup>269</sup> Her tone of regret gives the impression that she would rather have the "noise" than this grief-bringing quiet. After this she talks about Anu, the head of the gods' assembly, and a kind of father figure in the story. Consider the focus of her critique:

What was Anu's intention as decision-maker?  
It was his command that the gods his sons obeyed,  
He who did not deliberate, but sent the flood,  
He who gathered the people to catastrophe  
(III.iii)

The text is then missing three lines, but when it returns to clarity Nintu is still wailing against Anu:

Would a true father have given birth to the rolling sea  
So that they could clog the river like dragonflies?  
(III.iv)

Nintu criticizes Anu precisely in his roles that concern making decision aimed at the well-being of persons in his care: he is leader of the assembly and he is (metaphorical) father of mankind. In these roles, Nintu complains, Anu has failed. Note especially her characterization of Anu as "he who did not deliberate:" is this notion of failed planning on the part of the high god echoed in the Greek tradition about Zeus' plan and the Trojan

---

<sup>269</sup> For a review of the range of opinions on what this "noise" could signify in the *Atrahasis* (from value-laden "rebellion" to more neutral "uproar") see Afanasieva 1996.

War? If so, then Zeus' ambiguous and changing plans in Homer's poem becomes that much more interesting. One pauses on the fact that Zeus waits before answering Thetis, and wonders if this is because he feels the gravity of what she asks of him—feels the complexity of negotiating the desires of all those involved (*Iliad* 1.531ff.).

But there is more in the *Atrahasis*. After these particular criticisms of Nintu voiced *during* the flood, she continues to voice her concerns *after the flood in the assembly*, that is, in a moment when the gods are together at a time when they could debrief, as it were, about the event. Nintu then criticizes *all the gods*, even though her critiques emphasize Anu the father and Anu' son, Ellil; the gist of her claim is the same, but again, now all the gods are together:

When they [the gods] had eaten the offering,  
Nintu got up and blamed them all,  
“Whatever came over Anu who makes the decisions?  
Did Ellil dare to come for the smoke offering?  
Those two who did not deliberate, but sent the flood,  
Gathered the people to catastrophe—  
You agreed the destruction.  
Now their bright faces are dark forever.”  
(III.v)

With these calls of injustice on the part of the gods as a decision-making body, Nintu then leaves their company. The narrative turns to Ellil as he sees Atrahasis' boat. It is important to remember here that the gods had decided to kill *all humans* with a flood, but with the secret help of the god Enki, Atrahasis alone built a boat and survived. The flood is now over. On seeing Atrahasis' boat, Ellil cries out—notice the emphasis on failed cooperation among the gods:

We, the great Anunna, all of us,  
Agreed together on an oath!  
No form of life should have escaped!  
How did any man survive the catastrophe?  
(III.vi)

We can now add Ellil's own frustrations at the way that the gods are planning as a group—or failing to cooperate—to Nintu's. It is true, though, Enki both swore the oath with the other gods, but also communicated secretly to Atrahasis.<sup>270</sup> This deception on Enki's part lies at the heart of the work: in the face of bad planning on the part of those in charge, what ought a dissenter to do? Cooperate, though disagreeing on principles of justice? Forcefully disagree? Or, say yes, but work quietly at undermining the success of the decision-makers? Enki seems to have chosen the latter—with good result for mankind, but obviously problematic for the cohesion of the divine cooperative. It is this lack of cooperation—bordering on treachery, though we cannot know—that Ellil picks up on. Nevertheless, Enki's reply to Ellil's accusation is to admit its truth:

I did it, in defiance of you!  
I made sure life was preserved  
(III.vi)

What follows, after a gap of nearly 20 lines, is a remarkable change in the gods' level of cooperation. While there are more gaps in the text, we can nevertheless see that Ellil, Enki, and Nintu make plans with each other in the assembly to re-address the human

---

<sup>270</sup> Nowhere in the *existing* lines of the *Atrahasis* do we actually see Enki swear the oath. But the lead-up to the gods' decision to send the Flood features massive quarrelling on their parts as to what to do. When the gods, and Ellil in particular, try to persuade Enki to swear to send the flood, Enki responds defiantly, "Why should you make me swear an oath? / Why should I use my power against my people? The flood that you mention to me — / What is it? I don't even know?" (II.vii).

population problem. Given the disagreements before, during, and after the flood, this togetherness is significant.

Thus, at a basic level, the *Atrahasis* and the *Iliad* resemble each other in the dual gods-in-assembly / humans-on-earth framework as well as in the narrative featuring profound mis-cooperation, even individual actions against the collective. Moreover, this frame highlights the divine decision-making group, and both texts end with important changes in how the divine assembly negotiates problems together. At the end of the *Atrahasis*, the gods put their minds together to come up with a solution to the human population problem that all the gods can agree with. That solution has to do with various methods of “birth control,” and seem to have been listed in some detail, though the text is too fragmentary for us to know what they were.<sup>271</sup> But it does not matter for my interpretation; for what I am suggesting is that one important theme of the *Atrahasis*, taken not so much as a historical document but as a work of literature, is *the method of planning itself*—how the characters plan and the effectiveness (or simply, the results) of their plans, and not so much the actual content of the decisions.<sup>272</sup> It is in this respect that I am further positing a resemblance to the *Iliad*, also considered as a work of literature.<sup>273</sup>

These comments are obviously gestures in the context of complex texts and traditions. Nevertheless, by zooming comparing the eschatological war with the Trojan

---

<sup>271</sup> Dalley (1989, 3-4 and note *ad loc.*) connects the women listed in III.vii with priestesses at Sippar’s temple for Shamash; these women were not allowed to give birth: “This version of *Atrahasis* may have been composed in order to justify their enforced infertility since it presents the myth as justifying a social phenomenon which was prevalent at that period” (4).

<sup>272</sup> Other thematic content on which modern scholarship has focused include the subject of the poem’s first line (“When the gods were men”), the significance of the name of the god who was killed to help create human beings (“We, the god who has intelligence”), the reason for the Flood (the “noise” mentioned above), and the new creation after the Flood. For basic literature see Pettinato 2005.

<sup>273</sup> Recall my comments above about the significance of Zeus arranging for the return of Hektor’s body—he does this not with a top-down, military-style command, but by eliciting the voluntary cooperation of many characters.

War and the myth of destruction, and asking why one would imagine such a thing, it becomes possible to see that one focus of this Near Eastern myth of destruction seems to have been how persons in charge make decisions in the face of serious problems. If 1QM's eschatological war at first seems the odd-man out here, I would suggest that precisely with its difference in temporal orientation and necessary nature it highlights aspects of its own elements and the others by way of contrast. Without this strong juxtaposition, similarities between the Babylonian and Greek epic might have gone unnoticed. As it is, the epic framework of *Atrahasis* and *Iliad* facilitates the theme of planning because the readers are given access to, first, the mental designs of individual planners as well as the planning group as a whole (through speeches, for example) and, second, the affects that those plans have on the subjects. In the case of the *Atrahasis*, the planners are the Anunna and the subjects are the newly created (and then to-be-destroyed) humans; in the *Iliad*, the planners are again the Olympians and other deities, and those affected are the semidivine and mortal humans on earth. Thus, Zeus' Plan is one thematic reflex of this tradition. The poets imagine a world—a kind of fiction laboratory—in which to show ways of addressing such problems, and inspiring human readers to think through their own. In short, why imagine the Trojan War? One answer: to imagine how Zeus might negotiate cooperation at solving its problems.<sup>274</sup> This theme in turn, the poet may hope, functions to inspire readers to do the same.

---

<sup>274</sup> See Heiden 2008, 161.

## **VI. Conclusion: Implications—Psychological, Historical, and Religious**

What is the psychological affect of going around with a past war in your head? What is the affect, contrariwise, of going around with a future war constantly on your mind? In what kind of historical circumstances (as reflection or critique) would we expect a mythmaker to write a story centering on themes of free deliberation and cooperative decision-making? What about a story whose outcome is determined, whose characters seem to have no choice about their future? And what are the religious implications of holding the notion that you, as a member of a certain collective, are living after a martial cataclysm somehow linked to a divine power or personality? What prayers are made to which god, what stories told to one's children, when god is bringing war? To my mind, the foregoing comparisons—ranging from the past cataclysms of the *Atrahasis* epic, the past, hero-ending war at Troy, and the coming battle of the War Scroll—suggest these questions for future engagement.

For now, let me observe that the archaic and classical Greeks' mytho-cataclysmic war was in the past, meant only for a handful of human beings in some traditions (Hesiod), for most of mankind in others (*Cypria*), thankfully diverted in even others (D-Scholium *Iliad* 1.5, P. Oxy. 3891), and expanded into a vast fictional universe fit to learn life's lessons in another (Homer). Only minimally moralized, some authors nevertheless did take this to-be-destroyed-race as ethically positive (Hesiod), and others not so much (P. Oxy. 3891), but on the whole the war is certainly not invested with the religious fury of the War Scroll's battle. A powerful, identity-forming use for these Greek heroes drew power from their historic roots as king-like individuals in their respective homelands (Hesiodic *Catalogue*). Margalit Finkelberg lately demonstrated the various ways that the

myth of the heroic generation's end has plausible kernels in historical reality, showing among other things how "the entire epic genre, entitled somewhat incongruously *Nostoi*, or *Returns*, was created to deal with this event."<sup>275</sup> What event? The Greek migration and settlement around the Mediterranean following the destruction of many Bronze Age sites. On this topic, Irad Malkin goes so far as to assert that "the entire ethnography of the Mediterranean could be explained as originating from the Big Bang of the Trojan War and the consequent Nostos diffusion."<sup>276</sup> Eventually, in the fifth-century, following the Greek-Persian conflict, some Greeks began using the Trojan War as a model to set-up strict, reduced, evaluative dichotomies of two people groups: Achaeans against Trojans as West against East.<sup>277</sup> This myth has its resonances still today.<sup>278</sup>

This final point about ideological uses of world-ending warfare to construct mythic, universally-opposed peoples reminds us again of IQM's Children of Light and Darkness, but it also reminds us of another difference. For if the hope to be derived from the eschatological battle in the War Scroll lies, paradoxically, at least partly in its inevitability—"yes, Yhwh will definitely fight for us," say the Children of Light—thus securing a hopeful future through definite action, the ambiguous and changing Plans of Zeus offer an alternative model.

---

<sup>275</sup> Finkelberg 2005, esp. 149-76 (quotation from 150).

<sup>276</sup> Malkin 1998, 3.

<sup>277</sup> Hall 2007, 346-51.

<sup>278</sup> See, e.g., Saïd 1979.

## CHAPTER 4: ERAS

### I. Introduction: The World's End in Time

In this chapter the end in question is time—not as fact-seeking chronology, but as eras in the human mind. We are obviously not dealing here with an absolute end, but series of transitions—ends and beginnings—from one era to another. How did thinkers from archaic and classical Greece imagine the periods of human history? How did they answer the question, “What era are we living in?”

From a phenomenological point of view the question is of primary importance, since orientation in time and space constitute fundamental aspects of human experience.<sup>279</sup> But the kind of temporal orientation I take up here is not that of so-called “lived experience.”<sup>280</sup> It is, rather, of a higher representational mode: periodization as an act of the imagination. Human beings imagine, however, not in a vacuum but in specific contexts for particular reasons. This changes the question slightly from “what era are we living in?” to “who imagines which eras, and why?”. Given the fundamental nature of the act of deciding the times, as it were, the question bears significantly on how a group of people of a shared temporal culture imagine their past, present, and future: where have we been? where are we now? where will we be?. Who frames and answers these questions sets the cultural time clock. And who sets the cultural time clock sets the

---

<sup>279</sup> Thus Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.

<sup>280</sup> See Schrag 1969, especially 49-81; he includes discussion of and builds on the thinking of the by-now famous French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty who developed the concept of lived time.



horizon of experiential expectations, the specific orientations in which persons appropriate primary experiences of, for example, fear and hope vis-a-vis the future.

I focus on three Greek thinkers: Hesiod, Plato's Eleatic Stranger, and Dikaiarchos of Messana. All three offer a periodization of sorts, manipulating a few common motifs for their own purposes: the reigns of Kronos and Zeus—what makes them distinctive and how the transition from one to the other occurs—and a succession of eras, sometimes overlaid with a metaphor of metals. To summarize: Hesiod's races in *Works and Days* is not a series of impersonal eras but of vignettes populated by mortals of varying ethics. It is designed to provoke thought about Zeus, justice, and human work. As an imaginative effort in periodization, his *logos* of human races thus functions as a lesson in human ethics. The Eleatic Stranger, in Plato's *Statesman*, describes a scenario in which, while taking the form of a mythic discourse, is one of nonmythic content: a scientific history of the universe and its eras. To further complicate matters, he uses the myth as an *archē*—a new beginning—to make claims about the origin and nature of the human statesman (*politikos*). Less personally ethical than Hesiod's, the Stranger's discourse is more factual, historical, and, ultimately, ideological: his Golden reign of Kronos, in which human beings do literally nothing for themselves, functions to legitimate the human statesman's near total management of the human "herd" in the present era. The periodization of Dikaiarchos, a personal student of Aristotle himself, is a tripartite development of cultural anthropology based on food supply: human societies began with an era of autarky, followed by pastoralism, and finally agriculture. In conceptualizing his understanding of human cultural history he interprets Hesiod's races, and the ways in

which his vision and Hesiod's are similar, despite different purposes, are striking. These three thinkers imagine their periodic schemes for ethics (Hesiod), ideology (the Eleatic Stranger), and anthropology (Dikaiarchos).

I want to mention three further points before I begin. These points concern content, use, and Hesiod's races. First, content-wise, in the archaic and classical periods we see an emphasis on the human being as, at least in origin, a part of nature. Greek thinkers then develop the idea that an important cause of separation of the human race from the natural world (and other animals) is the development of arts (τέχναι). This becomes a prominent theme in Greek philosophy, represented in this chapter by Plato's Eleatic Stranger and Dikaiarchos of Messana.<sup>281</sup>

Second, aside from concerns of content, there is the question of use: the thinkers surveyed here have quite different uses for the common task of periodization. For this reason, I go into some depth about these functions. By asking the question of use, we can detect the ways that any given scheme is not an absolute contribution to thought but tailored for a particular focus. Indeed, for two of the three thinkers here (Hesiod and the Eleatic Stranger), periodization is actually a means to some other end. Imagining the times—this is where we are reminded of the fundamental power of setting the ethical or cultural time clock.

Third, while we begin with Hesiod's races in this chapter, as we will see in the case of the Eleatic Stranger and Dikaiarchos, they do not gain traction as a mode of history. And in this sense, the Stranger and Dikaiarchos are fairly representative of the Greek

---

<sup>281</sup> On the Greek concept of nature, which is based on growth, see Naddaf 2005.

tradition (broadly construed as a manner of thinking). His races, thought to be an adaptation of a Near Eastern motif,<sup>282</sup> do however remain a set piece in poetry—they have a central role to play in, for example, Aratos’ *Phainomena*, and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. This is not to say that later thinkers evacuate the motif of any thoughtful provocation, that they are superficial ornamentation. It is to say that in the Greek tradition they are rationalized by historians and philosophers, if mentioned at all. The mythic notion of Kronos’ reign as a Golden Age, on the other hand, does gain some traction in diverse contexts, to which the authors surveyed here attest. And this makes sense, since Kronos’ reign stands at the beginning of human history in the Greek imagination. And while there are other ways to set the cultural and ethical clock, nevertheless, he who sets the beginning has particular power on the present and future.

## II. Hesiod: The World’s End as Ethical Provocation

Hesiod imagines an end to the world of his time (which is our time too) in a famous passage from his *Works and Days*: the *logos* of the five races (lines 106-201). The entire poem is initially framed as a celebration of Zeus, but this celebration takes the particular shape of an instructional piece for his brother Perses. These two elements—hymn for Zeus and lesson for Perses—are not mutually exclusive but always co-existing throughout the whole.<sup>283</sup> Indeed, this educational aspect of the poem might have gained it the title of *The Education of Perses* rather than *Works and Days*.<sup>284</sup> At any rate, for us

---

<sup>282</sup> For an update on West’s groundbreaking work on Hesiod’s *Works and Days* and the Near East (1978), see Woodard 2007.

<sup>283</sup> On didactic and hymnic aspects, respectively, see West 1978, 3-25 and 136-37.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Clay 2003, 34.

readers the pedagogical context inspires questions such as, “who is the teacher?”, “who is the student?”, and “what is the lesson?”. The hymnic aspect, on the other hand, begs the questions “who is Zeus?” and “why is he to be celebrated?”.

The centerpiece of my discussion is the series of five races which constitute Hesiod’s *logos* in lines 106-20. But before I discuss that passage I want to mention a few themes that we ought to bear in mind as literary context for the *logos*. The thematic frames offer clues about what to look for in the *logos* as well as the passage’s overall import and purpose. My reading of the *logos* will then focus on these themes. There are two, mentioned briefly above: first, Zeus’ identity and concerns as an imagined, third party source of law, and second, a lesson for Perses centering on means and ends through a particular discourse about how to obtain what you want in life.

One final word of introduction regarding my approach and its scholarly context. It seems important for me to emphasize the limited nature of my analysis: since this is not a comprehensive interpretation of the entire *Works and Days*, but an investigation into the question of what Hesiod says about the world’s end and why, I will pick out only those aspects of the poem which are relevant to those questions. The challenge is to say just enough to situate the *logos* in the poem’s context. My pedagogical-ethical interpretation can be compared with three other prominent approaches. To begin with, Martin West’s introduction and commentary<sup>285</sup> still needs to be consulted, but more for philological and comparative concerns than for literary interpretation. Just how different my exegetical attempt is—to analyze themes, to balance the part and the whole, etc.—from his can be

---

<sup>285</sup> West 1978.

seen in West's statement about the *logos* of the races, to wit that "by the time he [Hesiod] reaches the end of it (201) [i.e., the *logos*], he has quite forgotten his starting-point. His mind is full of injustice, violence, godlessness."<sup>286</sup> Moreover, despite classifying the *Works and Days* as "wisdom literature," West says surprisingly little about the content or the method of Hesiod's wisdom project. He asserts that the myth illustrates "man's passage from an original paradise-state to his present misery" but ultimately takes Hesiod "away from the work theme."<sup>287</sup> Neither is another prominent interpreter of the *logos*, Jean Pierre Vernant,<sup>288</sup> interested in the piece for its literary-thematic and pedagogic content. But Vernant's approach is explicitly structuralist, and so this need not surprise. His essay is more concerned with treating the *logos* as a surgical patient, dissecting its parts to discover its stable, essential, necessary architecture—which, he claims, evinces a tripartite social structure mirrored in other so-called Indo-European societies. Vernant's study and Near Eastern comparanda commonly frame scholarly interpretations of Hesiod's *logos*, and this is seen in the third work especially worth of mention here: Jenny Strauss Clay's monograph, *Hesiod's Cosmos*,<sup>289</sup> is currently the cutting edge literary treatment of Hesiod's poetic corpus. She too frontloads her discussion of the *logos* with mention of the potential Near Eastern and Indo-European traditional comparanda as well as Vernant's structuralist reading.<sup>290</sup> Yet while her approach is avowedly literary and she views the poem as a work of didactic poetry,<sup>291</sup> her examination of what she calls the

---

<sup>286</sup> West 1978, 49.

<sup>287</sup> West 1978, *ad loc.*

<sup>288</sup> Vernant 1983.

<sup>289</sup> Clay 2003. This monograph should be consulted for recent bibliography, to which can be added Montanari et. al. 2009.

<sup>290</sup> Clay 2003, 81-85.

<sup>291</sup> See, for example, Clay 2003, 1 and 5.

“early Greek theology” in Hesiod’s poems and other early Greek poetry, can leave the reader with the sense that the texts do not raise live ethical questions, but rather function less dynamically to transmit information. This effect is seen in how she frames the purpose of the *logos* of the races: we can turn to this passage “to study the origins and nature of mankind in Hesiod,” since “the origins of mankind constitute the focus of Hesiod’s myth of the five races.”<sup>292</sup> This makes Hesiod’s teaching for Perses sound more like a history lesson than an ethical one. That said, my interpretation combines West’s and others’ generic classification of the *Works and Days* as “wisdom” or “didactic” literature, and Clay’s commitment “to take Hesiod seriously as a thinker and poet and to show what rich insights we may find if we do.”<sup>293</sup> We find that Hesiod frames the *Works and Days* as a celebration of “Zeus” and a lesson for Perses, and that he further tailors the myth of the races to be one part of that larger celebration and teaching.

## II.1. *Works and Days*: Two Thematic Frames

### *Thematic Frame 1: A Celebration of Zeus (as Law)*

In the proem, Hesiod sets up a triangulation between himself, Zeus, and Perses.<sup>294</sup> The triangulation is very much like that of a court of law. Zeus is the judge, Hesiod the prosecutor and his poem a prosecution speech, and Perses the (silent) defendant. We could add a fourth, making the triangle a square (?), if we consider the non-Perses reader another party: that reader could be understood as another “Perses,” though, expected to

---

<sup>292</sup> Clay 2003, 81.

<sup>293</sup> Clay 2003, 10.

<sup>294</sup> Other persons, however, are relevant to the poem’s discourse, some of them even being addressed by Hesiod (i.e., the Muses and the kings); see Clay 2003, 34 and Bartlett 2006, 178.

learn his lessons; or that reader could be an audience member in the court room, a literary eavesdropper.

However that may be, the key is that it is all imaginary. No matter the ontological status of Zeus, this court room, Perses, and the brother's quarrel, all we have before us is a poem bringing these things into existence. But Zeus is perhaps the most important imagined entity—he is the celebrant and the core of the lesson; for in him Hesiod invites Perses to imagine a third party arbitor, a third party source of both judgment (i.e., law) and also ethics. Now, Zeus is in some sense also a personal character in the poem. He features in several storied vignettes—for example, the Prometheus episode and the *logos* of the races. But the effect of imagining this character of Zeus is to put in Perses' mind the abstract notion of a law outside of *both himself and Hesiod*. Without such an imagined source of law, Hesiod and Perses are left with the real unjust judges or simply themselves to help resolve their dispute—neither are good options. It is only by sharing this concept via imagination that Hesiod and Perses can begin to settle their differences. Hesiod must draw Perses into a shared conceptual world: his means of doing so in the early stages of the *Works and Days* is an imagined court of law featuring Zeus as the source of that law.

And yet, imagining a third party *source* of law and ethics is only the start. Once Hesiod has presented the general idea of Zeus-Law to Perses, he can move to fill in the *content* of what this entity requires. Or, to use the court metaphor, Hesiod can then help Perses imagine what actions constitute crimes in the court of their shared, imaginary judge. This is one thing that Hesiod does later with the *logos* of the races.

For now, let's briefly look at how Hesiod sets up the court-room triangle in the proem. Hesiod first calls on the Muses, who glorify with songs, to come celebrate Zeus their father through hymnic singing (1-2). He then goes on to designate *Zeus as a causal force* in human phenomena. He does this with word play on Zeus' name in the accusative, Δία, and the relative clause beginning ὃν τε διὰ (3), as well as a chiasmic structure in the overall couplet (3-4), which reminds us that we are dealing with a work of art on several levels: ideas *and* words. Here are the song's first lines:<sup>295</sup>

Μοῦσαι Πιερίηθεν ἀοιδῇσι κλείουσαι  
 δεῦτε Δί' ἐννέπετε σφέτερον πατέρ' ὕμνείουσαι  
 ὃν τε διὰ βροτοὶ ἄνδρες ὁμῶς ἄφατοί τε φατοί τε  
 ῥητοὶ τ' ἄρρητοί τε Διὸς μέγαοιο ἔκητι.

Muses, from Pieria, glorifying in songs,  
 come here, tell in hymns of your father Zeus,  
 through whom mortal men are unfamed and famed alike,  
 and named and unnamed, by the will of great Zeus.

Hesiod does not specify the logical connection between his request for the Muses to celebrate Zeus and the claim of Zeus as cause: is Zeus to be celebrated because he is this cause? Or is the poet informing us about the particular aspect of Zeus' character that he most wants to feature in this poem: the Muses will celebrate Zeus *as* a causal force in men's reputation? But this in turn is because Zeus can easily change a man's life circumstances—for the better or for the worse. The trick is that the appearance in the present is not necessarily a sound guide for the reality in the present and future:

ῥέα μὲν γὰρ βριάει ῥέα δὲ βριάοντα χαλέπτει  
 ῥεῖα δ' ἀρίζηλον μινύθει καὶ ἄδηλον ἀέξει  
 ῥεῖα δὲ τ' ἰθύνει σκολιὸν καὶ ἀγήνορα κάρφει

<sup>295</sup> The text and translation is that of Most 2006.



Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης ὃς ὑπέρτατα δῶματα ναίει

For easily he strengthens, and easily he crushes the strong,  
easily he diminishes the conspicuous and increases the inconspicuous,  
and easily he straightens the crooked and withers the proud—  
high-thundering Zeus, who dwells in the loftiest mansions.

The first couplet (5-6) features one concept per line, where Zeus brings about the opposite of initial appearances: the idea of becoming mighty (5), and the idea of being conspicuous (6). The second couplet features a single line of two metaphors, to be taken ethically, one from geometry and one from botany: straightening the crooked, and withering the bold. The climax of these two couplets is the single line devoted to Zeus himself, pictured high in his own mansion.

But how does Zeus accomplish these changes? I take this to be one of the poem's riddles; for any reader of the poem knows that Zeus does not exist in the same way that a human person does: Zeus does not walk on the earth such that he could go to a rich man's treasure bin and empty it, thus, for example, making things difficult for a mighty person (5). Moreover, the language is figurative: what would it even mean for Zeus literally to straighten out a crooked man, or to diminish the conspicuous? Hesiod does not imagine a ghost-like being walking the earth; he imagines the presence of this Zeus idea in the mind of a person. In Hesiod's view, there is something about mentally positing or not mentally positing this Zeus-Father-Judge that results in certain circumstantial realities. Things change when human beings imagine Zeus.

Before elaborating Hesiod explicitly establishes the judicial triangle: he addresses Zeus about what he wants him to do during this song-speech, and also lets Zeus know

what he intends to do while Zeus listens. Here readers are introduced to Hesiod (the speaking “I”), Zeus, and Perses:

κλῦθι ἰδὼν αἰῶν τε δίκη δ’ ἴθυνε θέμιστας  
τύννη ἐγὼ δέ κε Πέρση ἐτήτυμα μυθησαίμην

Give ear to me, watching and listening,  
and straighten the verdicts with justice yourself;  
as for me, I will proclaim truths to Perses.

There is the poetic triangulation. Zeus is the imagined judge, Hesiod is the (speaking) prosecutor, and Perses is the (silent but learning) defendant. Hesiod brings this courtroom triangulation up again after introducing the theory of two Erides (Strifes) and a little bit about the brother’s quarrel:

ἀλλ’ αὖθι διακρινώμεθα νεῖκος                      35  
ἰθείησι δίκης αἵ τ’ ἐκ Διός εἰσιν ἄρισται.

let us decide our quarrel right here  
with straight judgments, which come from Zeus,  
the best ones.

But, again, where is Zeus? The task that the poem sets for itself is constructing Zeus as causal force in human phenomena, Zeus as source of law, and Zeus as source of ethics. The trick is that the poem imagines Zeus—and invites Perses to imagine the same Zeus, so that he and Hesiod can settle their dispute based on this newly-shared ethical source. And, finally, on top of that the poem will simultaneously celebrate this imagined-Zeus-law while constructing it: it is to be regarded as praise-worthy, so the later *logos* of the races will argue, because it does nothing less than protect human beings from the Law of the Stronger, a law which partakes not of a shared, imagined, third party negotiator (i.e.,

law), but the physical material of bigger bodies. At the very least, however, this thematic frame of an imagined courtroom scenario must be borne in mind when interpreting the poem as a whole as well as any of its parts.

### ***Thematic Frame 2: An Ethical Lesson for Perses***

A second important frame is education. Not only will Hesiod celebrate Zeus with the poem; he will also educate Perses about Zeus. Hesiod indicates this in the last line of the proem: ἐγὼ δέ κε Πέρσῃ ἐτήτυμα μυθησάμην (as for me, I will proclaim truths to Perses) (10). The particular truths that Hesiod will provoke Perses to think about concern means and ends, and this follows from the nature of their brotherly quarrel. Hesiod reminds his brother that after the two of them had already divided their inheritance, Perses proceeded to bribe the local judges to bring about a legal proceeding in which Perses obtained more than his share (37-39). The basic idea here is that Perses stole Hesiod's stuff. The more basic idea is that Perses used unjust means in pursuit of a particular end. Despite Perses' efforts at monetary gain, he is still poor (394ff.). Hesiod shows him a different way.

This is where the notion of two Erides (Strifes) comes in. Here in *Works and Days* both Erides have to do with the fundamental human desire to get what you want. The difference lies in the means that each Eris inspires one to follow. One Eris leads to violence: on seeing someone else with something that you want, instead of finding a way to make it yourself or simply asking the person for it, one attempts to take it by force (14-

16).<sup>296</sup> The other Eris inspires healthy competition: again, on seeing someone else with something that you want, instead of attempting to take it by force, you strive to obtain it yourself by emulating that person in your own hard work (17-26).<sup>297</sup> This Eris results in a win-win: the other person keeps her stuff; you also obtain what you want. Beyond this individual level, however, the good competition has the potential to lead to broad advancement in the arts.<sup>298</sup>

But what is particularly difficult about this second Eris is that it is harder to see. Here we meet Zeus again, since it is he who is responsible. And yet Zeus is not to blame for this relative unseen-ness about the good Eris, for the Eris is, afterall, good for mortals. Moreover, the poem leaves us wondering “what if Zeus had not himself put this good-for-mortals Eris in the land?”. This could even be one of Perses’ first lessons about Zeus: he intends good for mortals and provides just means for obtaining what we aim at. Here is how Hesiod describes the good Eris. Note the emphasis on Zeus, the land, and healthy competition—all especially relevant to Perses’ current lifestyle:

But the other one gloomy Night bore first;  
and Kronos’ high-throned son, who dwells in the aether,  
set it in the roots of the earth, and it is much better for men.  
It rouses even the helpless man to work. For a man who is not working  
but who looks at some other man, a rich one who is hastening  
to plow and plant and set his house in order, he envies him,  
one neighbor envying his neighbor who is hastening  
toward wealth: and this Strife is good for mortals.  
And potter is angry with potter, and builder with builder,  
and beggar begrudges beggar, and poet poet.

---

<sup>296</sup> Hesiod writes of this sort of bad Eris in his *Theogony* (225-32).

<sup>297</sup> This is not the only instance of an early Greek poet assigning Eris a positive connotation. See, for example, *Od.* 6.92

<sup>298</sup> Benardete 2000, 4.

The major points to note here are, again, Zeus' role as the one who made this good competition available to mortals; the role of the land as that through which men access the goodness; the fact that this type of competition inspires men to mind their own business and work hard for what they desire; and the various skill-contexts in which it is relevant. Of course Hesiod emphasizes skills of farming and home-making since that is what he hopes Perses will pursue to be independent. Important, too, is the unseen-ness involved, since it points to the ability to delay gratification in obtaining these good things that Zeus has in store for those who are willing to work hard rather than steal.

The invisibility of this good Eris, moreover, reminds us of the invisibility of another important factor in the poem, namely, Zeus as source of good judgment (what I referred to above as part of thematic frame 1). On the one hand, there are judges that Perses can see with his eyes. On the other hand, there is a judge that Perses cannot see with his eyes. It is this latter judge that Hesiod provokes Perses to imagine. The connection is that both Zeus-Judge and good-Eris require Perses to see beyond what he can see only with his physical eyes. This is one of the pedagogical themes of the poem, already at play in the lines I previously analyzed about Zeus as an invisible causal force in changing men's fortunes: the way things seem to be going for any given person at any given time can turn out not to reflect a pending reality change when Zeus is involved. Fundamental to Perses' learning the lessons of the poem—and to avoiding a guilty charge in Zeus' court—is foresight, mentally seeing ahead beyond the immediate. Much later in the poem this idea receives its climax in the person who Hesiod names ὁ πανάριστος, “the man who can

think for himself and sees how things will turn out in the end.”<sup>299</sup> This type of thinking ahead, of course, relies on imagining that which is not yet in (fore)seeing options and choosing the best course of action.

One final point on the Eris passage, again reminding us of Hesiod as word artist. He rounds out the section poignantly by making this good Eris applicable specifically to himself and Perses: “beggar competing with beggar” refers to Perses, who by the time of the poem’s composition is a beggar (394-97), and the “singer competing with singer” refers to Hesiod, who is obviously a poet. This gesture continues to remind the reader of the specific context of Hesiod’s and Perses’ quarrel, and of the poem’s purpose therein. But the other affect of the juxtaposition is to hint to Perses that when it comes to obtaining the possessions he desires, he ought to be looking to his analogous artisan rather than his brother. Hesiod will compete in the literary market, while Perses will compete—and here is a stinger since Perses’ choices are ironically leaving him poor—in the beggar market.

So far we have seen that in the context of education, Hesiod is concerned that Perses learn something of Zeus and of fulfilling desire. A final point that I want to make about this pedagogical program is that while Hesiod certainly challenges Perses on the means with which he goes about fulfilling his desire for certain stuff, Hesiod nowhere tells Perses to stop desiring things. Put another way, Hesiod allows Perses the desire to possess—he does not question the end toward which Perses is striving. The implicit message is that, to reference the specific desire that Perses went wrong in obtaining,

---

<sup>299</sup> This is the translation of Athanassakis 1983. Clay 2003, 47 suggests that the *panaristos* is “Hesiod’s ideal addressee.” I agree, but would add that Hesiod’s aim is to provoke Perses to become this ideal.

wanting land is good. This point about the implicit goodness of striving to possess was actually already present when Hesiod formulated the idea that Zeus put the good Eris in the earth as a means for men to obtain what they want: Zeus did not eradicate human desire, but thought up an alternative to fulfilling that desire through physical force. Hesiod's pedagogical move, then, at least initially, will be to redirect the way that Perses goes about getting what he wants. This complex of themes centering on Zeus, means, ends, and the land will re-surface as a major concern in the *logos* of the races.

## **II.2. Hesiod's *Logos* of the Races as a Lesson**

I have just presented two thematic concerns from the early sections of the *Works and Days*: (1) Zeus/Law as a causal force in human phenomena and (2) Perses' education in means and ends. Turning from this general literary framework to the specific *logos* of the races, it must be born in mind that Hesiod designs the *logos* to support these broader themes.

Hesiod gives an account (*logos*) of successive human races to teach his brother an ethical lesson about both justice and work.<sup>300</sup> Given the pedagogical-ethical aims of the poem, the account of the human races is neither chronology nor history but, as the generic classification of "wisdom literature" suggests, wisdom. Moreover, given that the *logos* is one lesson in the larger lesson that constitutes the poem as a whole, we are justified in asking about its particular contribution to that larger lesson. My reading will highlight these pedagogic aspects.

---

<sup>300</sup> Fontenrose 1974 emphasizes this dual concern of the *logos*.

Hesiod argues for Perses that theirs is the time of Zeus—a time when mortals must work the land for food and happiness while cooperating with one another. In this context the four races which precede the current Iron race function as a series of comparanda to show by way of contrast how Perses ought to live. From this perspective, each vignette is a little world—by considering its inhabitants, the problems they face, and how they respond to them, Hesiod can subtly bring Perses along a path of ethical education. It is important that Hesiod talks about races of *persons* rather than *impersonal* eras or ages, since it aims at the ethical instruction of a person, not the communication of impersonal knowledge (about, say, the history of mankind).

More than that, attention to Zeus as a character in the *logos* shows that the tour of races also functions to connect its ethical lesson with the person of Zeus. From this standpoint, the *logos* is a lesson about, and a celebration of, Zeus as that on which the health of human persons and communities depend. This conclusion about the purpose of the *logos* accounts for its particular contribution to the poem, as well as sees it participating in the poem's overall themes of celebrating Zeus and educating Perses through a variety of motifs and emphases on food supply. Let's turn now to the passage to see how this works out. My reading will focus on each race's morality, its acquisition of food, and its demise.

### ***1<sup>st</sup> Race—Golden: the End Like Sleep***

In this account, the first race of mortals is the only one to have lived under Kronos (111). This is the Golden Age: it features autarky and a painless death. Moreover, this race is



imagined to have lived like the gods except in respect of mortality: the gods exist always, presumably in both temporal directions, while the humans are created by the Olympians (110) and then die, though Hesiod does not say how long they live (nor do they seem to reproduce). That these particular aspects of divine and human immortality and mortality are not part of Hesiod's lesson should not surprise given the thematic frames discussed above. Hesiod writes about neither history nor theology. Thus, in keeping with the poem's emphasis on means and ends, Hesiod does talk about how the mortals of the Golden Race obtain their livelihood, their relationship to the land, and their relationship with the gods as a result:

ἐσθλὰ δὲ παντα	116
τοῖσιν ἔην. καρπὸν δ' ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα	
αὐτομάτη πολλόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον. οἱ δ' ἐβέλημοι	
ἥσυχοι ἔργ' ἐνέμοντο σὺν ἐσθλοῖσιν πολέεσσιν.	
ἀφνειοὶ μήλοισι, φίλοι μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν.	120

They had all good things:  
the grain-giving field bore crops of its own accord,  
much and unstinting, and they themselves, willingly,  
mild-mannered, shared out the fruits of their labors  
together with many good things,  
wealthy in sheep, dear to the blessed gods.

Possessing “all good things” is an end concern for these Golden men as it is for Perses.

But the means with which both parties work toward this end could not be more different:

Golden race men have all good things literally without raising a finger—the land produces it for them automatically (autarky). Moreover, the result seems to be either a perfect match between how much the mortals need (or want?), or a surplus. Either way, these mortals distribute the goods willingly, standing in direct contrast with Perses, who far from giving cooperatively, stole deceptively.

How do the gods collectively respond to these men? First, notice that Hesiod connects the gods' response closely with the Golden race's practices of distribution. Hesiod says that these men are "dear" (*philoí* [φίλοι]) to the gods (120). Is this a cause or an effect of their being beloved by the gods? Both the placement of the statement about the Golden race's method of distribution before the evaluation, as well as comparison with the races to follow in the logos suggest that the gods' love of these men is somehow a positive response to the men's ethics.

In terms of being a model for Perses to follow, there is a sense in which Perses may not be able to relate to the men of the Golden race, for they have all they need without working. How difficult would it be, Perses may argue, to be just without any competition for resources? This would be a good point, were it not for the fact that there is one point of analogy that the Golden race shares with Perses but where the two races diverge: regardless of *how* they obtain their goods vis-a-vis the land, the Golden race still distributes it fairly. So while the race as a whole obtains food without work, each individual seems only to obtain goods insofar as there is just distribution to him. Perses, on the other hand, as we have already pointed out, is depicted as not cooperating in a certain tradition of distribution (i.e., inheritance) but rather stealing. Thus, the lesson about just distribution with fellow men as the proper means of obtaining food stands. And, to repeat, its ethical normativity is signalled by the gods affection (φίλοι μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν).

That said, there is an important sense in which the Golden race's positive evaluation—implied with the epithet "Golden"—is superficial, even ironic. We see this

when considering the Golden race in light of the poem's broader themes. The reason concerns Hesiod's theory of two Strifes, elaborated earlier. Recall that Hesiod's idea is that Zeus put one Eris in the earth. Mortals can access this Eris through honest, hard work, and the result is that they acquire their food and other material desiderata justly. If everyone does this, then the situation is an all-around win-win. But, and here's the catch, the Golden race does not work. They have "everything," understood as material prosperity (or simply necessities?), but they do not have the good that comes from the correct process of obtaining. In other words, they have the end, if the end is understood as simply possessing things, but they do not have the means. Since the Golden race's autarky precludes benefitting from Zeus' good Eris, it turns out that the Golden race, as a potential ethical paradigm for Perses, may only be half Golden. Perses can stand to learn the lesson of just distribution, but the Golden race's lack of work will remain irrelevant to him.

### ***2<sup>nd</sup> Race—Silver: the End in Hybris***

The silver race receives an immediate evaluation compared to the preceeding Golden race: they are "much worse" (πολὺ χειρότερον, 127). Why? In terms of livelihood, each Silver race individual is nurtured at home at his mother's breast for one hundred years—totally immature (130-31). When they do go out on their own, at puberty, they live for a very short time. They bring on their own troubles due to their own folly (ἄφραδίας, 134), and though Hesiod intimates that they actually have a choice in the matter, the way that he expresses their ultimate downfall is that they are unable to restrain wicked *hybris*

(ὑβριν ἀτάσθαλον, 134) from each other. This sounds very much like the way that Perses has treated Hesiod in their inheritance dispute. Perses also seems childish in his dependence on others (i.e., the local magistrates) to obtain what he wants.

But there is another way in which Perses seems to belong to this Silver race: respect for the gods. Those of the Silver race are unwilling to recognize the gods (135-39). This in fact is the explicit reason that Hesiod gives for Zeus' ending this race. I take Perses' connection to this race in this respect from Hesiod's eagerness to teach Perses about Zeus. If Perses were already properly acknowledging Zeus, then Hesiod would not, presumably, have taken the time to write up the sermon that is the *Works and Days*. Hesiod attempts to save Perses from the fate of the Silver race whom Zeus hid away

οὐνεκα τιμὰς	138
οὐκ ἔδιδον μακάρεσσι θεοῖς οἱ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν	
because they did not give	
honors to the blessed gods who dwell on Olympus.	

Aside from these ethical considerations, the Silver race is important for the notion of imagined time and periodization. For, though Hesiod does not make the transition explicit, the Silver race has seen a shift from Kronos as king to Zeus as king. The former's rule was noted in the description of the Golden race; the latter's reign is hinted at in the fact that he is the one who takes notice of the Silver race's behavior and punishes them. We get the impression that the Golden race's autarky and Kronos' lack of moral interests go hand in hand. The Golden race men are not depicted as having faced any dilemmas, and therefore never had to make tough choices: if morality is defined by the making of the right choices, then there can have been no such thing as morality for the

Golden race. This being the case, Kronos would never have had to act as a judge. Nor would he be suitable as an imagined source of law. Moreover, in precisely that moment when Zeus is described as taking action against the Silver race (lines 137ff.) he is “Ζεὺς Κρονίδης” (Zeus son of Kronos). This language, as well as the emphasis on Zeus as moral enforcer, signals a new era, one in which Zeus’ expectations are normative. The *Works and Days* initially frames this as Zeus’ court room, and in Hesiod’s periodic pedagogy the answer to the question “what time is it?” is “the time of Zeus.” In the time of Zeus human beings face choices of a moral nature, i.e., about right and wrong, about good and bad, about wisdom and folly. Hesiod’s Zeus is the character who embodies the principles on which right and wrong choices are made, and this is seen partly in the transition from Kronos’ a-moral era to Zeus’ moral one. The Golden race showed Perses how to give and take the foodstuffs of life, but not how to obtain it through work. The Silver race shows Perses the need for certain mental capacities once it is his time to leave home and attempt to make a living on his own. These mental capacities are recognition of unseen things.

### ***3<sup>rd</sup> Race—Bronze: the End in Violence***

In terms of the internal logic of means, ends, and food supply, the Bronze race is unique: they do not eat. Actually, the text says that they “do not eat *grain*” (σῖτον, 146-47), but when we combine this with a few other of their characteristics, we will see how they do not fit the pattern of discussing how the men of each race obtains their food. First, Bronze race mortals are made out of ash wood (145); presumably trees have no need for human

meals (even though the individuals who belong to the Bronze race are definitely human beings). Second, all they care about is the bad Strife, i.e., war, apparently leaving no time for preparing and eating food (145-46). Finally, while father Zeus made them (143), they kill each other with their own hands (152). The Bronze race seem barely human.

Aside from this fundamental point about their aberrance with respect to livelihood, the Bronze race shows one other important characteristic: their sheer physicality. Everything about the men of this race is material. Their substance is ash wood. Their hearts (*thumos*) are adamant (147). They are all physical might, and hands, and massive limbs (148-49). Aside from their bodies, even their weapons, houses, and other possessions are bronze (150-51). Given this totalizing materiality, Hesiod does not even mention the gods, nor any abstract phenomena such as respect or shame. It is as if the material world which the Bronze race inhabits precludes any such imagined entities. And in the end, their death takes on a decidedly physical causality: as stated above, they conquer each other with their very hands (χείρεσσιν ὑπὸ σφετέρῃσι, 152). Moreover, the end of their ultra physical existence is finalized with another material-world image, with no mention of divine concealment for future generations (as for the Golden race, 122-26): the image is of the light of the sun (155). Again, this final image taken from the material world rounds out the depiction of an only material race.

What might Perses learn from the Bronze race? Perses has still not been supplied with a positive vision of life away from mom: he knows that he must give and take justly once he has acquired stuff, but none of the races so far has shown him how to obtain that stuff. And in fact, both the Silver and Bronze races depict an emphatic how not to live away

from home. On the one hand, the Bronze race would seem to be an extreme instantiation of the bad Eris. Hesiod had already connected this first Eris with war and battle (πόλεμόν τε καὶ δῆριν, 14), and so the association would not be far-fetched. On the other hand, the Bronze race is not described as taking part in *polemos* and *dēris*, but “deeds groan-giving and hybristic” (ἔργα στονόεντα καὶ ὕβριες, 146). The difference between the two lies in the relative recognition of persons and cooperative nature of the task: *polemos* can potentially be undertaken on behalf of persons and in a cooperative way, but these “hybristic deeds” of the Bronze race are of no such type. Rather, the Bronze race fights in order to, for lack of a better reason, *fight*: what makes their deeds so terrible is precisely the lack of any end just goal. Fighting is a means to fighting.<sup>301</sup> A contrast with this mode of fighting will be seen in the next race. Where do the Bronze race’s “groan-giving and hybristic deeds” get them?

A further point to be taken from this race is related to their utterly physical existence and their death. If Perses fails to pursue a life focused on the non-physical elements of human existence, then he is no better off than an individual in the Bronze race. The guiding ethical principle for the Bronze humans, if it makes sense to talk of one, can only be Might Makes Right. The biggest, strongest, and fastest always prevail in getting what they want. Aside from the general fact that the Bronze race misses out on certain good things by not pursuing ends with the proper means, their ethical principle poses a significant problem for Perses in particular. Hesiod makes it clear that Perses himself is at the bottom of the material totem pole: he has nothing. Hesiod reveals this in describing

---

<sup>301</sup> Compare Clay 2003, 91: “the bronze men cannot channel their violence to useful ends.”

Perses' utter dependence on others to support him (first the kings to help him steal, now Hesiod to help him stay alive). The impression is that, were Perses among the Bronze race, he would be among the first war dead. Hesiod's *panaristos*, however, would be able to see things which the Bronze race men cannot see. Without this sight, the Bronze race ends at their own hands.

#### ***4<sup>th</sup> Race—Divine: the End in Just War and Zeus' Plan***

In my previous chapter (on War) I discussed this race's epithet. There I pointed out that while it is common in modern discourse to refer to this race with phrases such as “the race of heroes” or “the heroic race,” these phrases contain a slight, but important, deviation from how Hesiod names the race. The adjective that Hesiod uses is *θεῖον*, “divine.” For the purpose of side-by-side comparison, here are the lines naming each race (including the fifth race, even though I have not yet talked about it):

**χρύσειον** μὲν πρῶτιστα γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων  
ἀθάνατοι ποίησαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες (109-10)

δεύτερον αὖτε γένος πολὺ χειρότερον μετόπισθεν  
**ἀργύρεον** ποίησαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες (127-28)

Ζεὺς δὲ πατὴρ τρίτον ἄλλο γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων  
**χάλκειον** ποίησ' οὐκ ἀργυρέῳ οὐδὲν ὁμοῖον (143-44)

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ γαῖα κάλυψεν  
αὗτις ἔτ' ἄλλο τέταρτον ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ  
Ζεὺς Κρονίδης ποίησε δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον  
ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων **θεῖον** γένος οἳ καλέονται  
ἡμίθεοι (156-60)

νῦν γὰρ δὴ γένος ἐστὶ **σιδήρεον** (176)



I raise this point about the specific adjective Hesiod uses to describe the heroes because of particular connotations of the descriptor “divine” that can too easily be erased in its absence. What does it mean for the fourth race to be divine? Obviously, there is the literal, genealogical sense: the race of heroes are divine because they are offspring of *divinities*. This is the generation of Homer’s main characters, all of whom are either directly descended from gods or do not have to go far back in their lineage to find them; the generation of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*; of the Epic Cycle, and so on. Thus, on this literal-genealogical level, Hesiod here refers to the birth nature of the heroes, while perhaps also conjuring up the body of stories surrounding them.

Aside from denoting genealogy, however, “divine” also connotes an evaluation. In the particular discourse of Hesiod’s *logos* of races, the connotation is ethical and positive. The implicit positive evaluation in the epithet “divine” thus works in tandem with Hesiod’s explicit positive evaluation of the race as “better and more just” (158): their superiority resides in their justice.<sup>302</sup> We are dealing with an important group, then, since the *Works and Days* is fundamentally an ethical education for Perses. What might he learn from this group about the poem’s concerns with Zeus and human livelihood?

Hesiod emphasizes land and livelihood in the vignette about the divine race of heroes by making it the very last thing he writes about them. Some of the heroes died in the Theban and Trojan Wars. But Zeus settled others on the Islands of the Blessed. This latter group is described as “blessed” or “happy,” followed by a statement about how they obtain their food on the islands.

---

<sup>302</sup> Cf. Bartlett 2006, 189.

ὄλβιοι ἥρωες τοῖσιν μελιθεῖα καρπὸν  
τρὶς ἔτεος θάλλοντα φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα

172

happy heroes for whom the grain-giving field  
bears honey-sweet fruit flourishing three times a year

In the very next line, Hesiod switches to talk about the next race. The ultimate position of the remark about the land marks it as emphatic and conveys an important connection between happiness and food acquisition. The fact that the land produces fruit without the heroes' labor makes us wonder, what did they do to earn a (sort of eternal life) livelihood that so resembles that of the past Golden race?

On the one hand, I could claim that it is simply a matter of parental affection—just the gods, or at least Zeus as father, acting on behalf of his children. Or I could go back to the idea of ethical superiority. Again, Hesiod makes it explicit that this race is more just and better, and he even gives clues about what specifically makes them so. Just to cite some examples. The race has cities (162), which presumes some sort of collective cooperation.<sup>303</sup> They build ships to travel away from their own lands to those of others (163-64), which also presumes high levels of cooperative efforts. They have marriages and family, and friends (165). Consider also the Theban and Trojan Wars in light of the fighting of the Silver and Bronze races: the immature adolescents of the Silver race fought because they refused to restrain themselves; and the Bronze race fought for reasons not specified or intimated but we know that it was profoundly violent and led to the total annihilation of the race. But neither seemed to have undertaken their wars

---

<sup>303</sup> Bartlett 2006, 189, notes that “their justice is connected with the fact that, although both the silver and bronze races lived in households (131, 150), only the heroes are identified as having lived in cities; justice comes into its own in the *polis*, in the political community.”

cooperatively or for personal reasons of justice. The heroes do both.<sup>304</sup> We are explicitly told that they fought the Theban War “on behalf of Oedipos” (163)—a group of friends helping a friend. We are then told that they fought the Trojan War “on behalf of Helen” (165)—again, a group of friends helping a friend.<sup>305</sup> The fact that the heroes fight in a way that is cooperative, collective, and on behalf of persons might be why they are called more just (insofar as justice involves personal cooperation).

More than that, we could see these two wars as responses to perceived injustice, which implies a sense of right and wrong and, moreover, a willingness to act on it. Compared to the other races, this would also garner them the evaluation of more just and better. Simply taking the two previous races, the Silver and the Bronze, we might wonder about their consciences. Hesiod discusses the Silver race with ethical terms such as folly (ἄφραδίας, 134) and outrage (ὑβριν, 134). This implies a set of ethical expectations for them, even if they obviously fell short. The Bronze race too is measured against an ethical standard in their actions, which are described, like the Silver race’s, as hybriatic (ὑβριες, 146). Compared to the senseless violence of these races, undertaken not out of a healthy sense of injustice, the wars of the heroes, though still described as bad (κακός, 161), do indeed seem more just. For this just action, Zeus himself blesses the heroes—with land that produces without work. But this would seem to put the Divine race in a situation of autarky, and I discussed above the ironic evaluation that autarky must receive in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*. How could it possibly be a good thing for Perses, then?

---

<sup>304</sup> On these social-cooperative aspects of the divine race, compare Clay 2003, 92-93.

<sup>305</sup> Bartlett 2006, 189 has another way of putting the same idea, saying that the heroes fought “for the well-being of their communities or for what might be called a ‘moral cause.’”

Here's how: autarky is the heroes' reward in the afterlife. Rather than being an expected mode of acquisition in *this* life, a life free of labor is presented as a reward for a life otherwise well-lived. Indeed, the Divine race has it all: ends, means, and the approval of the poem's imagined judge (i.e., Zeus). They display labor and largescale cooperation in obtaining food, and collective responses to injustice against persons—both realizations of what is good about the good Eris. Autarky finds its place in this scheme by being the reward. Hesiod's message for Perses is that he should expect to work while he is alive, but that if he does this justly (i.e., according to the advice in the poem), he may expect some such benefit.

Looking to the fifth, and final, race, the following table of the themes I have been tracking can be used for review and comparison.

**Table 3. The ethics, livelihood, and death of Hesiod’s Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Divine races.**

<b>race</b>	<b>ethos (means &amp; ends)</b>	<b>land</b>	<b>death</b>
<b>Golden</b>	possess “all good things;” distribute goods justly; beloved to the gods	autarky (connected with Kronos’ reign); no possibility of beneficent Competition (Eris)	like sleep
<b>Silver</b>	mothers nourish for 100 years; constantly fight as adolescents (ἄφραδίη, ὕβρις ἀτάσθαλος); do not respect gods	mother’s exceedingly long nourishment takes its place; no cultivation after weening; no possibility of beneficent Competition (Eris)	Zeus “hid” for not respecting immortals
<b>Bronze</b>	Ares-like war only — antithesis of good-giving Eris; deeds of violence as means to ends (ἔργα στονόεντα καὶ ὕβριες)	no labor for food; do not eat “grain”	kill each other
<b>Divine</b>	range of activities: build cities and ships; tend flocks; marry; cooperative ventures including war for friends	autarky as reward; on Isles of Blessed blooms three times a year on its own	some die in Theban and Trojan Wars; Zeus settles others for “happy” life on Isles of Blessed

### ***5<sup>th</sup> Race—Iron: the World’s End as the Key to Survival***

Hesiod’s *logos* of the races partakes of a fundamental dichotomy between the rule of Kronos and the rule of Zeus. As we saw, the Golden race is the only race to live under Kronos; all subsequent races live under Zeus. This is important because it answers one of periodization’s basic questions: what time is it? Kronos-led autarky or Zeus-led morality? Of the races under Zeus, the Silver and Bronze are paradigmatic for immature, mindless squabbling and utterly brutal violence, respectively, while the Divine race in their cities, flocks, and wars for persons is a paradigm for justice (though they are not morally perfect). Zeus personally did away with the recently-pubescent Silver race, an idea that

Hesiod picks up on in his description of the potential end of the Iron race. To this point, Zeus is generally relevant insofar as the races have been living under his reign ever since the Silver race; but he is specifically relevant to the Iron race since he stands as the agent of their potential demise. This centrality of Zeus is in keeping with the poem's overall aim to educate Perses about him (and to celebrate him in the process), and in particular to provoke Perses to connect his ethics to Zeus. But if Zeus somehow represents the notion of Law, then he is not merely the potential agent of the Iron race's demise; he is also the potent cause of its survival.

Ie have looked at the way of life of the other races, and the divine (usually Zeus') response. What is life like for the Iron race? Hesiod characterizes it as "toil by day" and "suffering by night" (176-77). The toil of day refers to the hard work it takes to survive—working the land, struggling with sickness, and so on. And the gods, says Hesiod, will give troubles (178). What could this mean? Have we run up against a cynical statement of evil divinities? This could mean that the gods simply have it out for human beings, and thus plan and act to make human life difficult. But if this were the case, how could I reconcile such a view with the poem's purpose to celebrate Zeus? Those two elements would be at bitter odds. Plus, we have already seen several ways in which Hesiod's Zeus acts on behalf of mortals, not the least of which includes putting a source of goodness in the earth (Eris = healthy competition), making it accessible, and giving a poet to show how.

A better way to understand the expression is that the existence of the gods is connected to certain ethical standards, which, while not unattainable, are nevertheless

challenging: as Perses struggles to discern how to get what he wants, part of that struggle will involve discerning and making decisions about right and wrong. The *Works and Days* grounds the source of such moral decision making in a shared-between-humans authority: Zeus as Law. However that may be, having a conscience renders moral life under Zeus difficult. Even so, in the vignettes about each race, moreover, the mortals themselves are responsible for their actions. If they have troubles, it is sounder to assume their own folly than to presume evil deities. As an example, Hesiod has already introduced to Perses the Silver race, which decided to ignore these expectations and the gods connected with them. The idea that Zeus responded by wiping these human beings off the earth provokes thought precisely about this connection between ethics and human responsibility. The Silver race mortals failed to share a more-than-human-something between themselves, and Zeus hid them as a result. Likewise the Bronze race. The point is that both races themselves, not the gods, are held responsible for their choices.

Moreover, Hesiod explicitly states that Iron race life is not *all* bad: there will be good things mixed with the evil.

ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ τοῖσι μεμείξεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν. 179

Yet all the same, for these people too good things will be mingled with evil ones. It has been suggested that the mixing of good and bad in line 179 refers, not to things, but to people of different social classes.<sup>306</sup> This view depends on seeing a tripartite Indo-European social ideology in Hesiod's *logos* of the races, and is of course heavily indebted, though not exclusively so, to Vernant's influential structural analysis of the

---

<sup>306</sup> Woodard 2007, 137-48.

passage. But there are clues within the *logos* itself that suggest an alternative interpretation. For instance, this line with its καὶ τοῖσι (“for these people too”) and ἐσθλὰ (“good things”) echoes a statement describing the Golden race, one of whose diagnostic features was the presence of all good things. Notice the similarity of language:

ἐσθλὰ δὲ πάντα	116
τοῖσιν ἔην.	

And all good things  
were present for them.

This distinctive combination of the τοῖσι(ν) and notice of good things (ἐσθλὰ) strongly suggests a thematic echo with the Golden race. But it also reminds of the more recently discussed blessed heroes “for whom” the fields bear fruit three times a year, introduced as follows:

ὄλβιοι ἥρωες τοῖσιν μελιθδέα καρπὸν	172
happy heroes—for whom sweet fruit	

Part of what gives significance to the idea that some of the heroes experienced this blessing from Zeus is precisely the fact that their lives were not perfect (like those of the Golden race). In fact, while I have pointed out some of the positive differences between the heroes’ wars and those of other races, these wars still point to the bad Eris: heroic friends come to the aid of their friends, but this is only because others were threatening them. All is not blessed ease in that time. Thus, some of the heroes actually die in war; but “for some others” Zeus makes an alternative afterlife. Zeus acts for the good of the Divine mortals.



Aside from the specific lexical echoes, consider Zeus' benevolent involvement with the other races. The Golden race lives under Kronos as king, but it is through *Zeus'* plans in particular that the mortals of the Golden race are blessed after death (122ff.). And even though it is Zeus who punishes the Silver race by concealing them for disrespecting the gods, they, like the Golden race, receive post-mortem honors (ἐλλ'ἔμπησ τιμὴ καὶ τοῖσιν ὀπηδεῖ, 142). (The Bronze race seems to be an exception to this rule, since the only mention of Zeus is that he made them [143].) After that, the Bronze race mortals are described as living in isolation save for their own utterly materialistic lives. This brings us to the Divine race of heroes, Zeus' beneficent treatment of whom I have already mentioned. But I can re-emphasize the connection between the relative justness and goodness of this race on the one hand, and Zeus' choosing to settle them in a blessed after life on the other. Given this survey, Perses could only expect Hesiod to have some ideas about how Zeus might act for the well-being of the Iron race—"even for those of the Iron race."

Indeed, Hesiod picks up on this notion of Zeus blessing some others here in the Iron race. On the one hand, he is candid with Perses about the fundamental difficulty of making a living as a human being in their time. He is also at pains, however, to convince Perses that there is goodness for these Iron race members too (like there was for the Golden race and others)—even if that goodness is hidden from physical sight.<sup>307</sup> But Perses and the others in his race must consider the means in arriving at their end. Finally,

---

<sup>307</sup> Recall further the lines about how Zeus hid the Eris which is a good motivation for humans in the earth: none other than *Zeus* put it there. This idea is also present in the introductory phrase for the Prometheus myth: κρύψαντες γὰρ ἔχουσι θεοὶ βίον ἀνθρώποισιν (for the gods keep the means of life concealed from human beings, 42). Hesiod does not say that the gods render human livelihood *hopelessly unattainable*, just that it takes some thought about how to obtain it.

as if these specific examples within the vignettes were not enough, Perses could meditate on Hesiod's idea that it is Zeus who gave the Muses in the first place—to give songs like the *Works and Days*, for people like Perses—to help make their lives better in some way (pleasure, wisdom, and so on). In other words, Hesiod's idea is that the Muses are Zeus' idea. Zeus as a benevolent helper of human beings is fundamental to the Hesiodic discourse.

Even Hesiod's line about Zeus destroying the Iron race of mortals (180) ends up amounting to a good thing. Far from a prediction of the world's actual end or a report on a currently deplorable state of affairs, it is an Muse-inspired (i.e., artful) prescription of how to avoid that end.<sup>308</sup> Or, to pick up on the courtroom metaphor, this is the law stated negatively: the crimes for which Zeus, acting as judge, would find an Iron race mortal guilty. What would it take for Zeus to be the “causal agent” (recall Zeus as cause in the proem) of the Iron race?

### II.3. The World's End Imagined for Perses

Races one through four occurred in the past, and so Hesiod could say “The Silver race *was* (past tense) bad so Zeus *punished* (past tense) them.” But the Iron race is different: still living, Hesiod needs to vary the “X acted thusly, so Zeus did Y” formula. That said, the basic format is the same, namely, that Hesiod depicts the members of the race acting a certain way and the gods responding. As we have seen over and over, the effect of this is

---

<sup>308</sup> As for the Iron race vignette as a report of the current conditions: that Zeus will at some point in the future destroy the human race for such and such choices presupposes that the human race has not reached that point yet. In other words, Hesiod's iron race mortals are currently getting some fundamental things right. Otherwise, Hesiod would not be alive to write what he writes, and it would have already been too late for Perses. It is a note of hope that it is not too late. “Zeus *will* destroy, when the iron race *will*...”—the future *will* presumes the *not yet*.

to establish an ethical standard of life under Zeus by highlight the choices of the mortals and the divine response, typically with emphasis on how a human being gets what they want—and always mentioning food supply. In the case of the Iron race, we see an ethical system in the reverse. Like viewing a negative of a photograph, it is Perses' task (i.e., the reader's task) to re-develop the picture in the positive. To conclude this discussion of ends, means, and demises in Hesiod's *logos* of the races, I want to consider three ways that Hesiod tailors his picture of the iron race to fit his brother's circumstances. These will be familiar from the thematic frames with which I introduced the poem as a whole. Three ends will constitute the end of the Iron race's world: (1) the end of personal affection, (2) the demise of the rule of law, and (3) the degradation of healthy competition and human conscience.

### ***(1) Perses as Son and Brother***

At several points, Hesiod highlights the parent-child and brother-brother relationships. The effect is to remind Perses of his identity in these regards, and to connect certain ethical standards about them to Zeus. These notices about parents, children, and brothers are of course poignant given the inheritance dispute between Perses and Hesiod, which might have involved Perses dishonoring his father, as well as the general poetic frame of Hesiod addressing Perses as his brother.

One of the first symptoms of systemic ethical disease that Zeus will take notice of in the Iron race concerns relationships that ought to be based on personal affection (*philia* [φιλία]). See how Hesiod frames the following lines to be applicable to Perses

specifically by beginning with parents and children, by ending emphatically with brothers, and by inserting a gesture to a bygone time when, Hesiod winks, Hesiod and Perses regarded each other affectionately:

οὐδὲ πατήρ παίδεσσιν ὁμοίος οὐδέ τι παῖδες                    182  
οὐδὲ ξεῖνος ξεινοδόκῳ καὶ ἑταῖρος ἑταίρῳ  
οὐδὲ κασίγνητος φίλος ἔσσεται, ὥς τὸ πάρος περ.

Father will not be like-minded with sons, nor sons at all,  
nor guest with host, nor comrade with comrade,  
nor will the brother be dear, as he once was.

These lines may be conventional, as a tripartite unit, or the first two as a couplet with the third added by Hesiod for special effect. Regardless, that need not detract from the impression they give to Perses, which is to point out the absence of *philia* in his dealing with the family inheritance, and to connect that to an authority outside of himself, Hesiod, and even their father. That authority is Zeus. And whether we take “Zeus” to be a really existing personal character in a religious worldview or an oblique way of talking about law, the point is fundamentally the same for Perses: there is some force outside of the particular persons in the dispute, a force which can somehow influence the survival and well-being of the community, Perses himself included. The ethical implications are clear: in the time of Zeus personal affection ought to govern relationships of parents and children, guests and hosts, comrades, and brothers. Recall that the men of the Golden race were “dear” (φίλοι) to the gods; such personal affection (i.e., *philia*), then, has been important all along.

Hesiod highlights Perses as son again when he discusses the second symptom of ethical disease. Zeus will take notice when children dishonor (ἀτιμῆσουσι) their aging

parents (185). This can be seen as a species of the genus of acting in personal relationships, discussed above. Two forms that this disrespect will take are harsh words (186) and a lack of gratitude (188). Are we to imagine that Perses acted in this way before his father died (if he is indeed dead)? We cannot say and ought not push the issue since it does not matter for the poem to achieve its pedagogical aims. More important are the moral decisions of the children. How can children in their role *as children* avoid the world's end?—honor parents well into old age, and nurture and then express gratitude for their rearing.

## ***(2) From Law as Imagination to Hands as Law***

A second way that Hesiod tailors his vision of the Iron age's end concerns the law. Recall that one of the poem's over-arching purposes is to establish and celebrate Zeus as the idea of a third party mediator in disputes. Throughout I have gestured toward the fact that Zeus in this role, though explicitly a personal character in the discourse, can be interpreted as the idea of an impersonal notion of law. Moreover, in the context of unjust human arbitors (and perhaps a dead father who could have adjudicated?), Hesiod invited Perses to settle their dispute themselves by using the idea of an imagined third party mediator (i.e., Zeus; 35-36). These points are among the most significant that I can make about this work of literature: Hesiod provokes discussion about the rule of law in human communities.

Given its centrality in Hesiod's discourse, we should not be surprised that it (better: its absence) features again as a symptom of ethical disease in the Iron race. Actually,

though, the point is more nuanced; for law (δίκη) is present, but located in physical bodies rather than an imagined third party. What resurfaces in later Greek literature as the Rule of the Stronger (as expounded, for example, by Thrasymachus in Plato, *Republic*) Hesiod talks about in terms of “hands:” Zeus will destroy the Iron race when “justice will be in hands” (χειροδίκαι, 189); when “justice will be in hands<sup>309</sup> and reverence will not exist” (δίκη δ’ ἐν χερσὶ καὶ αἰδῶς / οὐκ ἔσται, 192-93).<sup>310</sup> There are echoes here of Bronze race ethics. And in the latter phrase, I note that both justice and reverence are abstract notions, not visible to the physical eye and yet somehow central to human wellness. If Perses continues to live only by what evidently seems profitable, then he will die, undone by law (if folks ever join Hesiod in commonly imagining it); for *dike* and *aidos* are unseen. The connection between the ability and willingness to see the unseen (the goodness in the land), to see beyond what seems profitable at first glance (successfully stealing your brother’s land), and to see a future for oneself (by working and saving) all have a common point in imagination. Again, I recall Hesiod’s vision of the *panaristos* who can imagine the future and discern what is best (293-94). Here too, with justice. Hesiod calls Perses to imagine a way of settling disputes that relies on neither the strength of the physically stronger (like the Silver and Bronze races did) nor the unjust verdicts of ignorant magistrates (like Perses did in the inheritance dispute), but on some imagined entity *par excellence*. And that is one of the poem’s main points: human civilization’s well-being requires law, and law as a shared source of moral

---

<sup>309</sup> Consider also West’s comment: “this can only mean ‘justice will be decided by main force’ . . . The law of the stronger will replace fairness and decency” (1978, *ad loc.*).

<sup>310</sup> See Bartlett 2006, 190, who speaks of “justice” replacing justice; his scare quotes nicely encapsulate the counter-intuitive nature of the unjust “justice” of the stronger’s rule.

guidance requires imagination. The ability to imagine deities thus becomes a litmus test for the ability to nurture communal well-being.

***(c) From Good Strife (Eris) to Bad Strife (Zelos)***

The Iron race's end takes us back to the poem's beginning. But what has envy (*zelos* [ζῆλος]) (195-201) to do with the world's end? Recall that in the passage on two Strifes (*Erides*) Hesiod suggests to Perses that some competition is bad and some is good. The difference lies in the means of obtaining what one desires (and not necessarily in what one desires, let alone in desiring itself). Bad competition leads one, on seeing someone with something that one wants, to take it by stealing or fighting. Hesiod depicts this mode full-blown in the Silver and Bronze races, and a little more ambivalently in the Divine race. Good competition, on the other hand, leads one, on seeing someone with something one wants, to produce it oneself by working. This latter means involves healthy competition wherein all advance by making better and better products as each looks to the other for inspiration and ideas rather than as a source for what one actually wants. Hesiod then applies this general theory of competition to different market roles: farmer, potter, builder, beggar (!), and bard (20-26). Each competes in his own market to gain a livelihood in a just way. In this, the poem's initial, good scenario, one neighbor does indeed envy (ζηλοῖ, 23) another neighbor. But, motivated by healthy competition (ἐρις), he strives to gain a livelihood himself. This is how Hesiod's Zeus intends things to be—after all, Hesiod imagines Zeus making goodness available in the earth.

So much for the poem's beginning. The vignette of the Iron race suggests that in the time of Zeus envy can be both good and bad (like so many other paradoxes in Hesiod's discourse). Hesiod assigns healthy strife and competitive striving such an important role that he features it again at the world's end. Here's what it looks like now, though: Zeus will destroy the Iron race when envy (ζῆλος, 195) is no longer a good thing. There is a mode of envy that Zeus will not tolerate. Reading the following lines from the vignette of the Iron race, recall that Hesiod has already depicted the loss of personal affection in central relationships (e.g., parents, siblings, friends; 182-84); the rule of the stronger (rather than law; 189-93); and praise for oath-breakers, evil deeds, and hybris (rather than for the good man, 190-194). Then:

<p>Envy (ζῆλος), evil-sounding, gloating, loathsome-faced,  will accompany all wretched human beings.  Then indeed will Reverence and Indignation cover  their beautiful skin with white mantles,  leave human beings behind and go from broad-pathed earth  to the race of the immortals, to Olympus. Baleful pains  will be left for mortal human beings,  and there will be no safeguard against evil.</p>	<p>195</p>
---	------------

This envy will attend men, who have become wretched (195). What kind of envy is this? Surely not the healthy competition- and work-inducing envy of the two Strifes passage. This envy instead inspires words of malice and hate, finds pleasure in evil, and will ultimately be hated by human beings (taking στυγερώπης predicatively) (196).

The bad envy will be attended by the loss of two other fundamental human attitudes. First, not that one element of healthy work is the conviction that there is goodness to be had from labor (as Hesiod tried to persuade in the two Strifes passage). But this passage



suggests another element that underwrites health giving competition, to wit, respect for the persons involved and a sense of right and wrong (Hesiod's αἰδώς [reverance] and νέμεσις [indignation]). Apparently, if one sees a neighbor with lots of good things, but the viewing neighbor, wanting to possess those good things, lacks a sense of respect for that other neighbor as well as a conscience, the viewing-desiring neighbor will envy in an unjust way. Since actions are the concern here, we may assume that this viewing-desiring neighbor will violate the other neighbor in order to obtain the desired good things. This is the sense of *zelos* in this passage.

The result of this envy, lack of personal respect, and lack of sense of right and wrong rounds out the *logos* of the races. While the Golden race had all good things (116-17) and no cares (112), all that the Iron race will be left with are grievous pains (ἄλγεα λυγρὰ, 200). The imagined, abstract notions of reverance and indignation left for Olympos, to be with the other ultimately imagined, abstract Olympians (197-200). And this leaves the Iron race mortals with no defense from the bad man (201). Hesiod thus draws a connection between immaterial, imaginative elements and the availability of goodness on several levels: in the passage of the two Strifes, where goodness comes from Zeus through the land, and here where defense ultimately comes from similarly unseen entities.

But the centrality of the immaterial and the unseen in guaranteeing the physical safety of the Iron race individual seems to embody a paradox. And one, in fact, that Perses to date has evidently been unwilling to accept; for he relies on the visible authority of judges (who turn out to be unjust) and the unwise common sense notion that having more

land means having more good things.<sup>311</sup> For Hesiod, it all turns on dearness to the gods, who are of course invisible to all but the human mind: for the Iron race this means ethics in the time of (immaterial, imaginatively-shared) Zeus—attention to persons and Zeus as a third party mediator. Yet Hesiod’s Zeus always embodies this paradox of the centrality of imagination and seeing the unseen; for Hesiod’s Muses praise their father as one who causes changes that surprise based on appearance alone (1-8). Hesiod’s point to Perses is that law (when commonly imagined) changes everything: Perses’ world will end without it.

### **III. Plato’s Eleatic Stranger: The World’s End as Ideology**

In moving from Hesiod to Plato in a discussion of the five races, it may be thought that I should consider how Socrates in the *Republic* explicitly invokes Hesiod’s five races to discuss the analogy between the five political regimes and five states of the human soul (book 8, especially 546e). Yet despite Sokrates’ explicit allusion and a fundamental similarity between the texts (e.g., the theme of justice), I will not go in that direction here because Socrates’ use of the five races does not involve the world’s end.<sup>312</sup>

Instead, I will turn my attention to the Stranger from Elea in *Statesman*, because he has some ideas about cosmology, world history, and the current era. The form in which he communicates these ideas is a fictional vignette featuring story-like features, and so his discourse bears comparison with Hesiod’s. This Eleatic Stranger, like Hesiod, tells his tale for a purpose, and the tale itself, again like Hesiod’s, is one part of a larger literary

---

<sup>311</sup> The problem being, of course, undue consideration of the means of obtaining that ultimately good end. Plus, the land is useless without knowledge of how to realize goodness through it.

<sup>312</sup> On Plato’s (i.e., Sokrates’) use of Hesiod’s races in *Republic*, see Van Noorden 2010.

context. What does the Stranger say about the world's end, and why? His basic notion is that the universe is always in one of two states, and that in the transitional moment between the two the universe and its inhabitants experience vast destruction and loss of life. The cycle is on-going and inevitable. The Stranger tells this tale in order to surmount an obstacle in a discussion about statesmanship. He will use the myth to show certain aspects of the origin and nature of the political art. And, importantly, he will use the myth as the epistemological basis for his ultimate claim that the statesman's art, and the statesman's art alone, is the best source of concern of the human community—and, were it not for the fact that the statesman cannot be everywhere at once and so laws must stand-in as the next best thing, the statesman would be responsible for the total management of the citizens. Ultimately, the Eleatic Stranger says that he and his interlocutors live in a godless era: bereft of divine care, human beings are weak creatures in a cruel natural landscape—our only recourse has been, and is, to develop arts (like statesmanship) to defend ourselves. But we are not merely physically limited. We are also epistemologically limited; those of us who come to know how to govern others, therefore, will have a difficult time persuading the rest of our competence. These political realities, moreover, have their basis in the natural order. And this natural order is the subject of the Eleatic Stranger's myth of cosmic eras, to be discussed here. This mythologizing is the ideological support for the Eleatic's views of the statesman's authority and role in the polis. Hence the title of this section: *The World's End as Ideology*.

In what follows, I will first give a brief introduction to the literary work in which the Eleatic Stranger's discourse occurs, then discuss the content and use of the Eleatic's tale. First, then, zooming out to consider the dialogue as a whole, the general aim of the interlocutors in *Statesman* is to define the statesman, ὁ πολιτικός.<sup>313</sup> The dialogue's dramatic date is around the day of Sokrates' trial, probably the day after Sokrates' indictment,<sup>314</sup> and can be read as part of a trilogy, sandwiched between the *Sophist* and the *Apology*. In the *Sophist* the interlocutors ask the Eleatic Stranger if he would like to define the sophist, statesman, or philosopher, and he chooses the sophist; likewise in the *Statesman*, and he chooses the statesman. We never get a full treatment of the Stranger's views on the philosopher, although there are inklings of his ideas throughout both the *Sophist* and *Statesman*.<sup>315</sup> For a picture of the philosopher in the Platonic corpus, we turn to the *Apology* where we see not the Eleatic Stranger's understanding but Sokrates' own. Sokrates himself is present for the discussion in the *Statesman* but he is not the Stranger's interlocutor. Instead, there is a Younger Sokrates who responds. Nevertheless, Sokrates' presence during the conversation constantly reminds readers that there are other ways of doing philosophy, especially when it comes to engaging in philosophical discussion. This leads to one final point by way of introduction. It concerns the Stranger's method of teaching and learning, namely *diaresis*, or division. In this mode he aims at a definition of a thing (e.g., the *politikos*) by repeatedly dividing an entity into subordinate kinds, and

---

<sup>313</sup> As a general introduction to the dialogue, from two different angles, see both Kahn 2009 and Zuckert 2009, 680-82. These two references helpfully reflect a current trend in Platonic scholarship to read the dialogues, not according to the order in which Plato supposedly composed them (Kahn exemplifies this approach), but according to the dramatic dates of the dialogue's settings (Zuckert champions this approach).

<sup>314</sup> See Zuckert 2009, 16-18.

<sup>315</sup> See Zuckert 2009, 695-706.

then choosing which of the two kinds is appropriate for advancing the search for the definition. The Eleatic Stranger speaks of this metaphorically as following a road, or choosing a path (258c; 266e); we can also think of it as a tree and its branches. The idea is that choosing the correct series of roads leads one to the destination of the true definition of a thing.

### **Mythos as Archē**

The Eleatic Stranger tells his tale of cosmic eras after he and the Younger Sokrates have been attempting to define the statesman for a while. They pause to summarize their understanding so far (267a-d), that the statesman's art is a science dealing with the rearing of a particular kind of herd, namely that of human beings. The statesman, accordingly, is a shepherd. After the summary the Eleatic Stranger points out a problem in their definition and then proposes a myth as the beginning of a solution. The problem is that among human beings there are rivals to the true shepherd, rivals who claim also to be legitimate herdsman, but who are only pretenders. What the Eleatic Stranger wants to do, then, is twofold: first, to remove the contenders of the statesman, and, second, to reveal the statesman, alone and pure (268c).

The problem is apparently significant enough to warrant a whole new beginning (ἐξ ἄλλης ἀρχῆς, 268d).<sup>316</sup> This new archē is a bit childish (σχεδὸν παιδιάν), according to the Stranger, as it involves part of a myth. The Stranger also tells the Younger Sokrates to pay attention to the myth “just as children would” (268e), since he is not far beyond

---

<sup>316</sup> I use the Greek text of Burnet 1903 and the translation of Fowler 1921.

childhood. What could this mean? “Listening like a child” entails a lack of critical reflection on what one is hearing.<sup>317</sup> If the Stranger presumes to speaking about matters that are ultimately trivial, that is, if the mythic digression is simply for pleasure, then perhaps this is no big deal. But then, if the purpose of the conversation is to advance in knowledge, would that not be a waste of time? If, on the other hand, the Stranger intends to communicate something to be used as a foundation for truth, then the request to listen like a child is serious, and potentially frightening.

These two facts—myth as a new starting point and an uncritical reception of the myth as that starting point—indicate a certain epistemological position for the myth. The Eleatic Stranger uses a mythic discourse to authorize the statesman’s total care of the human herd by means of a transcendent epistemology. What is potentially frightening is its comprehensive scope of explanation and more-than-human epistemological basis and mode of reception meant to bypass human thinking on certain fundamental points. In short, the Stranger seems to give the discussion a new starting point that transcends the human ability to reason. I am not claiming that story is an essential, un-changing human phenomenon that is epistemologically-opposed to reason as another essential phenomenon. But in this case the Stranger certainly seems to be asking the Younger Sokrates to ground his trust at least partly in a non-rational realm. The tension with this move lies in the fact that the Stranger will use a myth to make what are ultimately scientific claims, which is not typically the point of telling stories. As Benardete would have it, “the Stranger’s comprehensive myth prepares the way for a precise account of

---

<sup>317</sup> Rowe 1995, *ad loc.* interprets the *σχεδόν* as limiting the extent to which we ought to hear the story as merely playful: “it is *partly* playful, and in that respect suitable for children (*παῖδες*, e5), but is also has a serious purpose” (*italics his*).

political science *which is altogether nonmythical*.<sup>318</sup> Perhaps that is precisely why he needs to preface his telling with the request of suspending judgment: if Young Sokrates were to think about what the Stranger will tell him, then he would question it on epistemological terms (and if not, then we would learn something about Young Sokrates' level of critical education). Recall briefly how we saw Hesiod using the motif of the metallic races: not as a history lesson about an actual succession of races of mankind, but as a Muse-inspired provocation to think about ethics. Hesiod makes no pretense to be speaking about historical fact. But had Hesiod gone on to make factual claims about the past and present history of the human race, then that would be somewhat akin to what the Eleatic Stranger does here. And indeed, what gives the Eleatic Stranger's storytelling an air of deceit is that he tells a story, instructs the Younger Sokrates to listen uncritically, and ultimately makes scientific claims. Young Sokrates, moreover, seems to comply: he does not bring up this tension and accepts the Stranger's specific scientific claims as well as how he arrives at them through the myth.

### **Mythos as Science**

The Stranger begins by indicating that a fact of nature lies behind three well-known Greek myths, and that he alone knows what it is (268e-269c). The fact that all three myths recount the origins of different political regimes is important because by accounting for the common, and truest, origin of all three, the Stranger will give an account of the origin of the human political art itself<sup>319</sup>. The first myth is about a quarrel

---

<sup>318</sup> Benardete 1984, III.95, italics mine.

<sup>319</sup> Zuckert 2009, 713.

between Atreus and Thyestes. It features the idea that Zeus changed the rotational direction of the sun and other planets as a sign of his approval of Atreus' side; the quarrel settled, he then restored the universe to its typical rotation. The second myth is about the reign of Kronos during which human beings do not have to work for life. And the third myth is about an age in which mortals reproduce not through sex but simply by springing from the ground—the myth of earthborn men. After the Stranger reminds Young Sokrates of these stories, he claims that they are all grounded in cosmological fact. He goes on to elaborate this cosmology, but we should note that he offers no rational proof for its veracity. Having turned Young Sokrates' attention to a stories, and having disarmed him of his critical capacities, the Stranger takes advantage of Sokrates' intellectual vulnerability to make scientific claims which will go unquestioned but will have far-reaching implications for his understanding of the statesman's communal role.

Continuing his habit of *diareisis*, the Stranger divides cosmic history into, not coincidentally, *two* eras.<sup>320</sup> I say “not coincidentally” because the Stranger divides everything into two with his method of *diareisis*. We ought to expect him, therefore, to do the same to history. At any rate, underlying everything is the simple fact that the universe and its contents rotate. In the first era, the cosmos rotates in one direction; in the other era the cosmos rotates in the opposite direction. This rotational change explains the plot point in the myth about Atreus and Thyestes: the story tells that Zeus himself acted on the sun, moon, and stars to change their direction, but this is a storied version of what actually happens periodically. And the myth of the earthborn race comes from the fact that at the

---

<sup>320</sup> There is a debate about whether the Stranger imagines two or three eras; see Verlinsky 2008. The fact that the Stranger applies his usual method of *diareisis* even to cosmic history is, to my mind, important; still, it is perhaps not enough to settle the issue, not least in part due to the confusing way that the Stranger tells his tale.



point of rotational change, not only do the trajectories of celestial bodies go backwards, but human birth, growth, and death reverses too (270e-271c). Thus, the old “grow” young; the dead and buried rise from the grave; and so on. The human beings who are raised from the dead in the new rotational reality are actually being born: hence, earthborn men. Notice that an unstated principle in the Eleatic’s view is that human phenomena are mechanically linked to the natural world. That is, certain human realities are linked in a necessary way to the cosmos: καὶ γηγενεῖς δὴ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἐξ ἀνάγκης φεομένους (“and men are born from the earth of necessity according to this view,” 271c). His rationalization of the myth of earthborn men is just a conspicuous, because an extreme (dead folks literally being born again!), instance of this premise.

The statesman becomes truly relevant in the Stranger’s scientific explanation of the third myth, the rule of Kronos and its corollary, the rule of Zeus. After the Eleatic has explained the origin of the myths of Thyestes and Atreus, and of earthborn men, Young Sokrates raises the question about the rule of Kronos (271c):

ἀλλὰ δὴ τὸν βίον ὃν ἐπὶ τῆς Κρόνου φῆς εἶναι δυνάμεως, πότερον ἐν ἐκείναις ἦν ταῖς τροπαῖς ἢ ἐν ταῖσδε;

But was the life in the reign of Kronos, which you mentioned, in that previous period of revolution or in ours?

The Stranger immediately equates the Younger Sokrates’ “time of Kronos” with an age when human beings do not have to work for a living because the earth produces food automatically, like the earth does for Hesiod’s golden race (271d).

περὶ τοῦ πάντα αὐτόματα γίγνεσθαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ἥκιστα τῆς νῦν ἐστὶ καθεστηκυίας φορᾶς ἀλλ’ ἦν καὶ τοῦτο τῆς ἔμπροσθεν.

No, the life about which you ask, when all the fruits of the earth sprang up of their own accord for men, did not belong at all to the present period of revolution, but this also belonged to the previous one.

Before I continue analyzing the Stranger's views, I want to make two observations about this response. First, notice that the reign of Kronos is synonymous with a golden age. The Younger Sokrates simply mentioned "the reign of Kronos." What this signals for the Stranger is a time "when all the fruits of the earth sprang up of their own accord for men." This response suggests that the reign of Kronos was widely understood in this way: the Stranger does not think that he is introducing any new information to Sokrates. And it is important for the Eleatic, as a storyteller, to be able to count on a certain level of familiarity with any given motif on the part of Sokrates, as an audience member. Such basic familiarity of constant elements allows the audience to detect what is distinctive about the new telling. This common concept of Kronos' reign and autarky will be relevant in the case of Dikaiarchos too.

The second observation I want to make concerns terminology. It is common to discuss this passage as the myth of two cosmic "eras," or "ages." And perhaps this really does express the gist of the Stranger's understanding such that there is no harm in it. Nevertheless, he does not conceptualize these times at that abstract level. Instead, he and Sokrates talk about "then" and "now," "in those times" versus "in these times," or "in previous times" versus "in these times." This is important for the underlying sense of temporal continuity. Sure, the transitions are associated with large scale destruction, and there are significant changes politically and otherwise, as I will show. But both the Stranger and Sokrates seem to regard the entire time span—then and now—as more or

less part of *their history*. And this is not so much science as imagination, less static chronology than dynamic periodization. If the Eleatic can manage to inhabit a shared conceptual world with his students (part of which may involve inspiring epistemological leaps of faith), then he will be able, in turn, to shape their views on a number of topics in radical ways. Moreover, the specific analogy that he will draw between the divine shepherd of “then” and the human shepherd of “now” requires a sense of meaningful connection. Thus, it is within this broad sweep of time that the Eleatic will subtly compel a particular answer to the questions “where time was it then, what time is it now, and what is the connection between the two?” The rest of my discussion has four parts: analyses of (1) the Stranger’s “then,” (2) the transitional moment, (3) the Stranger’s “now,” and (4) some concluding remarks on his use of myth.

### **Then: the Divine Shepherds and their Human Herds (271d-272b)**

The Eleatic goes on to describe that previous rotational time. As we just saw, “all things come to be automatically for human beings.” This translation features a slight, but important, change from the one offered above; it fleshes out “πάντα αὐτόματα γίγνεσθαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις” into “all the fruits of the earth sprang up of their own accord for men.” Another translation suggests, reminiscent of Hesiod’s golden race, “all good things come about without man’s labor.”<sup>321</sup> But these are not exactly what the Stranger says. He says that “all things,” literally, come to be for human beings automatically. “All things” encompasses more than food. While Hesiod’s Golden race

---

<sup>321</sup> J. B. Skemp in Hamilton and Cairns, eds. 1961.

had food supplied for them and yet it was their duty to distribute it justly, the mortals under the Eleatic's Kronos *do nothing for themselves*. The importance of this point will become clear shortly.

This is because god (ὁ θεός) is in total control (271d). He makes the world turn, which the Stranger expresses in language echoing their new starting point, or *archē*, in myth:

τότε γὰρ αὐτῆς πρώτον τῆς κυκλήσεως ἤρχεν ἐπιμελούμενος ὅλης ὁ θεός.

For then, in the beginning, God ruled and supervised the whole revolution.

Although this is not poetry, and so we may not expect the dense kind of wordplay of that medium, it is still important to notice how the Greek comes out. This is one place where it can be helpful to slow down and see it in action, for the placement of the adjective ὅλης (“whole”) in the Greek sentence above is given emphasis by its hyperbatic separation from the noun it modifies, κυκλήσεως (“rotation”)—a linguistic feature that is completely lost in the English. The sense of the Greek, left to right, is: “because then it, at first, the cycle, he ruled over it as overseer, actually the whole cycle, god did.” The phrasing introduces basic ideas first, then specifies more and more, culminating of course in the stark juxtaposition of subject/object = God/everything. The relationship between the two is one of be-all, end-all management. This is important for the way it will be mirrored in the present time when human beings are in control.

Instead of micro-managing every minute location, god has a team of local shepherds do that. His watchful eye carries out the total management by having distributed the lands into allotments to lower-order *daimones* (271d). Each *daimon* is in charge of the detailed

care of his own “flock.” Human beings seem to have no choice about anything. The result of this total care is that the mortals and animals do not eat each other; there is neither war (*polemos*) nor civil strife (*stasis*); there are no states (*politeiai*), no private possession of wives and children; the trees and ground grow fruit automatically such that there are no farmers; the human beings live in the open without houses, clothes, and beds (271d-272a). The Stranger repeatedly emphasizes the god’s role in maintaining this situation, and his favorite verb for describing the action is νέμω, which fundamentally denotes the act of distributing, but is also the word used to describe what a shepherd does for a flock, i.e., feed and care for it in pasture. Hence, the Stranger’s conception of the reign of Kronos is a time when human beings are basically herd animals. But an important point, especially in a debate about the skill of maintaining a human group (i.e., the statesman’s art), is that for these mortals in the time of Kronos—and indeed, for all persons involved—there is no such thing as consent. This in turn is because there are no problems to be solved which may require deliberation. What possible relevance could this set-up have for teachers and students of consent-based *poleis*, especially Young Sokrates as a citizen of Athens? The implication moves in the direction of an anti-democratic, pro-monarchic rule by one expert, and the end of this god-managed world in the time of Kronos will entail the beginning of the expert’s rule in the time of Zeus.

### **End is Beginning is End (272d-273e)**

The first era ends when each human soul has experienced its allotted number of births (272e). At that time, god, spoken of metaphorically as ship captain, lets go the universe,

and removes himself to a distance. All the other gods and *daimones*, seeing the supreme god's release, also let go of their specific locations. From that point on, the cosmos is godless.

Before discussing the specific age that the Eleatic envisions himself living in, I want to offer his general theory of what happens next, as well as the general trajectory of the ensuing era. When god first lets go of the cosmic rudder, as it were, the universe changes direction, resulting in a great earthquake (σεισμὸν) and vast destruction (φθορὰν) of all kinds of living things. The messiness of the transition—with the implication of continuity, however—is further conceptualized in the idea that “the beginning (ἀρχῆς) and the end (τελευτῆς) rushed in opposite directions” (273a). When the confusion dies down, the universe begins the process of governing itself in the absence of god, a process which it can undertake because it is partly divine, being endowed with a mind (the Eleatic first introduces this idea back in 269d). Thus, it can remember god's instructions for it, but only for a time. Since it is also material, the universe degenerates: as it “forgets” what it ought to do, evil begins to get the upper hand. Eventually, so the general theory goes, the evil so corrupts the good that the universe hovers on the brink of destruction. But before that happens god again takes charge and puts everything right. This seems to begin another Kronos era. And we are to assume that the cycle continues as before. In the time of Zeus, things will again begin well, but since the universe is partly material, and since material objects are governed by necessary forces leading to birth, growth, and decay, then it eventually ages to the point of death, at which point god saves it. We can see that the Stranger understands the principle underlying all natural and human phenomena to be

that of *growth*: the trajectory is ultimately one of decline and decay.<sup>322</sup> In fact, however, for the Stranger there are *only* natural phenomena, for he has subsumed the human entirely into this paradigm.

### **Now: the Human Shepherd and his Human Herd (273e-274e)**

The Eleatic Stranger's "then" is the time of Kronos; his "now" is the time of Zeus. But Kronos and Zeus are little more than figureheads for his cosmological eras. He draws on the story of Kronos' golden age, because it is well-known, to conceptualize his otherwise scientifically-understood eras. The divine characters who really matter in the Stranger's schema are not Kronos and Zeus, but the highest god (*theos*), the lower gods (*theoi*), and the *daimones*. Perhaps connecting the world eras to the mythological ages of Kronos and Zeus is an instance of what the Stranger said he would do when introducing the myth: he indicated that he would "mix in" an element of play (268d). Kronos and Zeus are useful, in part then, for the commonly known division between their reigns—not because of any ideas that they represent or any ethical paradigms that they inspire. Nor does the Stranger's use of them amount to a claim about these deities' ontological status (i.e., whether or not, or in what sense they actually exist). It is rather a testament to the endurance and penetration of their storied lives.

Having introduced his general theory about both eras and about the mechanics of the changes between the two, he offers a few details about the present reality and applies the story to it (273e). These details are the very reason that the Stranger brought in the stories

---

<sup>322</sup> On this idea of nature, see note 3 above.

in the first place: they will bear upon the definition of the statesman (274b). The Stranger claims to have much to say about the changes that beasts experienced in the most recent retrogradation, and about the causes of each of those changes. But they are too many to relate. And besides, he says, not only is there less to say about human beings but it is also more to the point. This admission is interesting because it again raises questions about how the Stranger regards his *mythos*, in terms of content and function. Is the *mythos* a type of *content*, or is it a *mode* of telling?<sup>323</sup> Perhaps he regards it as the latter. Regardless of whether he claims to be speaking about facts—astronomical, cultural, or otherwise—he can use storied elements (even if to “explain” them) to illustrate his points. And this type of illustrating may constitute “mixing” in mythic play for him. But the point I want to make here is that he continues to allude to what we could think of as scientific knowledge, even if only to say that he will not speak of it (akin to the rhetorical technique of *praetermittio*).

He will, however, speak about the human condition since the last cosmic change. Since that moment, human beings are bereft not merely of the care of God and a local *daimon*. They are also, in fact, totally helpless. We can think of this as the reasonable corollary for their helplessness under God the total shepherd in the previous era when human beings did nothing to stay alive. But now there is a problem: since they never learned to both fend for themselves against wild beasts and also obtain food for themselves (no need compelled them), for the first while after the retrogradation, these weak and unprotected human beings are slaughtered by the beasts (274c). Rationalizing

---

<sup>323</sup> This raises the vexed question of *mythos* vs *logos* in Plato, which I need not address; see Morgan 2000 and Clay 2007.



another set of stories, the Stranger says that this is why Prometheus, Hephaistos, and other gods gave their various gifts to humankind. And these gifts, in turn, formed the basis for human culture as we know it (274d). The result is that human beings are no longer as helpless as they were at the start of the current era.

That said, there is still another important sense in which the Eleatic's current human beings are bereft: they do not have the care of God. This is the case not only of humankind, however, but also of the cosmos as a whole (274e). Recall that the cause of the universe's change in rotation is the fact that God removes his hand from it, with the other deities following suit (272e-273a). When first introducing this idea, the Stranger's language gives the impression of a merely mechanical reality: God simply ceases to spin a material object. But when finally describing God in the present era, his language emphasizes, not simply a mechanical lack, but also a personal void. Humans beings lack the concern of their shepherd (274b); the gifts of particular resources and tools from particular gods, while of lasting value, nevertheless represented a single, one-way transaction, not one gift of many in an on-going personal relationship with those deities. They gave their gifts and then left. That kind of on-going care of the gods no longer exists. Instead, human beings and the cosmos must fend for themselves. But why would God's letting go of the cosmic rudder effect human beings so much? The answer, which I mentioned above, is that human phenomena are linked to physical phenomena, which mortals must "imitate" and "follow on" in all eras, and in respect of living and growing (274d). When the physical universe changes, the human condition follows suit. Humans beings are not just *part* of nature—human beings are totally natural.

This connection explains the fundamental status of the political art in the current era. It is necessarily based in cosmology. The Stranger tells the myth, in part, to ground the discussion on this point. And the myth gives the claim of human helplessness a kind of sub-rational (and thus almost ideological) epistemological status. Hence, it is uncontested. All that the Stranger needs, then, is the young Sokrates to believe it. He does.

### **Conclusion: The Ideological Use of Myth**

After the Eleatic Stranger finishes his mythic lesson, he and Young Sokrates put it to use for their argument. The myth shows that they erred so far in their discussion on two points. First, they must understand that the statesman of their era is human, not divine. Second, they were wrong to think of the statesman primarily as a shepherd; a better way is to regard him as a weaver, an analogy which the Stranger develops at great length throughout the rest of the discussion.

For our purposes, it suffices to notice how the Eleatic uses his story of eras. I have made these points throughout the analysis, but it is worth summarizing them here. First, the Stranger uses the familiar motifs of the reigns of Kronos and Zeus. The former is characterized by autarky and universal peace, while the latter is almost defined by the struggle for survival. The Stranger narrates the end of Kronos' reign because of continuities from it to now: human helplessness and the need of total care of an expert at shepherding human beings. Second, despite explicitly drawing on fictional discourses (i.e., myths), the Stranger's myth-making is ultimately not mythical—that is, he uses the

mythic mode of speech to make factual claims (e.g., about cosmology, and the past, present, and future condition of real human beings). Third, the *role* of the Stranger's nonmythic mythmaking cannot be overstated: it is the epistemological basis of his claims about what a human statesman is (a weaver of the fabric of human society).

I noted that this ultimate function of the tale almost gives an impression of deception on the part of the Stranger, because he had instructed Young Sokrates to listen as a child (i.e., uncritically). Using a discourse whose epistemology lies outside human reason to make factual claims about reality can smack of ideology. The Stranger imagines the world's end (and subsequent beginning) to ground a definition of the most important political actor in a community. The fact that his mythical grounding ends up telling an origin story (i.e., of the political art) appears to be a godless analogue of so many religious discourses about beginnings. The power of these aetiological tales lies not in the specific content, whether the origin under question is that of the very cosmos, or merely a social custom. Rather, it lies in the more-than-human epistemology, outside the scope of human calculation.<sup>324</sup> This aspect permits us to point out a paradox about the Stranger's myth: for all its godlessness, it is still fundamentally religious.

The final point is simply that the Eleatic Stranger is himself a fiction—a character from Plato's imagination. While he may resemble historical figures in some regards, he nevertheless remains a figure of Plato's literary world. I have tried to show some of the questions that the character raises. In this fictional aspect, the Stranger is like the Hesiodic voice of *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. Both are imaginary speakers whose

---

<sup>324</sup> On the distinction between content and epistemology I am drawing on the analysis of religion I introduced in Chapter 1: Lincoln 2012.

ideas about periods and the way they are expressed constitute moments to think through the question “what time is it?”, but also point beyond the particular answers to this question to the uses in asking it. So far, I have examined an ethical use of periodization, and an ideological use. At this point I turn to another person whose thought includes claims about the past and present of human civilization—and in a series of eras. But this person actually existed, and we can take his thoughts (to the extent that we can glimpse them through fragmentary notices) not as fiction, but as bona fide factual claims, stated as such. I turn now to the cultural anthropology of one of Aristotle’s personal students, Dikaiarchos of Messana.

#### **IV. Dikaiarchos: The World’s End as the End of Man**

In the past two sections, I showed how Hesiod and the Eleatic Stranger mixed together ideas about a Golden Age under Kronos with notions of a sequence of eras, and the uses to which they put their tellings. Hesiod’s *logos* is explicitly and deliberately fictional—a Muse-inspired tour of human societies. Its aim is to provoke his brother Perses to think about how he goes about obtaining what he wants in life. The Eleatic Stranger and his discourse is likewise a fiction on the part of Plato. But the Eleatic as a character presents his myth to Young Sokrates in a complex fashion: he calls it childish storytelling, but assigns it factual status. It is designed to ground (beyond human calculation) a discussion of the statesman as a human analogue in the current era to the divine shepherd in the

previous era. From outright fiction in service of morality, to fact-fiction hybrid smacking of ideology, I turn to ancient cultural history.<sup>325</sup>

### **Dikaiarchos' *Life of Greece***

*Life of Greece*, by Dikaiarchos of Messana, a Peripatetic philosopher and student of Aristotle himself, is a history of Greek art and technology from human origins up to Dikaiarchos' lifetime.<sup>326</sup> Due to its fragmentary state, however, reconstructions must remain conjectural.<sup>327</sup> It seems to have begun with a three-step progression of human culture based on food supply. To describe the beginning, Dikaiarchos draws on and adapts the familiar motif of the Golden Age under Kronos. His three eras of broad human cultural development are the Golden Age of autarky, followed by the life of hunters and shepherds, and finally agriculture. The final era continues to Dikaiarchos' lifetime, although not without its own developments along the way. After this cultural history, he seems to have discussed several non-Greek peoples, e.g., the Egyptians, Babylonians, and possibly Medes, before returning to the Greeks. We call the work a *cultural* history because there appears to be a particular focus on arts (see note above). This focus on technology and art, moreover, might have implied an emphasis on human agency in a

---

<sup>325</sup> "Culture" and its cognates are slippery terms, so I must clarify what I mean by them here. It is well enough known that, while in general usage culture still often simply means the high arts, in the academy its usage is quite contested and vague—sometimes virtually entailing everything that a group thinks, believes, and does (see Morris 2012, *ad loc.* "culture"). For modern theories of culture, see Baumann 1996, 9-14 and Tanner 1997. In my discussion I adhere to a more limited notion of culture, involving human technologies generally and arts in particular, because this reflects the contents of Dikaiarchos' work.

<sup>326</sup> On Dikaiarchos and his writings, see Fortenbaugh and Schütrumpf 2001, which contains all the extant texts with full translation, and a series of essays.

<sup>327</sup> For a reconstruction beyond the basics of what I offer here, see Ax 2001, especially 281-90.

generally progressivist trajectory. Finally, we may guess that the work had an evaluative argument, to wit, the Greeks as the current pinnacle of human artistic development.

Here I am concerned with his views of periodization, and in what follows I will further discuss his scheme of three eras—what they are and how they change—and then focus on his treatment of Hesiod’s Golden race. But first a brief note on sources.

### **A Note on Sources**

The two main sources for Dikaiarchos’ three-step cultural history in *Life of Greece* are Varro, *On Farming* 2.1.3-9, and Porphyry, *On Abstinence* 4.2.1-9.<sup>328</sup> Just as Hesiod, the Eleatic Stranger, and Dikaiarchos adapt the motif of the Golden age to suit their purposes, so too Varro and Porphyry adapt Dikaiarchos’ three step cultural progression for their aims. Varro in his passage is concerned to demonstrate, not just the factual origins of agriculture, but also its positive value (*dignitas*, 2.1.6). Accordingly, he treats the first era in single sentence, since it involved neither shepherds nor farmers; however, he dwells on the latter two eras, i.e., the pastoral and agricultural. Porphyry, on the other hand, uses Dikaiarchos’ eras in an argument for vegetarianism. Consequently, for him, the first era receives the most attention. Drawing on the evaluative connotations of “golden” in the phrase “the golden age” and praising human beings of that time, he notes that they ate only plants. He then links the onset of strife in the subsequent pastoral era with human engagement with animals, including eating them. His observation of the simultaneous rise of meat-eating and warfare subtly implies that meat-eating was actually somehow a

---

<sup>328</sup> On Dikaiarkos via Varro and Porphyry, respectively, see the essays by Ax and Saunders in Fortenbaugh and Schütrumpf 2001.

cause of human violence. Opposite of Varro, Porphyry devotes barely a sentence to the life of agriculture. Sifting through these particular concerns we can nevertheless make out the basics of Dikaiarchos' scheme.

### **Three Eras: What they are and How they change**

Dikaiarchos imagines a progression of human society based on the criterion of food supply. The first era (*naturalem* in Varro; the Golden race under Kronos in Porphyry) is defined by a presence and an absence. In terms of presence, this is the time when human beings ate what the earth bore spontaneously. This first era corresponds to Hesiod's Golden race under Kronos in which autarky is a defining feature. But of equal importance is the definition of this period with reference to the absence of human arts: men obtained food from the earth both because it was there and also because they had no other means, i.e., no arts (τέχναι) (Porphyry, *On Abstinence* 4.2.4). The transition to the next era (*pastoriciam* in Varro; νομαδικός in Porphyry) occurs when mortals develop the skills of gathering fruits (to eat now or to save for later) and of domesticating wild animals. The latter they use to make milk, cheese, and clothing; whether or not they also eat the animals is unclear. At any rate, the third and final era (*agri culturam* in Varro; γεωργικόν in Porphyry), lasting to Dikaiarchos' present time, is defined by the application of farming technologies.

The end of each of Dikaiarchos' eras (he probably called each a "life," βίος), are not ends in an absolute sense. Human societies did not undergo catastrophic devastation at moments of transition, as was imagined, for example, by the Eleatic Stranger. Instead, the

ends and beginnings are blurry. One's ability to claim that an era had "changed" from one to another would depend more on how far certain technologies had been taken up. This mode of periodizing human history is remarkably modern. Of course Dikaiarchos had no idea what the future held in this regard, but when we think of ourselves as living in an "industrial" or "post-industrial" era, we are thinking along the same lines as Dikaiarchos.

How do the changes take place? This is an important question for the way that it gets at what seems to have been a central theme of *Life of Greece*: human progress based on human effort alone.<sup>329</sup> Dikaiarchos' account seems to have no place for the aid of more-than-human agents or forces (i.e., gods, chance, etc.). His book is about the growth of the arts (from sheep herding to poetic writing) and perhaps their positive effects on human communities. And this is another respect in which Dikaiarchos seems to have prefigured (certain, at least) modern views.

If we compare this account of causality in period transitions with those of Hesiod in his races and the Eleatic Stranger, we notice that Dikaiarchos' is the only one in which human effort, striving toward things more and more useful (Porphyry, *On Abstinence* 4.2.8), is the means of change. In Hesiod's *logos*, the causes of end-times are various: natural causes for the Golden race, Zeus for the Silver, themselves for the Bronze, themselves and Zeus for the Divine, and Perses himself, perhaps as representative of the everyman, for the current Iron race. The emphasis is on the consequences of human choices in terms of justice and morality. This makes sense since Hesiod's discourse is fashioned to provoke one person in particular, i.e., Perses, to think about his choices. On

---

<sup>329</sup> Saunders 2001.



the other hand, change of the Eleatic Stranger's eras depends on a mix of personal and impersonal causes, but the human inhabitants are never that cause. In the first era, the impersonal cause is simply the number of births and rebirths of each human soul; when this is fulfilled, then the god, as personal agent, changes the cosmic clock. Hence, we see both an impersonal mechanism and also a personal agent. In the second era, likewise, the universe undergoes a necessary process of decline based on an impersonal mechanism (the universe is like a living, material thing in this respect); and when the cosmos is on the brink of self-destruction, the god again steps in, changing the times back to those in which he is in charge. This periodic change too is a mix of natural and personal causes. Either way, the persons on earth have no choice in the matter. If I implied a certain positive judgment of Dikaiarchos' account of human progress and then compared it to Hesiod and the Eleatic Stranger, this need not imply a negative evaluation of the latter two. The important factor here is function: each of these thinkers intends his account for a particular purpose, which may or may not overlap with that of the others. Dikaiarchos, for his part, is writing a factual account and it is on criteria appropriate to this mode that we evaluate his work. He claims that eras change through human-led advancement in technology and art.

### **Dikaiarchos on Hesiod's Golden Race**

When Dikaiarchos attempts to describe the first human beings and their mode of food supply, the distinctively Greek concepts of Hesiod's Golden race and Kronos' reign are the conceptual frameworks that he turns to. He even seems to have quoted Hesiod's

*Works and Days* 116-19.<sup>330</sup> But his engagement with Hesiod's poem is more nuanced than a mere quotation. I want to make three points. First, caution must be exercised because we cannot accurately discern what is Porphyry and what is Dikaiarchos. Saunders asserts that "nothing in the passage tells us anything about the degree, if any, to which Porphyry is quoting directly, nor about the degree to which the passage is summary, abridgement, selection, rewriting, insertion, or expansion."<sup>331</sup> Additionally, we must remember that Porphyry has an interest in portraying Dikaiarchos' own portrayal of Hesiod's Golden race as morally excellent because they killed no animate thing.

Second, moving on to what Dikaiarchos seems to have said about Hesiod, he brings up Hesiod's Golden race in order to extract one principle: autarky. Dikaiarchos extracts this principle through a process of rationalization to get at a kernel of truth. How? Two moves: (1) the fact that autarky under Kronos' reign is so renowned—exemplified in this particular example in Hesiod—compels one to conclude that it really did exist; (2) we rationalize Hesiod's myth by jettisoning what is excessively mythical (τὸ δὲ λίαν μυθικόν) and keeping what is natural (φυσικόν), which leaves the principle of an artless society (Porphyry, *On Abstinence* 4.2.3). Dikaiarchos thus interprets Hesiod's Golden race, seeing in it confirmation of his theory about the origin and development of human technologies.

The third, and final, point is that Dikaiarchos' interpretation of Hesiod's Golden race is ironic. He uses its imagery because it is so commonly known. But once he has reminded readers of its autarkic nature, he says "this is the *kind* of thing we're talking

---

<sup>330</sup> Fragment 56A in Fortenbaugh and Schütrumpf 2001.

<sup>331</sup> Saunders 2001, 241; see his fuller discussion pp. 241-43.

about.”<sup>332</sup> What kind of thing?—an era of humanity devoid of arts. He does not disparage Hesiod as if he got things wrong historically, because he is not using Hesiod as a historical source in that respect. Instead, the joke would end up being on those who were perhaps nodding along with Dikaiarchos as he brings up Hesiod’s “Golden” race. And there is irony beyond this. What makes Dikaiarchos’ use of Hesiod’s Golden race ironic is that for Dikaiarchos the artless human society is not a good thing. We should not consider it golden, he implies. Instead, what impresses him—what he considers worth researching and writing about in the *Life of Greece*—is precisely humanity’s progression away from such technological ignorance and simplicity. Contrary to the Eleatic Stranger’s fundamental pessimism about human phenomena, if you will, Dikaiarchos’ position seems to have been more positive: progression is both possible and real. His three-fold development from nature to agriculture is the backbone of this claim. Where the current era may end and the next begin, however, is anybody’s guess. Dikaiarchos seems to have offered no vision of the future—his teleology found its *telos* in the Greek art of his own time. Fundamentally, then, Dikaiarchos’ story of humanity is one in which the end is always better than the beginning.

## V. Conclusion: A Future Era?

Periodization is fundamentally concerned with representing time. Representational time is constituted by past, present, and future. Certain ancient Greek thinkers imagined

---

<sup>332</sup> Dikaiarkos literally says, “life in the time of Kronos was of this sort” (τὸν ἐπὶ Κρόνου βίον τοιοῦτον, Poryphyry, *On Abstinence* 4.2.3).

periods of time: what about the future? I want to close this chapter by briefly meditating on the future implications of the three periodic schemes discussed above.

Hesiod does not imagine an era beyond the current one.<sup>333</sup> He has no need for a new period of human history. For his is the time of Zeus—not just sufficient for handling the challenges to human society but necessary. As I demonstrated, Hesiod’s Zeus is that which guarantees the well-being of persons. The Eleatic Stranger’s eras also end with Zeus, even if the popular gods are all but cultural fictions for him. Perhaps there is a change of eras on the horizon, but he gives no way of calculating it. For now, it is up to us humans to manage ourselves as best as possible—which means, handing the political decisions over to the real expert. The *polis*’ well-being thus depends on the ability of the statesman to select appropriate persons in marriage and to control citizens’ courage and fear. Dikaiarchos’ scheme of technological development, based on the principle of advancement through human effort, implies a future of more of the same: arts giving rise to human circumstances different enough from what came before to warrant conceptualizing a new era. But as a thinker Dikaiarchos’ inherent optimism seems to have been sobered by the view that while human beings are the cause of their own betterment, they are also the greatest cause of their own destruction. In his *On Human Destruction*, now totally lost but mentioned by Cicero, Dikaiarchos collects all the sources of vast death for the human race and concludes that human beings are the gravest danger to themselves.<sup>334</sup> For Dikaiarchos, then, survival into whatever the next

---

<sup>333</sup> Thus far I agree with West 1978, *ad loc.* on lines 174-75 (“the system as he expounds it is finite and complete”); but I cannot agree that “the myth has no place for a brighter future.”

<sup>334</sup> Cicero, *On Duties* 2.16.

technological era may be, depends on the choice of justice. And in this emphasis on human choice, his future is much like the one Hesiod imagines for Perses.

## CHAPTER 5: FIRE

### I. Introduction: The World's End by Fire

The idea of the world's end by fire is present in the earliest extant Greek literature. There are two central strands. The first involves Zeus and his lightning bolt. Indeed, the greatest weapon of the greatest Greek god is lightning-fire, and this features prominently in Hesiod's *Theogony*. There, Zeus ends the reign of Kronos and the violence of Typhon<sup>335</sup> in flames. Why? I will attempt to go beyond pat answers that stop at "chaos" management and the like, while attending to features of Hesiod's Zeus that characterize him and his battles as the storm god in combat myths. The second strand is fire as a material element. Here I look at the role of fire and the world's end among Greek natural scientists. A possible third strand emerges in the Phaethon's myth, but the evidence for the archaic and classical periods is slim. I deal with it, therefore, in conjunction with Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*, where the Egyptian priest naturalizes Phaethon's tale. Finally, I close the chapter with a return to combat myths and natural fire, using their reception by Hebrew prophets and Stoic philosophers, respectively, as a segue into bona fide eschatological scenarios.

---

<sup>335</sup> Throughout this chapter I use Typhoeus and Typhon interchangeably, a common practice; see, e.g., *BNP* s.v. "Typhoeus, Typhon."

## II. Hesiod's Zeus: The World's End as Political Philosophy

In Hesiod's *Theogony*, fire in the form of Zeus' lightning bolt from heaven and a resulting conflagration on earth has an important role to play in the end of two monstrous foes, namely the Titans and Typhoeus. Both events represent the end, not of the world as a material thing, but of a specific socio-political configuration. This is very much an end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it motif. In both events the ultimate instrument of the demise of the old order, as well as a central instrument of rule in the new, is the lightning bolt wielded by Zeus. We have, then, two episodes in which a foe threatens the reign of Zeus (even though his reign is not entirely consolidated yet) and Zeus regains control by using fire from heaven.

Despite the fundamental role of fire, the episodes differ in their respective thematic resonances as episodes in *Theogony* as a whole. This can be seen in how each passage is framed, namely by what I will call the "prologue" of the Titanomachy (in which Zeus gains the friendship and support of the Hundred Handers) and the "epilogue" of the Typhonomachy (in which the gods urge Zeus to be king). The episodes are told in such a way as to make the point that, while it is true that Zeus' might rests on the sheer physical force of the lightning storm and its capacities for destruction, it does not rest on this alone. To be sure, Zeus defeats Typhoeus in an outright contest of fire, which shows the physical superiority of Zeus—and that is one side of the coin. But this is not how Zeus defeats Kronos and the old gods. He does that with cooperation, the other side of the coin. These two capacities of Hesiod's Zeus—to elicit cooperation based on personal friendship as well as to destroy through physical superiority—are invoked in the Titanomachy and the Typhonomachy.

There is yet another aspect of Zeus' use of fire that I want to point out, this time another similarity between the two episodes. As destructive, even lethal, as lightning and its conflagration can be, in neither case does Zeus actually kill his enemies with it. Instead, Zeus disables the Titans and Typhoeus, and then imprisons each in Tartaros. While I could claim that this is because those characters are immortal, and thus cannot die, still, the text plays on a bit of a paradox between the potential for Zeus to destroy the earth and its life with fire on the one hand, and the damage he actually does with it on the other.

I want to ask two questions of these two episodes. First, why does Zeus bring an end to Kronos' actual reign and Typhon's potential reign? Second, how does he do it? In answering these questions, I am looking for answers that go beyond the claim, no matter how true in some sense, that each foe in their own way represents chaos or disorder, or that simply assert some generic comparison with non-Greek traditions of the combat myths.<sup>336</sup> While these are valid and important insights, I want to seek answers that derive from the particular themes of Hesiod's poem, rather than from generalizations. For example, answering "why does Zeus conquer Typhon?" with "because that's how the combat myth goes" would not constitute an answer to why Hesiod's Zeus defeats Typhon in *Theogony*; nor would "because he's the storm god" adequately answer the question

---

<sup>336</sup> On both chaos and combat myths, see the still important study of Fontenrose 1959, as well as West 1966 for Hesiod specifically. Adela Yarbro Collins' study of the combat myth in the Christian book of Revelation (1979, repr. 2001) is an illuminating study of how an author may adapt motifs of the storm god and the combat myth, and how an awareness of such adaptations can help interpreters detect the themes and purposes of a literary work.



“why does Zeus use lightning to fight the Titans.”<sup>337</sup> Close reading of Hesiod’s poem reveals more specific answers.

My reading will show that the Titanomachy is the end of an *actually* monstrous regime, with thematic resonances of the ending of individual suffering through cooperation; and the Typhonomachy is the end of a *potentially* monstrous tyranny, which functions to point up Zeus’ distinctive ethos of leadership by way of contrast with Typhon. Zeus will outdo Kronos in the realm of personal relationships, and he will outdo Typhon at being the storm god. The ultimate result of these successes is that the gods will ask Zeus to be their king. And this fact, that the gods *ask* Zeus to reign (βασιλεύω), is in direct contrast to Ouranos’, Kronos’, and Typhon’s *seizing* that role for themselves. Hesiod’s Muse-inspired “song” (ᾠοιδήν, 104) thus constitutes a meditation on *ruling*, with Zeus’ lightning fire representing a ruler’s potential for the use of force in that task and role.

### **Titanomachy: Sociopolitical Destruction & Renewal**

Why does Zeus bring an end to Kronos’ reign, and how? That is, what is the problem for which the Titanomachy is a solution, and what are the salient features of that solution? The short answer points to Kronos’ treatment of his fellow immortals. A longer answer, though by no means exhaustive, cites the examples of how he treats his brothers the Hundred Handers, his father Ouranos, his partner (for she is not really his wife) Rhea, and his very own children. All of these episodes show Kronos failing in the specific roles

---

<sup>337</sup> On the storm god, see Green 2003.

of brother, son, husband, and father, respectively, and therefore warranting the end of his domination.

The Titanomachy begins, as I mentioned, with Zeus and the Olympians dealing with the Hundred Handers. In this vignette we hear about the Hundred Handers' experience (617-663). The story is that Ouranos, their own father, imprisoned them (shortly after birth, we are to assume). How long they have been in the underworld matters less than three other factors. First, no one has helped them in the meantime, not even Kronos despite being their brother and eventually the de facto ruler of the world. There may be an implicit charge here against Kronos, who can be seen as guilty of inaction vis-à-vis his brothers. Second, the Hundred Handers' time below has not been pleasant. They have been grieving, with pain in their hearts (623). Third, they had no expectation of release (660). This experience on the part of the Hundred Handers is part of why they respond so positively to Zeus and the Olympians when they approach the Hundred Handers about helping them in the war against Kronos et. al. Indeed, the Hundred Handers respond with gratitude to this offer of salvation and subsequent friendship. But, again, I want to highlight Kronos' *inactivity* in the face of his brothers' suffering over against Zeus' *activity* for his uncles. There is a development here of persons reaching out to persons in wider circles of connection. In other words, we might have expected a brother to help a brother before expecting a nephew to help an uncle.<sup>338</sup> This surprising reversal, and ultimately Kronos' choice underlying it, contributes to the sense that Kronos' reign ought to end and a new reign established.

---

<sup>338</sup> It has been pointed out to me that a brother is likely more of a threat than an uncle. I would agree, but add that the flipside of the principle that the first person to argue with a brother is a brother is the principle that the first to come to a brother's aid is a brother. It is this latter principle that underlies my comment here.

But the way that Kronos treats his brothers is part and parcel of how he treats others, even those who one would think deserve more respect than a brother, namely, a father and a birth partner, and even one's children. Indeed, the first thing that the poet says about Kronos is that he hated his own father from the beginning (138)—again, that's the *first* trait about Kronos as a character in Hesiod's *Theogony*. I can of course then point to his plotting with Gaia to mutilate his father as further indications of Kronos' moral habits. And finally, Kronos famously evinces a similar wickedness in his treatment of Rhea and his children at their birth (453-60). The experience of the children is commonly referenced, and readers are well aware of their suffering, for Kronos eats (literally: gulps down<sup>339</sup>) his children one by one. But I should also note Rhea's experience, for Kronos wrongs her no less in the act. The result of Kronos' violence is that "unremitting grief gripped Rhea" (467). The experience of those around Kronos and his explicit and implicit maltreatment of them thus make a compelling case for the end of his domination.

How does Zeus accomplish this? By employing three means: first, Zeus elicits the gratitude and thus friendship and support of other physically powerful characters in the story; second, Zeus himself turns the tide of battle with his lightning-fire; and third, Zeus, in line with his cooperative gestures vis-à-vis the Hundred Handers, allows *them* to put the finishing touches on the battle.<sup>340</sup>

---

<sup>339</sup> The word is κατέπινε. West (1966, *ad loc.*) points out the imperfect tense and its significance: "the imperfect is appropriate not only because the action was repeated, but because it was not completed: Zeus was never swallowed."

<sup>340</sup> Schmidt 1988, 55, Arrighetti 1998, 328-29, and Clay 2003, 18 have all noticed Zeus' eliciting the cooperation of these powerful characters. By the time of the Titanomachy in the *Theogony*, there has already been precedent for Zeus making powerful friends: he does this with Styx and her mighty children, Zelos, Nike, Kratos, and Bia (383ff.); see Clay 2003, 22.

Zeus relies on the support of the Cyclopes, the Hundred Handers, and his siblings the Olympians in the Titanomachy. Before the Titanomachy is narrated, Hesiod gives his version of how Zeus obtained the lightning and thunder storm. As in the case of the Hundred Handers, deeds of reciprocity, gratitude, and personal friendship are at play. Directly following the narrative about the Olympians' birth, including that of Zeus and the trick with the stone (453-500), we hear that Zeus frees the Cyclopes, Kronos' brothers, whom Ouranos had bound (501-506). There are three things to note about this episode. First, the Cyclopes' being in chains goes back to Ouranos' initial act as a father in which he stuffed his children inside Gaia. Thus, like the Hundred Handers, the Cyclopes have been bound for their whole lives. It goes without saying that this reflects badly on Ouranos in his role of father. Second, Zeus frees them unbidden. There is no mention of motive, just the act. Compared with Ouranos, Zeus seems more of a father to the Cyclopes; this is one of many episodes, then, that garners Zeus the epithet "father of gods and men." Third, the Cyclopes in turn give Zeus the thunder and lightning bolt to serve as a sign of their gratitude. This last point is particularly important for the way that it shows Hesiod adapting the motif of the Storm God. West conjectures that the point here is that Kronos never wielded the thunderbolt,<sup>341</sup> but from a strictly literary standpoint there is a positive aspect as well. Indeed, Hesiod draws attention, not simply to the fact that Zeus uses the lightning and storm as a means of ruling, but how he obtained them, namely, what we just saw, as a gift of gratitude for personal help. The effect is to associate Zeus' rise to power with his ability to nurture these personal relationships. In

---

<sup>341</sup> West 1966, *ad loc.* (line 505). Another relevant point is that Kronos is not a storm god, but a chthonic deity associated particularly with grain; as such, iconographically, he wields not a lightning bolt but a sickle. See West 1966, 205; West 1997, 280; López-Ruiz 2010, 89 (and Chapters 3 and 4, *passim*).

terms of the Titanomachy, Zeus will use these gifts to turn the tide of battle, as we will see shortly. But a basic point is that the lightning is a *gift* given in *gratitude*.

We have already seen how Zeus elicits the help of the Hundred Handers who join Zeus and the Olympians in the battle. But I should not fail to mention the basic fact of Zeus' siblings also cooperating with him. The fact may seem banal until compared with the relative cooperation of the Titans against their father Ouranos. There, when Gaia asks her children for help in tricking and gelding Ouranos, Kronos is the only taker (168-72). Moreover, a mother-son team acting in *secret* is much different from a team of several siblings acting in cooperation with themselves and others who have chosen to come along (i.e., the Hundred Handers) to fight *openly* against the previous generation. What is more, while Zeus certainly takes the lead in the Olympians' dealings with the Hundred Handers, Hesiod makes it clear that it is the Olympians as a group who are eliciting their help (624-26). These episodes manifest a trajectory of more and more cooperation in how the gods address their problems, with Zeus leading the cooperative efforts.

These personal relationships notwithstanding, Zeus also relies on his own physical superiority to defeat the Titans. By Zeus' physical superiority I mean of course his lightning-fire, and this is where the phenomenon of the world's end by fire is manifested in the Titanomachy. After the Hundred Handers' salvation, the arrangement of both sides for battle, and the initial engagement, Hesiod envisions what can only be called Zeus' *aristeia* (687-710).<sup>342</sup> I want to note its description and its specific effect. Hesiod evokes a sense of a new world beginning, a new creation by giving the Titanomachy in general and

---

<sup>342</sup> West 1966, *ad loc.* (line 687) also uses the term *aristeia* to describe Zeus' feats here.

Zeus' lightning strike in particular a cosmic scope. He does this in two ways: first, by including the fundamental components of the world among the affects of his fire storm, and second, by likening the sound of Zeus' storm to the sound of Gaia (i.e., earth) and Ouranos (i.e., sky) crashing together in sexual union. The following lines create the impression of a battle of cosmic scope, with every part of the universe involved:

Both sides manifested the deed of hands and of strength together.  
The boundless **ocean** echoed terribly around them, and  
the great **earth** crashed, and the broad **sky** in response  
as it was shaken, and high **Olympus** trembled  
from its very bottom under the rush of the immortals,  
and a deep shuddering from their feet reached murky **Tartaros**.  
(677-82)<sup>343</sup>

These lines all at once connote a *new* creation through a world-ending lightning strike likened to the sound of sky and earth crashing together at the world's beginning. In the following passage note the reference to Chasm just before the simile of Earth and Sky: this contributes to the sense of a return to some primordial state by referencing the cosmic circumstance at the *original* beginning when there was only Chasm (116). At this point in the poem, Zeus' fire becomes the instrument of the world's socio-political destruction and renewal, a cosmic re-boot, as it were:

The whole **earth** boiled, and the streams of **Ocean**  
and the barren **sea**. The hot blast encompassed the earthly Titans,  
and an immense blaze reached the divine **aether**,  
and the brilliant gleam of the lightning bolt and flash  
blinded their eyes, powerful though they were.  
A prodigious conflagration took possession of **Chasm**;  
and to look upon it with eyes and to hear its sound with ears,  
it seemed just as when **Earth** and broad **Sky** approached from above:

---

<sup>343</sup> Translations of Hesiod are by Most, unless otherwise noted.

for this was the kind of great sound that would rise up  
as she was pressed down and as he pressed her down from on high  
(695-704)

Hesiod then sums up Zeus' fiery, world-changing intervention with four words, notable for their ironic understatement:

κάρτευσ δ' ἀνεφαίνετο ἔργον.

And the deed of supremacy was made manifest.  
(710)

The deed's effect, too, is communicated with ironic brevity:

ἐκλίνθη δὲ μάχη.

And the battle was turned.  
(711)

So far, as part of my examination of how Zeus ends Kronos' reign, I have addressed Zeus and the Olympians' befriending of the Hundred Handers and Zeus' *aristeia*. We might have thought that Zeus' "prodigious conflagration" would have been sufficient to end the entire battle. But Hesiod does not allow it. Instead, Zeus uses his lightning to "turn" the battle in the Olympians' favor. The ultimate goal, however, has not yet been reached. West claims that this non-ending is awkward. Of the lines I have just interpreted using phrases such as "ironic understatement" and "ironic brevity" West says: "A clumsy transition, necessary in order to reconcile the routing of the Titans by Zeus, which Hesiod's convictions demanded, with the fact that the victory depended on the assistance of the Hundred-Handers."<sup>344</sup> Underlying West's interpretation is a kind of narrative necessity on Hesiod's part, as if he had no choice in what to write. In what follows I want to argue against such an understanding of Hesiod's narrative at this point, and to

---

<sup>344</sup> West 1966, *ad loc.* (lines 711-12).

demonstrate, rather, that the transition is neither “clumsy” nor “necessary” but thematically crafted to fit Hesiod’s vision for the particular ways that Zeus achieves his goals.

For the final means of achieving the end-goal of defeating the Titans, Hesiod, in a move of narrative chiasm, returns to the Hundred Handers, with whom the Titanomachy’s narrative began. They, not Zeus, end the war. This is significant for Hesiod’s thematic emphasis on Zeus’ *means* of political destruction and renewal being a *group* project.<sup>345</sup> After all, from the description of his lightning strike quoted above in the Titanomachy and from its description later in the Typhonomachy (examined shortly), there can be no doubt that Zeus could have ended the war himself; his lightning storm is certainly depicted as the most powerful physical force in the cosmos. This emphasis on the particular means by which Zeus defeats the Titans, and not just on the fact that he did, is part of Hesiod’s theme of Zeus’ ethics as a model for leadership. I want to point out, then, how exactly the Hundred Handers end the battle. But before that, I should note that Zeus’ fire did not kill the Titans. It did, however, blind them (698-99), whose effect is supposedly to stun them. With the enemy thus standing still, and the battle’s scales tipped, the Hundred Handers move as champions among the front lines for their own *mini aristeia*:

But then among the foremost [ἐνὶ πρώτοις] they roused up bitter war—  
Cottus and Briareus and Gyges, insatiable of war;  
and they hurled three hundred boulders from their massive hands

---

<sup>345</sup> West 1966, *ad loc.* tries to rescue the passage from those who dismiss it as an interpolation; but his reasoning in doing so (to wit, that “it is entirely in accord with Hesiod’s tendency to glorify Zeus more than the facts of mythology warranted”) misses the emphasis on *how* Zeus treats others, and thus *why* the characters ask him to be king.



one after another and overshadowed the Titans with their missiles.  
(713-17)

The Cyclopes and the Hundred Handers were physically imprisoned within the earth until Zeus befriended them. Zeus himself then wields the gifted thunder to turn the battle, making the Cyclopes *indirect* champions in the Titanomachy. But he steps aside for the now-free Hundred Handers, making them *direct* champions in the last stage of battle.<sup>346</sup> What is more, there is irony in Kronos' rocky end, for he is now twice defeated by Zeus' use of stones, although in neither case did Zeus actually wield a stone as a physical object (which points to his mental superiority): first when Kronos swallowed the stone-as-Zeus (485-91) and now when Kronos crumbles beneath the stones from the hands of Zeus' friends.

We have seen both why and how Kronos is defeated in the Titanomachy. In Hesiod's overall chiasmic vignette, which begins and ends with the Hundred Handers, Zeus' fire features as the central turning point. The conflagration evokes a cosmic scope and gives significance to the socio-political destruction and renewal effected by Zeus, and we have seen both why that destruction was warranted and also Hesiod's particular thematic focus on Zeus' means of pulling together a community in defense of itself. I did not explicitly, however, say anything about Kronos' identity as a monster, although his conspicuous inaction in the face of profound suffering on the part of those ostensibly under his care certainly warrants that evaluative term. Zeus, on the other hand, befriends would-be monsters such as the Cyclopes and the Hundred Handers, putting their physical prowess to good use in ending Kronos' monstrous reign. There is one monster, however, and this

---

<sup>346</sup> For the epic phrase ἐνὶ πρῶτοισι used to describe champions, see, e.g., Homer, *Iliad* 9.709; 12.324; 17.506; 18.194.

time an actual monster, whose powers Zeus does not subordinate for good, but conquers and makes ineffectual. Since he stands as Zeus' parallel—and thus the most grave threat of all if he can outdo Zeus at being the storm god—Typhon, that last and most vicious of Gaia's offspring, must “die” like the Titans.

### **Typhonomachy: Cosmic Destruction Averted**

If the Titanomachy represents the end of an *actual* tyrannical regime, the Typhonomachy represents the end of a *potentially* tyrannical one. And if in the Titanomachy Zeus wields fire as a weapon in his own *aristeia*, in the Typhonomachy he will wield it as the true storm god. In Hesiod's telling there are at least three reasons that Typhon's end is warranted: his parents as the source of things hateful to the gods, Typhon himself as a manifestation of those hateful things, and Typhon's potentially vicious reign.

Typhon's parents—Gaia and Tartaros—are an indirect, yet still important, reason for Typhon's end. Their importance lies in the fact that Hesiod characterizes them as the source of things hateful to the gods. This language, “hateful to the gods,” is one way that we can go beyond more general terms, such as “chaos” or “disorder,” to describe Zeus' enemies. In fact, the description of Tartaros (721-819) is virtually book-ended by this very claim about what the gods “hate.” Here are the lines; they show up near the beginning at 736-39 and near the end at 807-10. Again, the context is the description of Tartaros in general (even though it shows up as an item in the list).

ἐνθα δὲ γῆς δνοφερῆς καὶ ταρτάρου ἠερόεντος  
πόντου τ' ἀτρυγέτοιο καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος  
ἐξείης πάντων πηγὰ καὶ πείρατ' ἔασιν  
**ἀργαλέ' εὐρώεντα τά τε στυγέουσι θεοὶ περ.**

That is where the dark earth's and murky tartaros'  
and the barren sea's and the starry sky's  
sources and limits are, all of them one after another,  
**distressful, dank things, which even the gods hate.**

These lines tell us that Tartaros is more than just a prison for Zeus' vanguished enemies, more than the territory over which Hades rules.<sup>347</sup> It is also somehow a *source* of anti-divine things—the hateful things both dwell there and also originate there. For our purposes it is important to note that both Earth and Tartaros are included in this list of hateful things, for they are in turn the source of Typhon. It is also important for us to point out the position of the final book-end description of Tartaros as this source of hateful things relative to Typhon's birth, namely, right before it. This position frames our interpretive expectations for Typhon as a character: he is hateful-to-the-gods.

Recall that in *Theogony* the last three episodes culminating in Zeus' kingship are the Titanomachy, the description of Tartaros, and finally the Typhonomachy. We have just seen how Hesiod concludes the description of Tartaros. He first brings this up to tell us where the Hundred Handers imprison the Titans, but a secondary frame of the Tartaros vignette is its role as an origin-source for things which the gods hate. This descriptor combined with Hesiod's next move of indicating that Gaia and Tartaros—two of the things hateful to the gods in the list—are Typhon's parents is a significant clue about the moral worth of Typhon. That is, from the juxtaposition we can safely assume that Typhon is one of the “distressful, dank things, which the gods themselves hate” (810).

---

<sup>347</sup> For the underworld as a prison in Greek and Near Eastern mythologies see López-Ruiz 2010, 113-14.

Moreover, precisely at the moment when Hesiod describes Gaia in the role as Typhon's mother, he calls her *pelōrē* (πελώρη, 821), a word which can both denote size (i.e., huge) as well as kind (i.e., morally bad or terrible).<sup>348</sup> The sense here is that Gaia-as-Typhon's-mother is "monstrous." Hesiod applies this epithet to her again at lines 858 and 861. And we may tweak the principle "like father, like son" to "like mother, like son", and see it at work; for Typhon himself is a "terrible monster" (*pelōros*, πελωρός) at 845, 856. Again, denotations of measurement and connotations of judgment mingle in an effort to describe a huge and terrifying creature. One would think that this pedigree in itself would be reason enough for Zeus, though not yet king, to effectively end Typhon's life.

Yet as reasonable as that may be (reasonable in the poem's evaluative terms), there is a more concrete reason, namely that, as we come to learn through Hesiod's description of Typhon, he is a creaturely manifestation of those things that are hateful-to-the-gods: we can understand why Jenny Strauss Clay says that Typhon is "*acosmia* incarnate."<sup>349</sup> We see this in his body, his actions, and his effects on persons. First of all, Typhon's body clearly puts him in the category of monster: his arms and legs are massive and tireless; he has 100 "terrible snaky-dragon" heads, all breathing fire, with fiery eyes, and uttering various kinds of sound at various times (823-35). The fact that Typhon speaks is important because it suggests that he is almost in a category with other speaking beings,

---

<sup>348</sup> *LSJ.* s.v. "πέλωρος" and "πελώριος." Generally speaking, *πέλωρος* conveys evaluative connotations more than its cognate *πελώριος*. The fact that *πέλωρος* is the more common form in Hesiod suggests his concern with the moral-judgmental aspects of the term. *Πελώριος* is Homer's favored form, mostly used to impress upon the reader size rather than evaluation; consider, for example, in the *Iliad* how Helen describes (not evaluates) Ajax during the Teichoscopia: οὗτος δ' Αἴας ἐστὶ **πελώριος** ἔρκος Ἀχαιῶν ("and that one is Ajax, a **massive** bullwark for the Achaians").

<sup>349</sup> Clay 2003, 26.

namely gods and human beings.<sup>350</sup> But his speech is not used for cooperative or deliberative communication; instead, his utterances are mere noise in the natural landscape.<sup>351</sup> Moreover, his murky, dank, and earth-born origin, manifested in a snaky nature connects him with other draconian arch-rivals of the storm god in the combat myth, illustrated in the following table.<sup>352</sup>

**Table 4: The storm god and the watery dragon.**

Culture	Storm God vs Monster	Date	Text(s)
Babylonian	Marduk vs Tiamat (water)	c.1550-1200	<i>Enuma Elish</i>
Ugaritic	Baal vs Yam (water) & Lotan	c.1550-1200	<i>Baal Cycle</i>
Israelite	Yahweh vs Yam (water)	c.1000-500	Psalm 29
	Yahweh vs Leviathan (water)	c.1000-500	Psalm 74
	Yahweh vs Yam (water)	c.600-300	Job 38
Greek	Zeus vs Typhon (dragon-ish)	c.800-700	Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i> 820-880
	Apollo vs Python (snake-ish)	c.675	HHApollo 300-375 (Ovid, <i>Met.</i> 1.435-450)

This aspect of Typhon is also manifested in what he contributes to the natural order after his “death” in Hesiod’s own version: Typhon is the source of “watery strength” for certain winds. These winds are random, and so by nature anti-cosmic, unpredictable, and destructive; they destroy boats on sea, killing the sailors, and on earth they raze men’s

<sup>350</sup> Compare West (1966, *ad loc.* [line 831]): “He [Typhon] makes the same kind of noise as a human larynx does, though the language he speaks is of course that of the gods.”

<sup>351</sup> Compare Benardete’s (2000, 14) remarks about Typhon (whom Benardete calls “Typhos”): “Typhos’s power consists in his ability to imitate the sounds of all things, including the language of the gods. Typhos is the false god.”

<sup>352</sup> See further Fontenrose 1959, 70-76, 121-273; West 1966, 379-81; Green 2003, 147-51. Ogden 2013 is a sourcebook on dragon and serpent fights in Greco-Roman and early Christian antiquity.

material structures, and generally result in confusion (869-880). Typhon's body thus exhibits characteristics that are antithetical to Zeus.

Second, Typhon's actions manifest things hateful to the gods in that he wreaks havoc on the entire world—a cosmic scope is again evoked, including land, sky, ocean, and the underworld (e.g., 839-41). A more concretely earthly location is specified, too, involving the land (χθών), sky, and sea (θάλασσα) (847); this latter localization gives Typhon's threat more vividness. The sense is that he is not some abstract threatening principle, but a real, physically present monster on the verge of filling the power vacuum in Kronos' absence. These actions, to be noted shortly, will prompt Zeus to act.<sup>353</sup>

Finally, Typhon manifests his parents' hateful qualities in the way that he effects the persons around him. He is not merely terrifying. He is *so terrifying* that Hades and the Titans, powerful beings in their own right, tremble at the din caused by Typhon (850-52). Hesiod points up the significance of the fact that these individuals are scared by depicting Hades and Kronos in this moment as rulers over their respective groups, Hades "ruling" (ἀνάσσειν) over the dead, and Kronos he around whom the Titans remain (as if under their leader). Typhon's tendency to inspire fear may be compared with Zeus' capacity to inspire friendship, a capacity just illustrated with the Titanomachy's emphasis on the Hundred Handers' experience before and after Zeus. In fact, the construction of Hesiod's poem calls this very comparison to mind by showing Zeus as the *actual* leader in the Titanomachy and Typhon as a *potential* leader in the Typhonomachy.

---

<sup>353</sup> Does this Hesiodic vignette reflect his version on a more general motif of the missing god? In this motif the god's return is celebrated because of what happened in his absence (Green 2003, 136-37). Here in *Theogony* there is a power vacuum and in the absence of anyone else noticing, Zeus does. So it's not that Zeus was in charge, then went missing, and then came back, as much as there was a vacuum and Zeus filled it. It would seem, then, that the motif of the missing god is not at play here.

This notion of Typhon as potential leader is the last reason I want to mention for why Zeus brought an end to Typhon. For the characters in the story of *Theogony*, it is also the most compelling. The sociopolitical context at the time of Typhon's birth includes a power vacuum: Kronos and the Titans have been deposed, but no other individual or group has officially been described as rulers. Typhon is born into this scenario and seems to have designs on power. He fails, though, because Zeus notices. Hesiod calls Typhon's potential reign an "intractable deed," implying that it would be a thing nearly impossible to get out of. Further, it is said that Typhon nearly "ruled" (ἄναξεν), but, importantly, nothing is said about Typhon being "king," which seems to have a positive connotation out of Typhon's morally-degenerate reach.<sup>354</sup> Opposite this, Zeus, precisely at the moment of noticing Typhon's potential tyranny, is the figurative and evaluatively-positive "father of gods and men" (see quotation below). Moreover, I mentioned the power vacuum, but I should make explicit the fact that Zeus is not in charge; that will come at the gods' bidding as a consequence of his actions on behalf of the well-being of the world community. And Hesiod describes part of this capacity for concern here, with the metaphorical epithet of "father," evoking the sense of paternal care. Here are the lines. Note the urgency of the implied "what if," and the connection between Zeus' "sharp noticing" and his role of "father of gods and men:"

καί νύ κεν ἔπλετο ἔργον ἀμήχανον ἡματι κείνῳ  
καί κεν ὅ γε θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἄναξεν,  
εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὅξυ νόησε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε

And on that very day an intractable deed would have been accomplished

---

<sup>354</sup> Recall Hesiod's own formulation of the positive communal role of the "basileus" in the *Theogony* itself, lines 80ff.

and he would have ruled over mortals and immortals,  
**if the father of men and of gods had not taken sharp notice**  
(836-38)

While Typhon attempts, in effect, a *seizure* of control, Zeus notices, acts, and as a consequence *will be asked* to reign. There is a dichotomy here about the basis of rule: seizure (tyranny) versus consent (kingship). Neither Typhon nor Zeus are yet in charge, but of course only one will “win” in this regard. The *Theogony* poses Typhon’s connection with and manifestation of things hateful to the gods, as well as his potential violent seizure of power, as problems which Zeus attempts to solve. Let’s turn now to that solution, to the “how” of Typhon’s end.

Put simply, Zeus outdoes Typhon at being the storm god. Both use the same tools, i.e., lightning fire, but Zeus not only beats Typhon at wielding them as weapons in combat, he also ultimately puts them to a different use, namely ordering the world versus destroying it. Clay frames Typhon’s use of fire for destruction like this: Typhon is “an embodiment of the total disorder that threatens to dismantle the articulated cosmos through *universal conflagration*.”<sup>355</sup> Notice the link with Typhon and a total fire: Typhon threatens to end the world, and to establish his rule, in flames. Clay further implies the storm god motif, though does not mention it, when she asserts that “Zeus must here fight fire with fire.”<sup>356</sup> Indeed, it is important that the fire is the *lightning*-fire of the true storm god. But the question of storm god superiority is not one of quantity. Typhon, after all, has *100* fire-glaring heads (827-28) and can himself somehow command thunder, lightning, and his own fire (845). Yet despite this apparent abundance of “fire” power (to

---

<sup>355</sup> Clay 2003, 26 (italics mine).

<sup>356</sup> Clay 2003, 26.



the extent that it can be quantified), and the fear Typhon instils with it, Zeus dispatches him in a head-on fight.

Ζεὺς δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν κόρνηθεν ἐὼν μένος εἴλετο δ' ὄπλα  
βροντὴν τε στεροπὴν τε καὶ αἰθαλόεντα κεραυνόν  
πλήξεν ἀπ' Οὐλύμποιο ἐπάλμενος ἀμφὶ δὲ πᾶσας  
ἔπρεσε θεσπεσίας κεφαλὰς δεινοῖο πελώρου

Then when Zeus had lifted up his strength and grasped his weapons,  
the thunder and lightning and the blazing thunderbolt,  
he struck him, leaping upon him from Olympus; and all around  
he scorched all the prodigious heads of the terrible monster.  
(853-56)

Just as swiftly as he came on the scene, Typhon is dispatched. And to fill the power vacuum left since the fiery and rocky fall of Kronos, the gods next ask Zeus to rule. This final move points at what was at stake in the Typhonomachy: the role of king. Fabienne Blaise highlights the fine lines of similarity and difference between Typhon and Zeus—their royal prerogatives rooted in voice, eyes, and fire—and finally sums up Typhon's identity as “un anti-Zeus parfait” (a perfect anti-Zeus).<sup>357</sup>

### **Hesiod's *Theogony*, the World's End, and Political Philosophy**

Through these episodes, Zeus defeats the children of Earth and Sky, then the child of Earth and Tartaros. Since Sky, Earth, and Tartaros constitute the entirety of the created order, the implication is that Zeus has taken control of the entire world.<sup>358</sup> What is more, however, with reference to potential rivals in the future, Earth's procreative capacities to birth a rival to Zeus have thereby been rendered ineffectual. With Earth as source of

---

<sup>357</sup> Blaise 1992, 162.

<sup>358</sup> Clay 2003, 26.

enemies neutralized, as well as Zeus himself (since he swallowed Metis and birthed Athena on his own), Zeus' reign is secure for the foreseeable future. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, the world ended by fire once (in the Titanomachy) through Zeus' thunder storm, but was simultaneously re-born; it almost ended again in the "anti-Zeus" episode known as the Typhonomachy in which Zeus outdid Typhon at being the storm god.

The discourse cued by these episodes continued to resonate among Greeks into the classical period.<sup>359</sup> But like any story, the Titanomachy (as a species of the genus "theomachy") and the Typhonomachy (as a species of the genus "combat myth") can be used for different purposes. As I just demonstrated, Hesiod's *Theogony* builds themes around the concept of ruling, and it does this through characters (e.g., Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus): the ends of reigns, the beginnings of reigns, right rule vs wrong rule, the role of personal relationships, how to deal with powerful individuals, and so on. A central thematic question that the text inspires is, in short, what is the communal good life? Here we have the Olympian theomachy and the combat myth of Zeus serving to provoke thought about broader issues of communal life and power. In modern parlance: political philosophy.

### **III. Physiologoi: Fire & the Undying Cosmos**

I turn now from a discourse centered on personal characters to one centered on impersonal forces. The three Milesians thinkers Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes are the first known contributors to a conversation about the nature of the world that seeks

---

<sup>359</sup> See for example Joan Breton Connelly's recent discussion of the representations of Zeus defeating the Old Gods (i.e., Kronos et. al.) and Typhon on the Athenian Akropolis (2014, 45-75).

to understand it on analogy with other physical elements. For this endeavor they earned the name of *physiologoi* (“investigators of *physis*”) or natural scientists. The object under investigation, and its principle as well, for these thinkers and their successors is *physis* (“nature” or “coming-into-being”).<sup>360</sup> Pretty much everything we can perceive in the world, they observe, including plants, animals, and humans, undergoes a process of coming into being, growing, and eventually perishing. Does it not make sense, then, that the world itself may be undergoing a similar process? If so, might it have done this several times already, and may experience it numerous times in the future? Moreover, since we can discover the mechanisms by which other physical entities are born, mature, and die, should we not be able to discover the same for the universe? How was it “born,” and how will it “die?”

The question here is, did any of these thinkers believe that the world would end in flames? And the answer to this question is—as with just about *any* issue related to the Presocratics—complicated, but mostly due to the state of the evidence. Several thinkers of our period, however, require a look. Our roster begins with a few Presocratics but also includes later thinkers: Herakleitos, Empedokles, two fifth-century Pythagoreans (Hippasus and Philolaus), Meton of Athens, Kritias’ Egyptian priest in Plato’s *Timaeus-Critias*, and Aristotle. Each is attempting a more or less factual account of how the *physical* world works, so we are dealing here with the mechanics of stuff, rather than the ethics of characters (as in Hesiod’s storied “ends” above).

---

<sup>360</sup> Kahn 1960, 201. For more on the Greek concept of nature see my discussion above in Chapter 2.

Unfortunately it is not easy to grapple with or summarize this body of thought. For one, with the exceptions of Plato and Aristotle, most of these authors exist only as excerpts in later authors who use them for various purposes, not necessarily to give a charitable (or accurate) account. And I should mention up front that nothing points in a teleological direction to anything like the Stoic conflagration theories, which I briefly discuss below as point of conclusion.<sup>361</sup> That said, the conversation about the question of the world's end that these thinkers began not only flourished in the ancient world (and Stoic theories of *ekpyrosis* are thus certainly part of the conversation, eventually) but also in some senses continues today. What follows is a chronological review of these thinkers, focusing on the question, fire as the instrument for the end of what?<sup>362</sup>

### **Herakleitos: Material Cosmos & Human Soul as Eternal Fire**

I begin with Herakleitos.<sup>363</sup> Flourishing in about 500BC, he postulated a close connection between the end of things and fire. But he did not, as far as we can tell, believe that the world would end in flames. I want to represent his views with four points. The first two points show him in relation to his Ionian predecessors with respect to the notion of an *archē* and cosmogony; the third is about the world's end and Herakleitos' concept of change; and the fourth relates to fire and the human soul.

First, on the one hand, Herakleitos is thinking along the lines of the three Ionian thinkers mentioned above, Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, by conceiving of an

---

<sup>361</sup> On Stoic theories of the world's end by fire (i.e., *ekpyrosis*), see Hahn 1979, 185-99; Long 2006.

<sup>362</sup> Unless otherwise noted, I number my references to Presocratic fragments in the traditional way, according to Diels-Kranz [DK].

<sup>363</sup> Fundamental: KRS, 197-208; Kirk 1962.

*archē*, a fundamental stuff of the universe out of which and into which all things exist. The notion of an *archē* is grounded in two things: first, the perception of a plurality of entities in the world, and second, the genealogical tradition of explanation. Ionian scientists before Herakleitos had been explaining things in terms of growth from a singular entity, then multiplying in their respective ways, and finally returning in death to that single original stuff. Consider Aristotle's interpretation of such an *archē*:

Most of the first philosophers thought that principles in the form of matter were the only principles of all things; for the original source of all existing things, that from which a thing first comes into being and into which it is finally destroyed, the substance persisting but changing in its qualities, this they declare is the element and first principle [*archē*] of existing things, and for this reason they consider that there is no absolute coming-into-being or passing-away, on the ground that such a nature is always preserved.<sup>364</sup>

Aristotle's rigid conceptualization of previous scientific endeavor has its own problems for interpreting the Presocratic fragments in particular,<sup>365</sup> but we have no reason to doubt the basic phenomena of a debate about origins and ends.

For Herakleitos, the *archē* is fire (DK22B30, B31, B90). That is, all material things are in some sense made of fire. What this means will be seen shortly. For now, I add that in its purest material form, the fire-*archē* is lightning (DK22B64). Yet while Herakleitos assigns to lightning the highest degree of purity of all material entities, moving into the immaterial realm, he also posits a further degree of purity by claiming that this lightning-fire-*archē* has a directive capacity.<sup>366</sup> In this respect lightning resembles Herakleitos' logos (DK22B1, B2, B50). This logos, or fundamental rationality, underlies all of nature.

---

<sup>364</sup> *Metaphysica* A 3, 983b6ff. Quoted from Horst 1998, 272 (his translation).

<sup>365</sup> On which see KRS, 90-91.

<sup>366</sup> For more on this point and the contents of the rest of this paragraph see KRS, 198-200.

Everything happens in accordance with it. The natural world operates, not randomly, but rationally. Since rationality underlies all of the natural world, and since fire has some directive role, we conclude that the cosmic logos and the cosmic fire are in some sense one. So far Herakleitos is thinking like an Ionian monist in attempting to account for natural phenomenon and doing that with recourse to some sort of singularly important element.

He leaves the Ionian camp, however, by rejecting cosmogony. While the Milesians posited a beginning, middle, and end—since they modeled their analysis of the universe on living things—Herakleitos seems to have claimed that the cosmos has always existed (DK22B30). This fact alone would preclude his positing a cosmic *ekpyrosis* along Stoic lines, although the point is quite debatable.<sup>367</sup> The major point, however, would be that Herakleitos' world can have no end.

But that seems to be not entirely true, which is my third point. The world and the things in it do end, but only in a relative way. That is, change, and thus beginnings and endings, is simply a change in degree of fieriness (DK22B31). More specifically, Herakleitos seems to have posited three significant instantiations of the fire-*archē*: fire, water, and earth. All things are in a constant flux of their *composition* of these elements. Combining this third point about change as change in level of fieriness with the first two, we are beginning to see something of a fundamental position on nature: the physical world is an eternal, always changing manifestation of fire, this change occurring

---

<sup>367</sup> KRS, 200, n1; Kirk 1962, 335-38; Kahn 1960, 224-27; Kahn 1979, 134ff.

according to some immaterial logic which itself is manifested in the ultra-pure fire of the lightning bolt.

The fourth point is that the cosmic fire of the material and immaterial universe exists at a microscopic level as the soul-fire of the human being (DK22B36, B118, B117, B45). On the one hand, human life and death are related to the level of fire in the body: life is warmth and heat, while death is cold. The more fire, the more life. As one progresses down the ladder to water, so to speak, one is less alive. And indeed, Herakleitos said that there is a sliding scale of wakefulness, sleep, and death causally connected to fire and water levels in the person. On the other hand, Herakleitos imposes an immaterial evaluative hierarchy onto this physical system: the state of dryness (i.e., fieriness) is best, and as one becomes more watery (when, for instance, flushed with alcohol or simply sleeping) one becomes worse off. This hierarchical connection between the human mind and fire might have been fairly widespread in the Greek world of Herakleitos' day.<sup>368</sup> At any rate, the homologizing of the human mind with the cosmic fire has an important place in Herakleitos' cosmology. Yet while fire plays an important mechanistic role in the life of both the cosmos and the human person, we must be cautious about our conclusions about how Herakleitos imagined the ends to occur.

### **Empedokles: Fire & the Four Eternal Elements Always in Mixture**

Between Herakleitos and Empedokles, whose thought I turn to consider now, stood Parmenides. This is important because Parmenides offered a serious challenge to

---

<sup>368</sup> KRS, 199 with note.

scientific endeavor with his claim that nothing can come to be or perish (DK28B2, B8). In other words, he banned generation and destruction. A central aspect of his reasoning was that it is impossible to speak about what does not exist; we can only speak about things that really are, and the things that really are, are all that we can think about. Thus, since talk of something perishing means talk of something not existing any more, there can be no such thing as perishing. Reality (whatever that consists of), therefore, is eternal. As a general principle, Empedokles agrees with this so-called Eleatic ban that nothing comes to exist or perishes. The things of nature are indeed eternal. But he disagrees with another aspect of Parmenides' thought, namely the consequent ban on all change whatsoever, and the even more radical assertion that therefore plurality is a deceit of appearances. According to this line of thinking, the really real, despite appearances, is *one* thing. Again, while Empedokles accepts the first ban and thus deals with an eternal natural world, he denies Parmenides' radical monism in this latter claim.

Instead, Empedokles says, what accounts for the variety of appearances is the fact that all these eternally existing things are actually *mixtures* of different *more fundamental* elements; the distinctive aspects of combination lead to different looks. These are some of the basic moves that Empedokles makes in response to the Eleatic challenge. Let's look now at his views on fire's role in the end of things. In Empedokles' account, what is ending, and what is the role of fire? I want to look at three aspects: first, the relative nature of destruction; second, fire's role as one of the fundamental material elements in nature; and third, Empedokles' "cosmic cycle" as a general metaphysical thesis rather than a specific claim about the end of this world.



First, the end of things is relative. I hinted at the reason above. Empedokles posits that the material existence of a thing is a mixture of four fundamental elements (DK31A37). The elements are fire, water, earth, and air (DK31B17). In this line of thinking, destruction is simply a *change* in the mixture or composition, leading at some point to a previous thing "dying" and becoming another thing. There is no generation and destruction, no birth and death, no beginning and end, outside this mixing (DK31B8). Trees, men, and women, for example, come to be in this way—so too beasts, birds, and fish (DK31B23). Empedokles illustrates this concept with a simile about a human painter mixing his paints and employing them in such a way that the paint, mixed in different ways, can be used to represent different objects (DK31B23). We see here a macro and a micro level. At the macro level, the cosmos and its elements are eternal. But at the micro level, any given mixture and physical manifestation of a particular mixture of eternal elements undergoes life and death as a change in its composition. This is what it means to say that Empedokles' notion of the end is relative.

Second, in this paradigm, fire is relevant only insofar as it is one of the four basic roots. That is to say, it is not more important than the others, as fire is for Herakleitos. All four of Empedokles' roots, rather, are somehow equal in their roles, as are the two causal forces (DK31B17, lines 27-35).

Finally, in one of the more lengthy fragments of *On Nature* (DK31B17), Empedokles mentions a cycle, leading some interpreters to see a view of cosmic cyclicity, one in which the world as we know it is destroyed and then re-born. Against this view is the observation that Empedokles uses the term in that passage to refer, not to a claim about a

specific world's end (or any particular entity's destruction), but to his *general metaphysical thesis* of end-as-change.<sup>369</sup> Empedokles' theory of change as change-in-mixture warrants the view that seemingly disruptive modifications such as birth and death are somehow smooth changes at the elemental level.

## Two Fifth-Century Pythagoreans

Without a doubt, Herakleitos and Empedokles are two of the giants of early Greek scientific thought. Two fifth-century Pythagoreans, Hippasus and Philolaus, though less well known, warrant mention here too for a few scattered references to their views on fire and the world's future.<sup>370</sup> Iamblichus tells us that Hippasus was reputed to be the father of the scientific (as opposed to the aphoristic<sup>371</sup>) strand of Pythagorean thought.<sup>372</sup> And Simplicius tells us that Hippasus, along with Herakleitos, held fire to be an Ionian-style *archē*: “they [Herakleitos and Hippasus] produce existent things from fire by condensation and rarefaction, and resolve them into fire again, this being the one underlying nature”.<sup>373</sup> We cannot be sure how widespread throughout the Pythagorean community this specific fire-as-*archē* view was, and we certainly have to be on the lookout for anachronistic Peripatetic categories.<sup>374</sup>

---

<sup>369</sup> KRS, 288, n.1.

<sup>370</sup> On Hippasus, see DK18 and Burkert 1972, 206-08 and *passim*. The signature study of Philolaus (with texts, translation, commentary, and essays) is Huffman 1993.

<sup>371</sup> On the distinction between the scientific and the aphoristic strands of thought within Pythagoreanism, see Huffman 2010.

<sup>372</sup> *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* xviii 81.

<sup>373</sup> *Commentary on the Physics* 23.33-24.4.

<sup>374</sup> For a discussion of the nuances of the term *archē* in this context, see Huffman 1993, 78-92.

Philolaus of Croton, also a scientifically-minded Pythagorean, gives fire and heat important roles in his cosmology and biology.<sup>375</sup> The universe developed from, and heavenly bodies circle around, a central cosmic fire, metaphorically referred to as the hearth (Huffman F7 and F17).<sup>376</sup> And human beings similarly developed out of a central thing (i.e., the navel [Huffman F13], associated with “the hot” (Huffman A27). These notions give us a sense of his theories on origins and the current state of things, but none of the extant texts reveal his views on the future of the cosmos in such a full way. One fragment (Huffman F21) explicitly attributes to Philolaus the view that the cosmos is indestructible (ἄφθαρτον τὸν κόσμον), but the fragment is widely regarded as spurious.<sup>377</sup> Some Pythagoreans held a notion of strict, mathematical, eternal recurrence in which all history will be repeated down to the choices each person makes, but again we have no evidence for Philolaus’ opinions in this regard.<sup>378</sup>

That said, several authors remark that Philolaus knows of a twofold source of destruction as part of his astronomical theories, one by fire and one by water (Huffman A18). We can say very little about the details and mechanics of this idea beyond the fact that Philolaus likely conceived of local disasters only, rather than universe-wide endings.<sup>379</sup> These specific notices about Hippasus and Philolaus, combined with the more general Pythagorean recurrence tempt one to wonder if any Pythagorean (or non-Pythagorean, for that matter) thinker put these together to say that the cosmic renewal

---

<sup>375</sup> Huffman 1993, 197.

<sup>376</sup> I cite Philolaus’ testimonia and fragments according to Huffman 1993: F=fragment, A=testimonium. On the role of fire in Philolaus’ cosmogony, see Huffman 1993, 202-15 and 244-45.

<sup>377</sup> Burkert 1972, 242-43; Huffman 1993, 341-44.

<sup>378</sup> References to the Pythagorean notion of eternal recurrence can be found, for example, in the writings of Eudemus of Rhodes (DK58B34) and Porphyry’s *Life of Pythagoras* (*Vita Pythag.* 19). Hahn 1979, 186 speculates that the doctrine was “well known and much discussed around the end of the fourth century.”

<sup>379</sup> See Huffman 1993, 261-66.

would be *caused* by fire, and that fire would have some other material-mechanistic role as the eternal *archē*. Tempting as it may be, it would be irresponsible to assert that given the evidence.

### **Meton of Athens: A Stoic-Influenced False Positive**

Meton of Athens is another tantalizing case.<sup>380</sup> A prominent astronomer and geometrist flourishing at the end of the fifth century, he was involved in reforming the Athenian calendar and gave his name to the Metonic cycle.<sup>381</sup> He features as a character in Aristophanes' *Birds*, and Plutarch also knows him as a protester against the Sicilian expedition: he pretended madness and set fire to his house.<sup>382</sup>

But what are we to make of Tzetzes' remarks about Meton's supposed claims about the world's end under Aquarius?<sup>383</sup> Probably not much. We can distinguish a number of things that Tzetzes is mixing up. First, Tzetzes' passages includes Ionian-style *archai*, as seen in Herakleitos—that from which and into which the material of the universe comes to be and perishes into. Second, we have astronomic cycles in which planets and other heavenly bodies come to align with one another; astronomers worked with these to calculate, among other things, seasons of the year and to construct calendars. This is the task that Meton is undertaking. Third, however, we have Stoic ideas about universe-enveloping catastrophes based on floods and fires, the most famous of which is the conflagration (*ekpyrosis*). Meton was known for an astronomic theory that predicted

---

<sup>380</sup> On Meton generally, see Burkert 1972, 314-16.

<sup>381</sup> On the Metonic cycle: Diodorus Siculus 12.36.2-3; Lehoux 2007.

<sup>382</sup> Aristophanes: *Birds* 992-1010. Plutarch: Nikias 13.7-8; Alkibiades 17.5-6.

<sup>383</sup> *Chil.* 10.534; 12.219, 283.

when all the heavenly bodies would align, and it is likely that Tzetzes is confusing Meton's astronomic year of heavenly alignments with Stoic notions of the world's end. At any rate, we have no evidence suggesting that Meton was involved in predicting astronomically-caused world disasters. In fact, his concerns are less metaphysical in this sense than practical. His influence in practical reasoning and the applied mathematics of his time can be seen in the role of the dial of his eponymous cycle on the Antikythera time-keeping device.<sup>384</sup>

If he had nothing to say about the world's end, let alone the world's end by fire, then why do I bring him up here? Because Tzetzes' later confusion of the world's end, astronomic theories, and Stoic conflagration notions is not the only case of its kind—we will see something similar when we look at Aristotle below. Generally, both cases are reminders that we must pay careful attention to the provenance of our sources when studying many early Greek thinkers. More specifically, both will highlight the bullying effect of Stoic theories in the context of anything having to do with Greek scientific thought about the world's end and fire.

### **Plato: Kritias' Egyptian Priest & Phaethon's Folly**

In a previous chapter I looked at how the interlocutors in *Laws* know of stories of repeated destructions from various causes—"floods, diseases, and many other things" (677a). They choose to focus on the story of the Flood, using it to ground a discussion of the development of the city-state. Recall that the Flood destroys one civilization, leaving

---

<sup>384</sup> A 2006 issue of *Nature* devotes no fewer than three pieces to the Antikythera Mechanism, all with relevant bibliography; see, e.g., Freeth et. al.

all but a small, uneducated remnant of hill-dwelling shepherds to begin the society anew. Fire, however, is neither explicitly mentioned there as a cause of civilization's destruction. Nor is it in the Eleatic Stranger's myth of eras in *Statesman*. But Plato's Kritias in *Timaeus-Critias* knows of cataclysms by *both* fire and water. He attributes these to Egyptian tradition through complicated narrative layers: Plato's character Kritias says that his grandfather Kritias says that Solon says that the Egyptian priest says that mankind is regularly destroyed by various causes.<sup>385</sup> Here is the general theory:

πολλὰ κατὰ πολλὰ φθοραὶ γεγόνασιν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἔσονται, πυρὶ μὲν καὶ ὕδατι μέγισται, μυρίοις δὲ ἄλλοις ἕτεραι βραχύτεραι.  
(*Tim.* 22c)

There have been, and will be again, many destructions of mankind arising out of many causes; the greatest have been brought about by the agencies of fire and water, and other lesser ones by innumerable other causes.

The Egyptian priest means to inform Solon about why Solon's Athenians are ignorant about the long past: whenever these cataclysms occur, they leave a remnant behind to begin communities anew (just as the characters in *Laws* speculate). If the cataclysm is a flood, then only shepherds high on mountains remain; if the cataclysm is a conflagration, then lowland dwellers remain unaffected. But the Egyptians along the Nile are immune to both kinds, therefore they alone have records going far, far back into human history. With this knowledge and this general theory of cataclysms they can also account for particular Greek stories, including the first man Phoroneus, Deukalion's flood, and Phaethon (22a-d). Deukalion's story is undoubtedly a story about the world's end by water, and I have examined some of the ways that Greeks of the archaic and classical periods used it (in

---

<sup>385</sup> Kahn 1979, 159 and 318, n.184 traces these dual cataclysms to Heraclitus. Huffman 1993, 264 suggests Philolaus.

chapter 2). What about Phaethon? Is his story a story about the world's end by fire? It would, after all, seem to be rich in potential in this regard.

The answer is no. Here in Plato, Kritias' Egyptian priest naturalizes the tale: Phaethon's conflagration reflects a great fire that occurs when heavenly bodies align in a certain position (22d). Nothing more is made of it, however. It serves as an example only to illustrate, first, how these Egyptians can account for Greek stories and, second, the phenomena of human remnants after cataclysms (who survives floods and fires, and why). But this simply allows us to dismiss the version of Kritias' Egyptian priest in Plato's *Timaues-Critias*. We have other versions of Phaethon's story—what about those? We do have fragments of works by Aeschylus and Euripides that feature Phaethon, but neither seem to play on Phaethon's story for its potential as an end-of-the-world tale. Instead, they feature dilemmas based on personal identity (typically bound up with the question of Phaethon's father, Helios). Moreover, although there are scatterings of artistic representations of Phaethon's story in the Hellenistic period, it is really after Ovid that visual artists take real note of the tale (at least based on the extant evidence).<sup>386</sup>

There is, however, a strand of modern interest very much along the lines of Kritias' Egyptian priest, seeing the myth based on some real natural catastrophe. Most recently, Barbara Rappenglück has argued that the Phaethon myth refers to an impact of a meteorite in south-east Germany somewhere between 2000 and 800 BC.<sup>387</sup> So Phaethon's tale would have to wait to have its world-ending themes exploited. And in terms of

---

<sup>386</sup> On the reception of Phaethon, see the excellent article "Phaethon" by David Nelting and Isabel von Ehrlich in *Brill's New Pauly Supplements I – Volume 4: The Reception of Myth and Mythology*.

<sup>387</sup> Rappenglück et. al. 2010.

Plato's Kritias, Solon, and the Egyptian priest, they leave Phaethon and his conflagration behind in favor of Atlantis.

### **Aristotle: Another Stoic-Influenced False Positive**

If Plato's characters know of the world's end by fire in a very limited or general sense, Aristotle himself seems even less concerned with it. After all, his cosmos is eternal, and in one of the central passages in which he makes this argument,<sup>388</sup> he even mentions Herakleitos and Empedokles only to refute their arguments (reviewed above). He is thus aware of their views, and had he thought it reasonable to take up, for example, Herakleitos' cosmic-fire, he could have.

Nevertheless we must address a claim made by Censorinus, a Roman grammarian of the third-century AD, that Aristotle posited a "Greatest Year" in which the sun, moon, and five planets align with the result that at the peak of winter there is a flood (Latin, *cataclysmos*) and at the peak of summer there is a world-enveloping fire (Latin, *ecpyrosis*).<sup>389</sup> This reminds us of Tzetzes' anachronistic combination of Meton's astronomic theory of a 19-year cycle with Stoic ones, resulting in a Meton who asserted that at the end of his 19-year cycle the world would end (presumably in flames). So too, here with Censorinus on Aristotle. Censorinus is perhaps picking up on a passage of Aristotle's *Meteorologica* (352a28-32) where Aristotle mentions a "great winter" (μέγας χειμῶν) with excessive rains. Can this be evidence of some sort of Great Year theory in Aristotle? As Alexander Verlinsky has shown in great detail, and David Hahm had

---

<sup>388</sup> *On the Heavens* 279b5-283b22 (1.10-12).

<sup>389</sup> *De die natali* 18.11.



noticed previously although not argued for, it is highly unlikely.<sup>390</sup> There is, first of all, the issue of Stoic influence, seen in the fact that Censorinus describes the catastrophes of the Great Year (a Stoic term itself)<sup>391</sup> with the technical Stoic terms of *exignescere* (Greek, ἐκπυροῦσθαι) and *exaquescere* (Greek, ἐξυγραινέσθαι). Secondly, Censorinus assigns to these catastrophes a worldwide status, and links them causally to the positions of heavenly bodies. Aristotle, on the contrary, posits only local catastrophes and causes that have to do with the sun's heat. He brings up Deukalion's flood, after all, as an example of just these features: it happened as a result of one of these moments of excessive wintry rains and affected only a limited area of Greece, namely Dodona and the river Achelous.<sup>392</sup> Aristotle's claims are more limited than this and do not function on planetary causes. Moreover, in another place where Aristotle mentions "destructions" (φθοραί) other than floods, he lists wars, diseases, and famines, but not fires. Compared to Herakleitos and the Egyptian priest of Plato's Kritias, Aristotle seems unconcerned about fire as a potential world-destroying element.

#### IV. Conclusion: Two Fiery Paths to Eschatology

Two of the traditions examined here—the combat myth and the *physiologoi*'s fire—have an impressive role to play in the development of some later (especially Hellenistic) eschatological scenarios, and would constitute essential topics of study for further examination. In this brief final section I want to address what this means.

---

<sup>390</sup> Hahn 1979, 185, n.2; Verlinsky 2006, 56-58.

<sup>391</sup> SVF II. 599.

<sup>392</sup> *Meteor.* 352a28ff. See my treatment of Aristotle and Deukalion's Flood in Chapter 2.

The Greeks restricted their versions of the combat myth to a past story with present relevance. But the Israelites projected the combat myth's battle into the future—this switch in temporal orientation is a crucial piece in the puzzle of apocalyptic eschatology's origins. Recall that in the first chapter of this study, while discussing the origins of the concept group “apocalypse-apocalypticism-apocalyptic,” I mentioned the combat myth. Here I want to draw on Collins' work to point out how the Hebrew prophets oriented “the conflict into the future and used the mythology to evoke the judgment of God, both on the Gentile nations and on Israel itself.”<sup>393</sup> Previous to the prophets we have traces of the combat myth and its themes of divine (storm god) triumph over chaos in Israelite mythology; these traces employ the myth's past orientation (e.g., Psalms 29, 74, 96, 98). But in the prophetic writings of, for example, Amos<sup>394</sup> and Isaiah,<sup>395</sup> the notion of divine judgment is projected into the future and at times given cosmic scope, even if directed at a particular urban locale. The prophecies in Isaiah 24-27 (the so-called “apocalypse of Isaiah”) further employ Canaanite mythic themes from the combat myth to talk about god's future promise to “swallow Death forever” (25:7) and to slay Leviathan (27:1), the watery snake analogous to Hesiod's Typhon. Likely composed in the Exilic Period, the text also shows a yearning for the restoration of the Israelite people (recall my invocation of this theme in Chapter 1, via Aune's essay on the theme). The basic point is that Israelite authors did something that no Greek authors did: gave the combat myth a future orientation.

---

<sup>393</sup> Collins 1998b, 129 (within 129-61).

<sup>394</sup> Amos 5:18-20 speaks of the day of the Lord, and 8:2 speaks of the imminent end of the kingdom of northern Israel.

<sup>395</sup> Isaiah 13:9-13 speaks specifically of Babylon's destruction, yet as if it had cosmic scope.

Collins traces the phenomenon in three stages: (1) late 6<sup>th</sup>/early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC during the Jewish restoration under Persian rule; (2) the Hellenistic period, with peak activity during the Maccabean revolt under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (168-164 BC); and (3) ca. 70 AD in the context of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, including the rise of Christianity. In the following centuries “the rabbis who undertook the codification of Jewish tradition seem to have turned away from apocalypticism” and its future-oriented combat myth.<sup>396</sup> Not so, of course, the Christian sects, and the most conspicuous text employing a future-oriented combat myth to come out of the latter-most phase is of course Revelation. Ever since, the apocalyptic-eschatological version of the storm god fighting the waters of chaos has represented a story-form of hope for the oppressed, whether in truth or in perception only, and formed a not insignificant part of the dualist mindset which so bothers the editors of *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*.<sup>397</sup> For the Greeks of the archaic and classical periods, however, it never seems to have been used for this purpose, and Hesiod’s Zeus as a meditation on power and right rule remains the signature vision.

The world’s end by fire was a deadend inquiry among the physical-scientific thinking of Greek thinking during the archaic and classical eras, because many of the thinkers share an assumption of an undying cosmos. But in the period *just outside* of the later temporal boundary of this study fire becomes a crucial feature of a bona fide Greek eschatology in Stoic theories of cosmic conflagration (*ekpyrosis*). Above, in the introduction to the *physiologoi*, I suggested a brief selection of references on the Stoic

---

<sup>396</sup> Collins 1998b, 156.

<sup>397</sup> See Chapter 1.

conflagration in itself, but a better point of departure for the purposes of eschatology would be an essay by Pieter van der Horst (1998) because it discusses the world's end by fire from the Stoic theories of the third century BC through Jewish and Christian adaptations in the late third century AD. Drawing on Horst's essay, my purpose in this final section is simply to introduce the theory and some of its implications for the study of the world's end in ancient Greece.

Three remarks to begin with. First, the notion of an undying cosmos ruled the day in the Platonic Academy and the Aristotelian Peripatos when Zeno the Stoic began teaching.<sup>398</sup> He had, therefore, to contend with these rival views in proclaiming the future death and resurrection of the cosmos. Second, as we have seen throughout my study, Plato and Aristotle restricted their catastrophes to a local scope: waters, wars, fires, and famines are destructive phenomena, but only on a regional level. Here too Zeno et. al. would be swimming upstream by positing a universal catastrophe. Third, just as there is no one *Ur* type of a myth, there is no one ideal version of the Stoic conflagration theory. We have instead fragments here and there representing various persons' views. I will present a few basic elements.

The Stoics privileged fire as an element, calling it "the element par excellence" and "the element of all things."<sup>399</sup> In keeping with the Greek concept of nature as "growth," fire is further posited as the source of both life and death of the cosmos: "at certain times the whole universe will be converted into fire; next, it is again made into an ordered universe. The primal fire is so to speak a kind of seed containing the *logoi* of all thing

---

<sup>398</sup> See Horst, 273; Mansfeld 1979, 138.

<sup>399</sup> SVF II 413.

that have become, do become, and will become.”<sup>400</sup> Fire will devour the material universe when it runs out of fuel from the earth (the celestial fire depends on terrestrial moisture for food).<sup>401</sup> The conflagration is a state of pure fire, out of which forms a new world,<sup>402</sup> exactly like the old one: “again there will be Socrates and Plato and each one of mankind with the same friends and fellow citizens. They will suffer the same things, and they will encounter the same things, and put their hands to the same things, and every city and village and piece of land return in the same way. The periodic return of everything occurs not once but many times; or rather, the same things return infinitely and without end. The gods who are not subject to destruction, from their knowledge of this single period, know from it everything that is going to be in the next periods. There will be nothing strange in comparison with what occurred previously, but everything will be just the same and no different down to the smallest details.”<sup>403</sup> Recall the context of prevailing views on the indestructibility of the cosmos: Horst suggest that this notion of eternal recurrence may be Zeno’s response.<sup>404</sup> For in this notion Zeno manages to retain an essential indestructibility to the cosmos, somewhat analogous to Plato’s transcendent Forms (e.g., *Phaedo* 78c-d; *Republic* 479a). Jaap Mansfeld further conjectures that Zeno posits this doctrine of eternal recurrence as “the only possible answer to the objection that to destroy (and remake) the world he [god] has made would be contrary to the nature of god.”<sup>405</sup> There is an a priori assumption of divine benevolence. It turns out, then, that the Stoic

---

<sup>400</sup> SVF I 98.

<sup>401</sup> SVF I 121, 504, 510; II 579, 593.

<sup>402</sup> SVF I 102.

<sup>403</sup> SVF II 625.

<sup>404</sup> Horst 1998, 275.

<sup>405</sup> Mansfeld 1979, 169.

eschatology of the world's end by fire may be linked with a positive view of the transcendent, the divine, of Zeus.<sup>406</sup> Consider Horst's remarks: "This is not an event to be feared—on the contrary: it is a wholly positive event—and so the apparent contradiction inherent in the doctrine of the two aspects of the divine fire is solved. The final conflagration is—in a sense—not a destruction, it is an act of god in his benevolent providence. It is a blessing, not an evil, let alone an act of anger or revenge on god's part. In view of what follows [Jewish and Christian notions of cosmic conflagration] it should be emphasized here that any element of divine judgement or punishment is completely lacking in this Stoic concept."<sup>407</sup> Rooted in the early Greek concept of nature and a benevolent transcendent realm, the Stoic theory is a non-violent religious eschatology.<sup>408</sup> It may not be true, but it may be worth imagining.

---

<sup>406</sup> "Zeus, having dissolved all matter into himself, becomes one and abolishes all further differences" (SVF II 1181). "Zeus, the only among the gods to be indestructible, reitres into Providence" (SVF II 1064).

<sup>407</sup> Horst 1998, 277.

<sup>408</sup> Again, when I say "religion" I invoke Lincoln's analysis (2012).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *Abbreviated Entries*

- BNP* H. Cancik et. al., eds. *Brill's New Pauly*. Leiden, 1996-present (accessed online).
- DK* Diels, H. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Edited by W. Kranz. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. 3 vols. Berlin: Weidmann, 1951.
- EDDS* Schiffmann, L. and J. VanderKam, eds. *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Oxford, 2000 (accessed online).
- EGM 1, 2* R. L. Fowler. *Early Greek Mythography* 2 Vols. Oxford 2000, 2013.
- HSCPh* *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
- KRS* Kirk, G. S., J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- LSJ* Liddell, H. G., and R. Scott, eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Revised by H. S. Jones and R. McKenzie. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.
- OCD* S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, eds. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Oxford 2005 (accessed online).
- PCPhS* *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*
- SVF* von Arnim, H. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. 4 vols. Leipzig, 1903-1924.
- TAPA* *Transactions of the American Philological Association*
- ZPE* *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

### ***Individual Entries***

- Afanasieva, V. 1996. "Der irdische Lärm des Menschen (noch-mals zum Atramhasis-Epos)." *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 86: 89-96.
- Albinus, L. 2000. *The House of Hades: Studies in Ancient Greek Eschatology*. Aarhus Publishing House.
- Alexander, P. S. 2003. "The Evil Empire: The Qumran Eschatological War Cycle and the Origins of Jewish Opposition to Rome." In S. M. Paul et. al., eds. *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls, in Honor of Emanuel Tov*. Brill.
- Arrighetti, G., ed. 1998. *Esiodo Opere*. Turin.
- Auffarth, C. 2006. "Religious Knowledge" under main heading "Religion." In *BNP*.
- Aune, D. E. 2008. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity*. Baker Publishing Group.
- Ax, W. 2001. "Dikaiarchs Bios Hellados und Varros De vita populi Romani." In Fortenbaugh et. al.
- Bartlett, R. C. 2006. "An Introduction to Hesiod's *Works and Days*." *The Review of Politics* 68: 177-205.
- Baumann, G. 1996. *Contesting Culture: Discourses of Identity in Multi-ethnic London*. Cambridge University Press.
- Beckman, G. 2008. Review of Finkelberg 2005. *The Classical Journal* 104.2: 175-77.
- Benardete, S. 1984. *The Being of the Beautiful: Plato's Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman*. Chicago University Press.
- , 2000. "The First Crisis in First Philosophy." In *The Argument of the Action*. Chicago University Press.
- Blaise, F. 1992. "L'épisode de Typhée dans la Théogonie d'Hésiode (v. 820-885): la stabilisation du monde." In *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 105: 349-370.
- Bremmer, J. 2006. "The Rise of the Hero Cult and the New Simonides." *ZPE* 158: 15-26.
- , 2008. *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible, and the Ancient Near East*. Brill.



- Bremmer, J. N. and A. Erskine, eds. 2010. *The Gods of Ancient Greece: Identities and Transformations*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Breytenbach, C. 2011. "‘For in Hope We Were Saved’: Discerning Time in Paul’s Letter to the Romans." In Watt.
- Broadie, S. 2012. *Nature and Divinity in Plato’s Timaeus*. Cambridge University Press.
- Burkert, W. 1972. *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*. tr. E. Minar (1<sup>st</sup> German edition, 1962). Harvard University Press.
- , 1985. *Greek Religion*. Translated by J. Raffan. Harvard University Press.
- , 1992. *The Orientalizing Revolution*. Harvard University Press.
- , 2004. *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis*. Harvard University Press.
- Cancik, H. 1998. "The End of the World, of History, and of the Individual in Greek and Roman Antiquity." In Collins 1998b.
- Chen, J. 2013. *The Primeval Flood Catastrophe*. Oxford University Press.
- Clay, D. 2007. "Plato Philomythos." In R. D. Woodard, ed.
- Clay, J. S. 1999. "The Whip and Will of Zeus." *Literary Imagination* 1: 40-60.
- , 2003. *Hesiod’s Cosmos*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, R. and J. Middleton, eds. 1970. *From Tribe to Nation in Africa*. Scranton, Pa.
- Cohn, N. 1993. *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come*. Yale University Press.
- Collins, A. Y. 2011. "Apocalypse Now: The State of Apocalyptic Studies Near the End of the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century." In *Harvard Theological Review* 104.4: 447-57.
- Collins, J. J., ed. 1979. *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*. *Semeia* 14.
- , 1992. "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism: Early Jewish Apocalypticism." In Freedman.
- , 1997. *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Routledge.

- , 1998a. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
- , ed. 1998b. *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. Vol. 1. Continuum.
- , 2000. "Eschatology." *EDDS*.
- Connelly, J. B. 2014. *The Parthenon Enigma*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Connor, W. R. 1984. *Thucydides*. Princeton University Press.
- Craig, W. L. 2008. "Time, Eternity, and Eschatology." In Walls.
- D'Alessio, G. B. 2005. "Ordered from the *Catalogue*: Pindar, Bacchylides, and Hesiodic Genealogical Poetry." In R. Hunter, ed.
- Daley, B. E. 2010. *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology*. Baker Academic.
- Dalley, S., ed. and trans. 1989. *Myths from Mesopotamia*. Oxford University Press.
- Darshan, G. 2013. "The Biblical Account of the Post-Diluvian Generation (Gen. 9:20-10:32) in the Light of the Greek Genealogical Literature." *Vetus Testamentum* 63: 515-535.
- Davies, M. 1989. *The Greek Epic Cycle*. Bristol Classical Press.
- Davies, P. 2000. "War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness." *EDDS*.
- de Boer, M. C. 1998. "Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology." In Collins 1998b.
- Deger-Jalkotzy, S. and I. S. Lemos, eds. 2006. *Ancient Greece: From the Mycenaean Palaces to the Age of Homer*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Doak, B. 2012. *The Last of the Rephaim: Conquest and Cataclysm in the Heroic Ages of Ancient Israel*. Cambridge, MA.
- Duhaime, J. 2004. *The War Texts: 1QM and Related Manuscripts*. T&T Clark.
- Dundes, A., ed. 1998. *The Flood Myth*. University of California Press.
- Eshel, H. 2001. "The Kittim in the War Scroll and in the Pesharim." In D. Goodblatt et al., eds. *Historical Perspectives: From the Hasmoneans to Bar Kochba in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Brill.

- Fenno, J. 2005. "A Great Wave against the Stream: Water Imagery in Iliadic Battle Scenes." *American Journal of Philology* 126.4: 475-504.
- Finkelberg, M. 2004. "The End of the Heroic Age in Homer, Hesiod, and the Cycle." *Ordis Prima* 3: 11-24.
- , 2005. *Greeks and Pre-Greeks: Aegean Prehistory and Greek Heroic Tradition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Flores, S. 2013. *The Roles of Solon in Plato's Dialogues*. Dissertation. The Ohio State University.
- Fontenrose, J. 1959. *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and its Origins*. University of California Press.
- , 1974. "Work, Justice, and Hesiod's Five Ages." In *Classical Philology* 69.1: 1-16.
- Fortenbaugh, W. W. and E. Schütrumpf, eds. 2001. *Dicaearchus of Messana: Text, Translation, and Discussion*. Transaction Publishers.
- Fowler, R. 1996. "Herodotos and His Contemporaries." *Journal for Hellenic Studies* 116: 62-87.
- , 1998. "Genealogical Thinking, Hesiod's *Catalogue*, and the Creation of the Hellenes." *PCPhS* 44: 1-19.
- , 2010. "Gods in Early Greek Historiography." In J. N. Bremmer and A. Erskine, eds.
- Freedman, D. N. et. al., eds. 1992. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Doubleday.
- Frey, J. 2011. "New Testament Eschatology—an Introduction: Classical Issues, Disputed Themes, and Current Perspectives." In Watt, ed.
- Furley, W. 2006. "Thucydides and religion." In A. Rengakos and A. Tsakmakis, eds.
- Gerber, D. 2002. *A Commentary on Pindar Olympian Nine*. Stuttgart.
- Gerson, L. P. 2006. "General Introduction." In C. D. C. Reeve and P. L. Miller, eds. *Introductory Readings in Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Hackett.
- Gomel, E. 2010. "Everyday Apocalypse: J. G. Ballard and the Ethics and Aesthetics of the End of Time." *Partial Answers* 8.1: 185-208.

- Gostoli, A. 1999. "La critica dei miti tradizionali alla corte di Ierone di Siracusa: Senofane e Pindaro." *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 62.2: 15-24.
- Gowan, D. E. 2000. *Eschatology in the Old Testament*. T&T Clark.
- Grabbe, L. 2000. "Warfare." *EDDS*.
- Green, A. R. W. 2003. *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*. Eisenbrauns.
- Griffith, M., ed. 1983. *Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hahn, D. 1979. *The Origins of Stoic Cosmology*. The Ohio State University Press.
- Hall, E. 1989. *Inventing the Barbarian*. Oxford University Press.
- Hall, J. 1997. *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*. Cambridge University Press.
- , 2002. *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture*. Chicago University Press.
- , 2007. "Politics and Greek Myth." In R. Woodard, ed.
- Hanson, P. D. 1975. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*. Fortress Press.
- , 1992. "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism: Introductory Overview." In Freedman.
- Heiden, B. 2008. *Homer's Cosmic Fabrication*. Oxford University Press.
- Heinze, T. 1996. "Cadmus." *BNP*.
- Hellholm, D., ed. 1983. *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*. J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Hendel, R. 1987. "Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106.1: 13-26.
- Hornblower, S. 1992. "The religious dimension of the Peloponnesian War, or, what Thucydides does not tell us." *HSCPh* 94: 169-97.
- , 2004. *Thucydides and Pindar: Historical Narrative and the World of Epinikian Poetry*. Oxford.
- Horst, P. W. van der. 1998. "The Elements Will Be Dissolved With Fire: The Idea of Cosmic Conflagration in Hellenism, Ancient Judaism, and Early Christianity." In *Hellenism, Judaism, Christianity: Essays on Their Interaction*. Peeters.

- Huffman, C. A. 1993. *Philolaus of Croton: Pythagorean and Presocratic*. Cambridge University Press.
- , 2010. "Pythagoreanism." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. E. N. Zalta, ed. URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/>>. (accessed May 2014).
- Hultgård, A. 1998. "Persian Apocalypticism." In Collins 1998b.
- Hunter, R., ed. 2005. *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women: Constructions and Reconstructions*. Cambridge.
- Johnston, S. I. 2004. "Death, the Afterlife, and Other Last Things: Greece." In *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*. Edited by S. I. Johnston. Harvard University Press.
- Jones, C. P. 1999. *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World*. Harvard University Press.
- Joseph, S. J. 2013. "Why Do You Call Me 'Master' ...?: Q 6:46, the Inaugural Sermon, and the Demands of Discipleship." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132.4: 955-972.
- Kahn, C. 1960. *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*. Columbia University Press.
- , 1979. *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*. Cambridge.
- , 2009. "The Myth of Plato's Statesman." In C. Partenie, ed.
- Käppel, L. 1996. "Themis." *BNP*.
- Kearns, E. 1996. "Erichthonius." *BNP*.
- , 2005. "autochthons." *OCD*.
- Kern, S. 2003. *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Harvard University Press.
- Kirk, G. S. 1962. *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*. Cambridge University Press.
- , 1985. *The Iliad: A Commentary, Books 1-4*. Cambridge University Press.
- Knipe, D. M. 2008. "Hindu Eschatology." In Walls.
- Koenen, L. 1994. "Greece, the Near East, and Egypt: Cyclic Destruction in Hesiod and the Catalogue of Women." *TAPA* 124: 1-34.

- Lehoux, D. 2007. *Astronomy, Weather, and Calendars in the Ancient World*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lincoln, B. 1997. *Theorizing Myth*. Chicago University Press.
- , 2003. *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*. Chicago University Press.
- Long, A. A. 2006. "The Stoics on World-Conflagration and Everlasting Recurrence." In *From Epictetus to Epicurus: Studies in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy*. Oxford: 256-82.
- López-Ruiz, C. 2010. *When the Gods Were Born: Greek Cosmogonies and the Near East*. Harvard University Press.
- Malkin, I. 1998. *The Returns of Odysseus: Colonization and Ethnicity*. Berkeley.
- , ed. 2001. *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*. Harvard University Press.
- Mansfeld, J. 1979. "Providence and the Destruction of the Universe in Early Stoic Thought." In *Studies in Hellenistic Religions*. Edited by M. J. Vermaseren. Etudes preliminaries aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain 78. Brill: 129-88.
- Martinez, F. G. and G. P. Luttikhuisen, eds. 1998. *Interpretations of the Flood*. Brill.
- McInerney, J. 1999. *The Fold of Parnassos: Land and Ethnicity in Ancient Phocis*. Austin.
- McNeal, R. A. 1985. "How did Pelasgians become Hellenes? Herodotus I. 56-58." *ICS* 10: 11-21.
- Montanari, F. et. al., eds. 2009. *Brill's Companion to Hesiod*. Brill.
- Morgan, K. 2000. *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato*. Cambridge University Press.
- Morris, M. A. 2012. *Concise Dictionary of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Naddaf, G. 2005. *The Greek Concept of Nature*. State University of New York Press.
- Nattier, J. 2008. "Buddhist Eschatology." In *Walls*.

- Nightingale, A. 1995. *Genres in Dialogue*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ormand, K. 2014. *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women and Archaic Greece*. Cambridge University Press.
- Parker, R. C. T. 2005. "Heraclidae." In *OCD*.
- Partenie, C., ed. 2009. *Plato's Myths*. Cambridge University Press.
- Partridge, C. 2008. "The End is Nigh: Failed Prophecy, Apocalypticism, and the Rationalization of Violence in New Religious Eschatologies." In *Walls*.
- Patterson, L. E. 2010. *Kinship Myth in Ancient Greece*. Austin.
- Pettinato, G. 2005. "Atrahasis." In L. Jones et. al., eds. *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Macmillan Reference USA.
- Podany, A. 2010. *Brotherhood of Kings: How International Relations Shaped the Near East*. Oxford University Press.
- Portier-Young, A. E. 2011. *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism*. Eerdmans.
- Race, W. R., ed. and trans. 1997. *Pindar*. Harvard University Press.
- Raaflaub, K. 2005. "freedom in the ancient world." In *OCD*.
- Rengakos, A. and A. Tsakmakis, eds. 2006. *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*. Brill.
- Richardson, B., ed. 2002. *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure, and Frames*. The Ohio State University Press.
- Rowe, C. J. 1995. *Plato: Statesman*. Aris & Phillips.
- Rowley, H. H. 1963. *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Lutterworth Press.
- Rusten, J., ed. 2011. *The Birth of Comedy: Texts, Documents, and Art from Athenian Comic Competitions, 486-280*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Saïd, E. W. 1979. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books.
- Saunders, T. J. 2001. "Dicaearchus' Historical Anthropology." In Fortenbaugh and Schütrumpf.

- Schmidt, J.-U. 1988. "Die Aufrichtung des Zeusherrschaft als Modell—Überlegungen zur Theogonie des Hesiod." In *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Alterumswissenschaft* 14: 39-68.
- Schrag, C. O. 1969. *Experience and Being: Prolegomena to a Future Ontology*. Northwestern University Press.
- Scodel, R. 1980. "The Achaean Wall and the Myth of Destruction." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 86: 33-50.
- Smith, J. 1990. *Drudgery Divine*. Chicago University Press.
- Sonnabend, H. 1999. *Naturkatastrophen in der Antike*. Stuttgart.
- Stinton, T. C. W. 1976. "Si credere dignum est: Some Expressions of Disbelief in Euripides and Others." *PCPhS* 202: 60-89.
- Tanner, K. 1997. *Theories of Culture*. Fortress Press.
- Van Noorden, H. 2010. "'Hesiod's races and your own': Socrates' 'Hesiodic' project." In G. R. Boys-Stones and J. H. Haubold, eds. *Plato & Hesiod*. Oxford.
- Van Wees, H. 2006. "From Kings to Demigods: Epic Heroes and Social Change c. 750-600 BC." In S. Deger-Jalkotzy and I. S. Lemos, eds.
- Verlinsky, A. 2006. "The Flood in Aristotle's *Meteorologica*." *Antike Naturwissenschaft und ihre Rezeption* 16: 51-68.
- , 2008. "The Cosmic Cycle in the *Statesman* Myth. I." *Hyperboreus* 14: 57-86.
- Vermes, G. 2003. "Eschatological World View in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the New Testament." In S. M. Paul et. al., eds. *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov*. Brill.
- , ed. and trans. 2011. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. Penguin.
- Vernant, J.-P. 1983. "Hesiod's Myth of the Five Races: an essay in structural analysis." In *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks*. Routledge.
- Vidal-Naquet, P. 1986. "Athens and Atlantis." In *The Black Hunter*, trans. A. Szegedy-Maszak. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- von Rad, G. 1965. *Theologie des Alten Testaments*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Kaiser.



- Watkins, C., ed. 2000. *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Walls, J., ed. 2008. *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*. Oxford University Press.
- Watt, J. G. van der, ed. 2011. *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*. Mohr Siebeck.
- Weitzman, S. 2009. "Warring Against Terror: The *War Scroll* and the Mobilization of Emotion." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 40: 213-241.
- West, M. L. 1966. *Hesiod: Theogony*. Oxford University Press.
- , 1978. *Hesiod: Works and Days*. Oxford University Press.
- , 1985. *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women*. Oxford University Press.
- , 1997. *The East Face of Helicon*. Oxford University Press.
- Woodard, R. D. 2007. "Hesiod and Greek Myth." In R. Woodard, ed. -----, ed. 2007. *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wyatt, N. 2001. *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East*. Sheffield Academic Press.
- Yadin, Y. 1962. *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*. Oxford University Press.
- Yarbro Collins, A. 1984. *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Zuckert, C. 2009. *Plato's Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues*. University of Chicago Press.