



CHAPTER

1

MYTHS  
of  
CREATION

There were many myths about the creation among the Greeks and Romans, and many parallels to them may be found in other mythologies, such as Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, and Hebraic. Homer (ca. 800 B.C.)<sup>1</sup> has Oceanus and Tethys responsible for the origin of the gods (*Iliad* 14. 201) and reflects a primitive belief in the geographical nature of the universe as a flat disc with hills, touched at its rim by the vast dome of the heavens. The deity Oceanus is the stream of ocean that encircles the earth. But Homer does not by any means provide a complete account of genesis. Hesiod (ca. 700), as far as we can tell, was the first to give literary expression to a systematic explanation of how the gods, the universe, and mankind came into being. At any rate his is the earliest account that has survived, and it may be considered the classic Greek version in many respects; the genealogical scheme is presented in his *Theogony*, while his *Works and Days* adds significant details.

Hesiod invokes the Muse in the manner of epic, but his text is steeped in a religious aura of divinely inspired revelation (*Theog-*

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1. All dates given henceforth will be B.C. unless otherwise indicated.

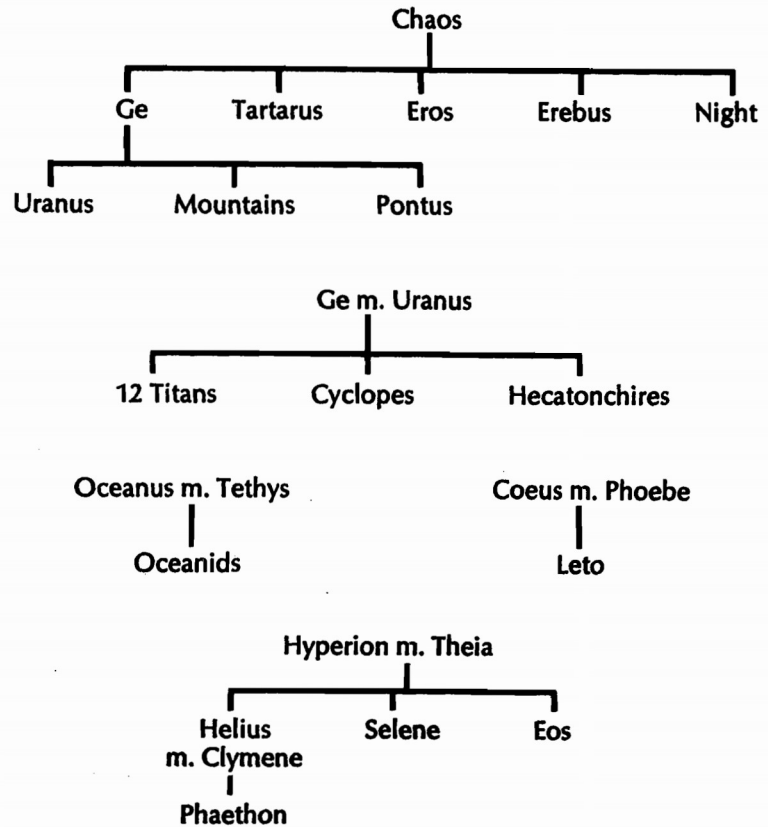


Figure 1. Descendants of Chaos.

ony 108 ff.)<sup>2</sup>: “Tell me how first gods, earth, rivers, the boundless sea . . . the shining stars, and the wide heavens above came into being.” His answer is that first of all Chaos came into being. The Greek word *Chaos* means a “yawning.” For Hesiod, then, Chaos is a void. How close we are in spirit to the investigations of the early pre-Socratic philosophers who sought a primal world substance is a difficult question. Thales (ca. 540) seems to provide a startling break with mythological and theological concepts when he claims water to be the source of everything, with shattering implications for both science and philosophy. Hesiod is not so revolutionary. From Chaos, Hesiod continues, came Gaea, or Ge (Earth), Tartarus (a dim place in the depths of the ground), Eros (Love), Erebus (the gloom of Tartarus), and dark Night.

Love naturally appears early, and quite typically is a potent

2. Hesiod tells how the Muses appeared to him and gave him the authority of divine inspiration to reveal the truth of what was and what is to be. *Theogony* 22–35.

force in tales of creation and more especially procreation. Hesiod characterizes Eros by one of his many descriptive touches, which strive to lift his didacticism to the realm of poetry (*Theogony* 120–23): “most fair among the immortal gods, who loosens the limbs and overcomes judgment and sagacious counsel in the breast of gods and men.”

Another myth of creation is found in *The Birds*, a comedy by the fifth-century playwright Aristophanes. For all its mock heroism and burlesque of religious philosophical speculation and vocabulary, this account reflects earlier theory and illustrates both the multiplicity of versions and the primacy of Eros. A chorus of birds proves that the birds are much the oldest of all the gods by the following tale (683 ff.):

Chaos, Night, black Erebus, and broad Tartarus were first. But Ge, Aer [the lower atmosphere], and Uranus [Sky] did not exist. In the vast hollows of Erebus first of all black-winged Night, alone, brought forth an egg, from which Eros, the desirable, burst forth like a swift whirlwind, his back glistening with golden wings. He mingled in broad Tartarus with Chaos, winged and dark as night, and hatched our race of birds and first led it to light. There was no race of immortals before Eros caused all things to mingle. From the mingling of couples, Uranus, Oceanus, Ge, and the immortal race of all the blessed gods came into being.

The Eros responsible for this fury of procreation may very well be the same Eros who is in the later tradition appropriately called Phanes (the one who first shone forth or gave light to creation) and Protogonus (first-born). If so, we have in Aristophanes a parody of a myth that was the basis of a religion ascribed to Orpheus in which the world-egg was a dominant symbol. Orphism has as its fundamental features a dogma, ritual, and a belief in purification with an afterlife of reward and punishment. Orpheus and Orphism will be discussed in their proper place and with them other religions similar in nature, designated generically as mystery religions.<sup>3</sup> The link between myth and profound religious thought and experience in the ancient world is a continuing and fascinating theme.

Ovid, a Roman poet of the Augustan Age, and thus writing some seven hundred years after Hesiod, provides another classic

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3. For the Orphic myth of creation in particular, see pp. 290–91.

account of genesis, different in important respects from that of Hesiod. Ovid is eclectic in his sources. Not only Hesiod but also the speculations of later Greek and Roman thought are definite influences, in particular those of Empedocles (a fifth-century philosopher) with his theory of four basic elements (earth, air, fire, and water) as the primary materials of the universe. Ovid's Chaos (*Metamorphoses* 1. 1–75) is not a gaping void but rather a crude and unformed mass of elements in strife from which a god (not named) or some higher nature formed the order of the universe.<sup>4</sup> Ovid's poem *Metamorphoses*, which concentrates upon stories that involve transformations of various sorts, could very well provide a basic text for a survey of mythology. We shall on occasion reproduce Ovid's versions, since it is often his poetic, sensitive, and sophisticated treatment that has dominated subsequent tradition. But we must remember that Ovid is Roman and late, and that his mythology is far removed in spirit and belief from that of earlier conceptions. Mythology for him is little more than poetic fodder, however attractive the end product may be. The poetic and the real world of Hesiod and Ovid are poles apart.

But let us return to Hesiod (*Theogony* 123–38). Night and Erebus (both sprung from Chaos) united and produced Aether (the bright upper atmosphere) and Day. Ge (also sprung from Chaos) first of all brought forth Uranus (Heaven or Sky) "equal to herself so that he might surround and cover her completely and be a secure home for the blessed gods forever." Ge thus produced Uranus alone, without Love the desirable, and also brought forth Mountains and Pontus (the sea). But then she lay with Uranus and bore the Titans.

The personification and deification of sky and earth as Uranus and Ge and their physical union represent basic recurring themes in mythology. Uranus is the male principle, a god of the sky; Ge, the female goddess of fertility and the earth. Worship of them may be traced back to very early times; sky and rain, earth and fertility are fundamental concerns and sources of wonder to primitive agricultural peoples. The rain of Uranus might, for example, be imagined as his seed that fertilizes the hungry earth and makes her conceive. Thus develops the concept of a sacred marriage (the Greek phrase *hieros gamos* is the technical term), and the sky-god and the earth-goddess (for example, Uranus and Ge, Cronus and Rhea, and Zeus and Hera) appear again and again under various names and guises to enact this holy rite.

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4. The concept of god creating something out of nothing is not found in the Greek and Roman tradition.

The worship of the female earth divinity has many important facets, and she may assume the dominant role in the partnership with her male consort. But whatever her name and however varied her worship, she is significant in all periods, either maintaining her own identity or lurking behind, influencing, and coloring more complex and sophisticated concepts of female deity. Ge, Themis, Cybele, Rhea, Hera, Demeter, and Aphrodite are all, either wholly or in part, divinities of fertility. Indeed some scholars are ready to find Ge's presence in every goddess and are deeply suspicious of even the most circumspect virgin deities. Certainly the emotional, philosophical, religious, and intellectual range of the worship of the mother-goddess is vast. It may run the gamut from frenzied orgiastic celebrations with the castration of her devoted priests to a sublime belief in spiritual communion and personal redemption; from a blatant emphasis upon the sexual attributes and potency of the female to an idealized vision of love, motherhood, and virgin birth.<sup>5</sup>

The Titans, offspring of Uranus and Ge, are twelve in number: Oceanus, Coeus, Crius, Hyperion, Iapetus, Theia, Rhea, Themis, Mnemosyne, Phoebe, Tethys, and the last-born, Cronus, "wily and most terrible, who hated his lusty father" (*Theogony* 137–38). They are for the most part deifications of various aspects of nature, important for their progeny, although a few assume some significance in themselves. In the genealogical labyrinth of mythology, all lineage may be traced back to the Titans and to the other powers originating from Chaos. From these beginnings Hesiod proceeds to create a universe both real and imagined, physical and spiritual, peopled with gods, demigods, deified or personified abstractions, animals, monsters, and men; we cannot list them all here, but it is from his system that we shall select the most important figures. At the moment it is expedient only to define the nature of some of the early deities and to describe their more influential offspring. Several of the Titans are best considered in pairs, since the six brothers must mate with their six sisters, at least in the beginning.

Oceanus and his mate, Tethys, produced numerous children, the Oceanids, three thousand daughters and the same number of sons, spirits of rivers, waters, and springs, many with names and some with mythological personalities. Hesiod provides an impressive list, but he admits (*Theogony* 369–70) that it is difficult for a

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5. Cf. Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother, An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Manheim (2d ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

mortal to name them all, although people know those belonging to their own area.<sup>6</sup>

The Titan Hyperion is a god of the sun, more important than his sister and mate, Theia. They are the parents of Helios, Selene, and Eos. Helios, like his father, is a sun-god. Duplication of divinities is common in the early scheme of things; they may exist side by side, or their names and personalities may be confused. Very often the younger generation will dominate the older and usurp its power.

The conventional picture of the sun-god is in harmony with the Homeric conception of geography described before. The sun-god dwells in the East, crosses the dome of the sky with his team of horses, descends into the stream of Oceanus in the West and sails back to the East, chariot and all. Mimnermus, a Greek poet of the seventh century, provides a description (fr. 10):

Helios has as his lot toil day after day and there is never any rest either for him or his horses, when rosy-fingered dawn (Eos) leaving the stream of Ocean makes her way up into the sky. But a beautiful hollow cup, winged and of precious gold, fashioned by the hands of Hephaestus, bears him, sleeping deeply, from the land of the Hesperides to the country of the Ethiopians, where he makes his swift chariot and horses stand, until rising dawn comes. Then the son of Hyperion mounts his chariot.

A well-known story concerns Phaethon, the son of Helios by one of his mistresses, Clymene. According to Ovid's account (*Metamorphoses* 1. 747-79, 2. 1-366), Phaethon was challenged by the accusation that the sun was not his real father at all. His mother, Clymene, however, swore to him that he was truly the child of Helios and told him that he should, if he so desired, ask his father, the god himself. Ovid describes in glowing terms the magnificent palace of the sun, with its towering columns, gleaming with gold and polished ivory, splendid in both material and workmanship. Phaethon, awed by the grandeur of his surroundings, is prevented from coming too close to the god because of his radiance; Helios, however, confirms Clymene's account of Phaethon's parentage, lays aside the rays that shine around his head, and orders his son to approach. He embraces him and promises on an oath sworn by the

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6. Included are many important rivers such as the Nile, Alpheus, and Scamander, to mention only three in this world, and the Styx, an imaginary one in the realm of Hades. The patronymic Oceanid regularly refers to a daughter of Oceanus and not a son.

river Styx that the boy may have any gift that he likes so that he may dispel his doubts once and for all. Phaethon quickly and decisively asks that he be allowed to drive his father's chariot for one day. The sun tries in vain to dissuade him, but Phaethon in his eagerness pays no attention. Helios must abide by his dread oath and reluctantly leads the youth to his chariot, fashioned exquisitely by Vulcan,<sup>7</sup> of gold, silver, and jewels that reflect the brilliant light of the god. The chariot is yoked; Helios anoints his son's face as protection against the flames, places the rays on his head, and with heavy heart advises him on his course and the management of the horses and tries for the last time to dissuade him.

Phaethon, young and inexperienced, is unable to control the four winged horses who speed from their usual path. The chariot races to the heights of heaven, creating havoc by the intensity of the heat, then hurtles down to earth. Ovid delights in his description of the destruction and transformations that result. (Two examples from many must suffice. On earth, because of the heat at this time, the Ethiopians acquired their dark skins and Libya became a desert.) Earth herself is ablaze and unable to endure her fiery anguish any longer. Jupiter in answer to her prayer hurls his thunder and lightning and shatters the car, dashing Phaethon to his death. The river Eridanus receives and bathes him, and nymphs bury him with the following inscription upon his tomb: "Here is buried Phaethon, charioteer of his father's car; he could not control it, yet he died after daring great deeds." His sisters (daughters of the sun) in their mourning for Phaethon are turned into trees, from whose bark tears flow, which are hardened into amber by the sun and dropped into the river. Away in Liguria his cousin, Cycnus, mourns for him, and he, too, changes and becomes a swan.

Selene, daughter of Hyperion and Theia, is a goddess of the moon. Like her brother Helios, she drives a chariot, although hers usually has only two horses. Only one famous myth is linked with Selene, and that concerns her love for the handsome youth Endymion, who is usually depicted as a shepherd. On a still night Selene saw Endymion asleep in a cave on Mount Latmus (in Caria). Night after night, she lay down beside him as he slept. There are many variants to this story, but in all the outcome is that Zeus granted Endymion perpetual sleep with perpetual youth. This may be represented as a punishment (although Endymion is given some choice) because of Selene's continual absence from her duties in the heavens, or it may be the fulfillment of Selene's own wishes for her beloved.

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7. When a Roman version of a myth is recounted, the Roman names of the original text will be used. Vulcan is Hephaestus, Jupiter is Zeus, etc.

Many stories about the god of the sun, whether he be called Hyperion, Helius, or merely the Titan, were transferred to the great god Apollo, who, although in all probability not originally a sun-god, was considered as such in the classical period. Thus Phaethon may be the son of Apollo. The confusion is caused for several reasons. The sun-god and Apollo share the same epithet, Phoebus, which means "bright." Apollo's twin sister, Artemis, became associated with the moon, although originally she probably was not a moon-goddess. Thus Selene and Artemis merge in identity, just as do Hyperion, Helius, and Apollo. Artemis, like Selene, as a moon-goddess is associated with magic, since the link between magic and the worship of the moon is close.<sup>8</sup> Apollo and Artemis themselves have a close link with the Titans. The Titan Coeus mates with his sister Phoebe, and their daughter Leto bore Artemis and Apollo to Zeus. Coeus and Phoebe are little more than names to us, but Phoebe is the feminine form of Phoebus, and she herself may very well be another moon-goddess. Phoebe became an epithet of Artemis, just as Phoebus is applied to Apollo. Again the identification of Apollo and Artemis with the sun and the moon is evident and confirmed by genealogy.

Eos, the third child of Hyperion and Theia, is goddess of the dawn, and like her sister Selene drives a two-horsed chariot. Her epithets in poetry are appropriate, for instance, rosy-fingered and saffron-robbed. She is an amorous deity. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, caused her to long for young mortals perpetually because she caught her mate Ares in Eos' bed. Orion, Cleitus, and Cephalus were all beloved by Eos, but her most important mate is Tithonus, a handsome youth of the Trojan royal house. Eos carried off Tithonus; their story is simply and effectively told in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5. 218–38):

Eos went to Zeus, the dark-clouded son of Cronus, to ask that Tithonus be immortal and live forever. Zeus nodded his assent and accomplished her wish. Poor goddess, she did not think to ask that her beloved avoid ruinous old age and retain perpetual youth. Indeed as long as he kept his desirable youthful bloom, Tithonus took his pleasure with early-born Eos of the golden throne by the stream of Oceanus at the ends of the earth. But when the first gray hairs sprouted from his beautiful head and noble chin, Eos avoided his bed. But she kept him in her house and

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8. Hecate, goddess of the moon, ghosts, and black magic, is but another aspect of both Selene and Artemis.



tended him, giving him food, ambrosia, and lovely garments. When hateful old age oppressed him completely and he could not move or raise his limbs, the following plan seemed best to her. She laid him in a room and closed the shining doors. From within his voice flows faintly and he no longer has the strength that he formerly had in his supple limbs.

Later writers add that eventually Tithonus was turned into a grasshopper.

By far the most important Titans are Cronus and Rhea, but before we consider them we must again take up Hesiod's account (*Theogony* 139–210). In addition to the Titans, Uranus and Ge bore Brontes (Thunder), Steropes (Lightning), and Arges (Bright), who were called Cyclopes (Orb-Eyed) because they each had only one eye in the middle of their forehead. They in their might and skill forged the thunder and lightning,<sup>9</sup> Uranus and Ge also bore Cottus, Briareus, and Gyes, who were even more overbearing and monstrous than the Cyclopes; they each had a hundred arms and hands and fifty heads and were named the Hecatonchires (hundred-handed or -armed). Hesiod says that these were the most terrible children of Uranus and Ge, and from the beginning their own father hated them. His account is worth reproducing in full:

As each of his children was born, Uranus hid them all in the depths of Ge and did not allow them to emerge into the light. And he delighted in his wickedness. But huge Earth in her distress groaned within and devised a crafty and evil scheme. At once she created gray adamant and fashioned a great sickle and confided in her dear children. Sorrowing in her heart she urged them as follows: "My children born of a presumptuous father, if you are willing to obey, we shall punish his evil insolence. For he was the first to devise shameful actions." Thus she spoke. Fear seized them all and not one answered. But great and wily Cronus took courage and spoke to his dear mother: "I shall undertake and accomplish the deed, since I do not care about our abominable father. For he was the first to devise shameful actions." Thus he spoke. And huge Earth rejoiced greatly in her heart. She hid him in an ambush and placed in his hands the sickle with jagged teeth and revealed the whole plot to him. Great Uranus came lead-

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9. These Cyclopes are distinct from the Cyclops Polyphemus and his fellows.

ing on night and desirous of love lay on Ge, spreading himself over her completely. And his son from his ambush reached out with his left hand and in his right he seized hold of the huge sickle with jagged teeth and swiftly cut off the genitals of his own dear father and threw them so that they fell behind him. And they did not fall from his hand in vain. Earth received all the bloody drops that fell and in the course of the seasons bore the strong Erinyes and the mighty giants (shining in their armor and carrying long spears in their hands) and nymphs of ash trees (called Meliae on the wide earth). And when first he had cut off the genitals with the adamant and cast them from the land on the swelling sea, they were carried for a long time on the deep. And white foam arose about from the immortal flesh and in it a maiden grew. First she was brought to holy Cythera, and then from there she came to sea-girt Cyprus. And she emerged a dread and beautiful goddess and grass rose under her slender feet. Gods and men call her Aphrodite, and the foam-born goddess because she grew amid the foam, and Cytherea of the beautiful crown because she came to Cythera, and Cyprogenes because she arose in Cyprus washed by the waves. She is called too Philommedes (genital-loving) because she arose from the genitals,<sup>10</sup> Eros attended her and beautiful desire followed her when she was born and when she first went into the company of the gods. From the beginning she has this honor, and among men and the immortal gods she wins as her due the whispers of girls, smiles, deceits, sweet pleasure, and the gentle delicacy of love.

The stark power of this passage is felt even in translation. Its brutal and transparent illustration of basic motives and forces in man's nature provides fertile material for modern psychology: the youngest son whose devotion to his mother is used by her against the father, the essentially sexual nature of love, the terror of castration. The castration complex of the Freudians is the male's unconscious fear of being deprived of his sexual potency, which springs from his feeling of guilt because of his unrecognized hatred of his father and desire for his mother. Hesiod provides literary documentation for the elemental psychic conscience of mankind.

In this view is it Hesiod's art that gets to the essence of things?

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10. Perhaps an intentional play upon the word *philommeides*, laughter-loving, a standard epithet of Aphrodite.

Or is it that he is close to the primitive expression of the elemental in man's nature? It is a commonplace to say that although elements of the more grotesque myths may be detected in Greek literature, they were humanized and refined by the Greeks and transformed by their genius. Yet it is also true that these primitive elements were retained deliberately and consciously because of the horror, shock, and revelation that they contain. The Greeks did not suppress the horrible and horrifying; they selected from it and used it boldly with profound insight and sensitivity. Thus Hesiod's account may reflect a primitive myth, the ultimate origins of which we can never really know, but his version gives it meaning with an artistry that is far from primitive.<sup>11</sup>

Aphrodite and Eros will be considered more fully in a later chapter, and the Erinyes (spirits of vengeance for blood-guilt) will subsequently play an important role. Now we must return to Hesiod's account of how Cronus and his sister Rhea usurped the powers and the functions of their parents, Uranus and Ge.

Hesiod tells of the union of Cronus and Rhea and the birth of their important offspring: Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus, and how Cronus devoured all these children, except Zeus. Hesiod relates (*Theogony* 453–506):

Great Cronus swallowed his children as each one came from the womb to the knees of their holy mother, with the intent that no other of the illustrious descendants of Uranus should hold kingly power among the immortals. For he learned from Ge and starry Uranus that it was fated that he be overcome by his own child. And so he kept vigilant watch and lying in wait he swallowed his children. A deep and lasting grief took hold of Rhea and when she was about to bring forth Zeus, father of gods and men, then she entreated her own parents, Ge and starry Uranus, to plan with her how she might bring forth her child in secret and how the avenging fury of her father, Uranus, and of her children whom great Cronus of the crooked counsel swallowed, might exact vengeance. And they readily heard their dear daughter and were persuaded, and they counseled her about all that was destined to happen concerning Cronus and his stout-hearted son. And they sent her to the town of Lyctus in the rich land of Crete when she was about to bring forth the youngest of her

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11. Hesiod's myths of divine succession have many parallels in Phoenician, Babylonian, Hurrian, and Hittite texts.

children, great Zeus. And vast Ge received him from her in wide Crete to nourish and foster. Carrying him from there Ge came first through the swift black night to Dicte. And taking him in her hands she hid him in the deep cave in the depths of the holy earth on thickly wooded Mt. Aegeum.<sup>12</sup> And she wrapped up a great stone in infant's coverings and gave it to the son of Uranus, who at that time was the great ruler and king of the gods. Then he took it in his hands, poor wretch, and rammed it down his belly. He did not know in his heart that there was left behind, in the stone's place, his son unconquered and secure, who was soon to overcome him and drive him from his power and rule among the immortals.

Cronus and Rhea are once again deities of sky and earth, doublets of Uranus and Ge, and like them their union represents the enactment of the universal holy marriage. But in the tradition Cronus and Rhea have a more specific reality than their parents. Cronus appears in art as a majestic and sad deity, sickle in hand. He rules, as we shall see, in a golden age among men, and after he is deposed by Zeus, he retires to some distant realm, sometimes designated as the Islands of the Blessed, one of the Greek conceptions of paradise.

Rhea, too, has a definite mythological personality, although basically she represents another one of the many names and guises of the all-pervading and important mother-goddesses of earth and fertility. She sometimes is equated with Cybele, an Oriental goddess who intrudes upon the classical world; worship of her involved frenzied devotion and elements of mysticism; her attendants played music on drums and cymbals and her myth involves a handsome young lover subordinate to her, named Attis.

It is of great significance that Hesiod places the birth of Zeus on the island of Crete and we can detect in his version some of the basic motives in the creation of myth.<sup>13</sup> Variations and additions occur in later writers who state that after Rhea brought forth Zeus in a cave on Mt. Dicte, he was fed by bees and nursed by nymphs on the milk of a goat named Amalthea. Curetes (the word means "young men") guarded the infant and clashed their spears on their shields so that his cries would not be heard by his father, Cronus. These attendants and the noise they make suggest the frantic devo-

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12. There is trouble in the text concerning Hesiod's identification of the mountain as Dicte or Aegeum.

13. Another version places the birth on the mainland of Greece in Arcadia.

tees of a mother-goddess: Ge, Rhea, or Cybele. The myth is etiological in its explanation of the origin of rites connected with her worship.

This story may also reflect history: the amalgamation of at least two different peoples or cultures in the early period. When the inhabitants of Crete (ca. 3000) began to build their great civilization and empire, the religion that they developed (insofar as we can ascertain) was Mediterranean in character, looking back to earlier Eastern concepts of a mother-goddess. The Northern invaders who entered the peninsula of Greece (ca. 2000) bringing with them an early form of Greek and their own gods (chief of whom was Zeus) built a significant Mycenaean civilization on the mainland, but it was strongly influenced by the older, more sophisticated power of Crete. The myth of the birth of Zeus reads very much like an attempt to link by geography and genealogy the religion and deities of both cultures. Zeus, the Nordic male god of the Indo-Europeans, is born of Rhea, the Oriental goddess of motherhood and fertility.

Two dominant strains in the character of subsequent Greek thought can be understood at least partly in terms of this thesis. W.K.C. Guthrie identifies this dual aspect of the religion of classical Greece in the contrast between the Olympian gods of Homer and the cult of the mother-goddess Demeter at Eleusis. His clear and forceful explanation is worth quoting.

*The Mother-goddess is the embodiment of the fruitful earth, giver of life and fertility to plants, animals and men. Her cult takes certain forms, involving at least the more elementary kinds of mysticism, that is, the belief in the possibility of a union between the worshipper and the object of his worship. Thus the rites may take the form of adoption as her son or of sexual communion. Orgiastic elements appear, as in the passionate, clashing music and frenzied dancing employed by the followers of Rhea or Cybele. . . . What an essentially different atmosphere we are in from that of the religion of the Achaean heroes described by Homer. There we are in clear daylight, in a world where the gods are simply more powerful persons who might fight for or against one, with whom one made bargains or contracts. The Achaean warrior did not seek to be born again from the bosom of Hera. He was indeed the reverse of a mystic by temperament.<sup>14</sup>*

14. W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 31.

We can detect the ramifications of this paradox again and again in many places, but perhaps we feel it most clearly in the mysticism and mathematics that permeate Greek philosophical attitudes: the numbers of Pythagoras and the immortality of the soul in Orphic doctrine; the dichotomy of Platonic thought and Socratic character in the search for clarity and definition through rational argument coupled with the sound of an inner voice, the depths of a trance, and divine revelation in terms of the obscure and profound symbols of religious myth. God is a geometer and a mystic.