CONTENTS

PROMETHEUS

Archetypal Image of Human Existence

I. WHO IS GOETHE'S PROMETHEUS?

Prometheus and Christ

AMONG ALL the gods of Greece, it is Prometheus who stands in the most remarkable relation to mankind. He presents a striking resemblance and a striking contrast to the Christian Saviour. More than any other Greek god, he intercedes for mankind, makes common cause with men. Therein lies the resemblance. But Christ suffered human existence as a man. His whole mission depended on his close bond with mankind. The paradox in his case is not that he, a man, made common cause with mankind. The paradox is the faith of the Christians who believe him to be a god. Prometheus never appears as a man. He is a mythological being and was never anything else; it is not as though a mythology had formed round him later on. His divinity is self-evident. In his case, the paradox begins when he defends the cause of humanity, when he, a god, suffers injustice, torment, and humiliation—the hallmarks of human existence. The paradox is precisely his bond with mankind. Just as the divinity of Christ is an intrinsic part of the Christian faith, so Prometheus' bond with mankind is an intrinsic part of the Greek view of the world.

The only really comparable god might be the Gnostic Anthropos, "Man," or "Primordial Man," though here again there are important differences. However, a study of the Gnostic primordial man would take us into a very different field; we should be leaving mythology for Gnosis.[1] And in the present investigation we mean to confine ourselves

1. See Kerényi, "Mythologie und Gnosis," *EJ 1940/41* (VIII), pp. 157 ff.; in Albae Vigiliae (XIV), 1942.

to the mythological tradition, to disregard our own conceptions of divine redeemers and rebels, formed by Christianity and Gnosis, and set ourselves back into a state of not-yet-knowing.

Such a state of innocence is not to be achieved at one stroke. It is not enough to say: forget all about Goethe's *Prometheus*. Obviously, those who are not acquainted with it will not think of it at all. But many others have experienced Prometheus through it. The question is only: which Prometheus? one who has nothing to do with the Prometheus recorded by ancient poets and modern scholars? A critic of Goethe's works on Prometheus advises us to forget all about Greek mythology in approaching them.[2] That is easily said. But it is not easy to forget either the Greeks or Goethe. Goethe has provided us, in the form of a monologue, with a kind of preface to any serious study of the Prometheus theme.

The 'Prometheus' of Goethe[3]

Cover your heavens, O Zeus,
With cloudy mist
And like a little boy
Cutting the heads off thistles,
Practice your hand
On oak trees and mountain peaks;
But you will have to let
My earth stand
And my hut that you did not build,
And my hearth
For whose fire
You envy me.

2. Emil Staiger, *Goethe, 1749–1786*. His interpretation of the Prometheus poems was published after the appearance of the first version of the present study in Albae Vigiliae (N. S. IV, Zurich, 1946), and is here critically discussed without further references. 3. *Werke* (ed. Beutler), I, 320 f.; tr. R. M.

I know of nothing poorer
Under the sun than you gods.
Wretchedly
You feed your majesty
On imposed sacrifices
And the breath of prayers.
You would waste away
If children and beggars
Were not hopeful fools.

When I was a child,
Hopelessly perplexed,
I turned my confused eye
To the sun, as though it had
An ear to hear my plaint,
A heart like mine,
To take pity on one oppressed.

Who helped me
Against the pride of the Titans?
Who saved me from death
And slavery?
Did you not do it all alone,
O ardent, holy heart?
And young and good,
Cheated, did you not shine
A message of thanksgiving
Upon the sleeper up there?

I honor you? What for?
Did you ever appease the pain
Of the sufferer?
Did you ever quench the tears
Of the fearful?

Was I not forged into a man
By all-powerful time
And eternal fate,
My masters and yours?
Did you suppose
I should hate life,
Flee to the desert
Because not all
My dream flowers bore fruit?

Here I sit, shaping man
After my image,
A race that is like me,
To suffer, to weep,
To rejoice and be glad,
And like myself
To have no regard for you!

The Dramatic Fragment

IN the foregoing poem, Goethe put his very own thoughts, the product of intense experience, into the traditional mythological figure. Did he do so without preparation? or was the dramatic fragment on Prometheus already in existence, and did his work on the "drama" (letter to Kestner, July, 1773[4]) bring forth such fruit? The question has recently been revived and incorrectly answered by a number of prominent Goethe critics.[5] Thus we cannot content ourselves with the impression that with the almost unparalleled violence of these stanzas

4. Ibid., XVIII, 201.
5. This is not the case with Humphry Trevelyan, *Goethe and the Greeks*, p. 62.

Goethe burst the framework of the play which he had already begun. When the dramatic fragment,[6] lost for nearly half a century, reappeared, Goethe stated quite clearly that the "monologue in question" had been intended to open the third act (letter to Zelter, May 11, 1820[7]). Accordingly, when the recovered two acts were published in 1830, he inserted the monologue after them with the stage direction: "Prometheus in his workshop." The passages in which the dramatic fragment complements and wholly fits in with the poem bear witness to the excellence of Goethe's memory and enable us to follow the young *mythológos* in him—for in those days he was far more of a modern *mythológos* than a playwright.

In the monologue Goethe speaks of "my earth":

But you will have to let
My earth stand . . .

Does this "my" mean possession or familiarity, does it suggest a bond with the earth or a sense of belonging to it? Though everything else stands out more clearly in the monologue than in the preceding two acts of the play, it is the dramatic fragment we must consult if we wish to measure the precise weight of this word and clearly discern the cosmogonic situation. The world was to be divided. The gods were willing to leave Olympos to Prometheus and keep only the heavens for themselves: up there on Olympos—this is the suggestion that his brother Epimetheus brings from the gods—

shall you live
And rule the earth.

6. Goethe, *Werke* (ed. Beutler), IV, 185–97; the passages quoted (tr. R. M.) are from pp. 186–90. 7. Ibid., XXI, 392.

But Prometheus declares that he already *has* the earth, not because it is allotted to him like a piece of property but because it belongs to him naturally:

What I have they cannot rob me of,
And as for what they have let them defend it.
Here mine and there thine,
Thus are we separate.

BROTHER: *How much then is yours?*

PROMETHEUS: *The realm occupied by my action.*
Nothing below and nothing above it.
What right over me
Have those stars up there
That they should gape at me?

For the young *mythológos,* Prometheus is "Lord of the Earth"—just as Hades is "Lord of the Underworld"—in a special, mythological sense, on the strength of an initial division, and not because he created it, for he did not. The notion that the "work of each day," of which Prometheus speaks, should be taken in a Biblical sense as the work of Creation, is surely erroneous. And in Goethe's mythologem Prometheus' work of creation is indeed limited exclusively to what he can create on the earth.

Here is my world, my universe.
Here is where I feel myself to be.
Here are all my desires
In bodily form.
My spirit divided a thousandfold
And whole in my beloved children.

In the beginning it was only

His world of clay

and then, by the life-giving power of Fate, it came alive:

Look down, O Zeus,
Upon my world: it lives.

The Lord of the Earth, whose spirit is divided a thousandfold in his creatures, men, does not look upon himself as a god, for he leaves this name to those in heaven, but he knows that he is just as eternal and omnipotent as they, thanks to the power which is inherent in his spirit and which the gods, lords of the powers of nature, do not possess:

Can you gather the broad
Spaces of heaven and earth
Into my hand for me?

—for that the creative artist can do.

Can you divide me
From myself?

—for the poet can do that.

Can you stretch me,
Can you expand me into a world?

For that man as such can do by virtue of his spirit. The gods have the power. Another power is opposed to them: the power of the spirit which knows itself not as itself but as a divinity, namely, as Minerva

(as it was then customary to call Pallas Athene). That is the clear meaning of the dialogue with the goddess:

PROMETHEUS: *Those were thy words.*
Then I was not myself,
And a god spoke
When I thought to speak.
And when I thought a god spoke
I myself spoke.
So was it between thee and me
So fervently one.
Eternal is my love for thee.

But the gods cannot give life or take it away, nor can the Lord of the Earth—or by now we may call him "Man"—do so by the power of his divine spirit. This only Fate can do, as Prometheus learns from the goddess at the end of the first act when, by the life-giving power of Fate, the "source of all life" is revealed. The second act is devoted to life with a fervor that Nietzsche could not have surpassed. This act explains Prometheus' now boundless love of further creation with which the third act begins. We have already entered into the second with the quotation:

Look down, O Zeus,
Upon my world: it lives.

And the speech continues:

I have shaped it in my image,
A race like unto me.
To suffer, to weep, to enjoy and be glad,
And like myself to have no regard for you

—lines that recur in the monologue. Goethe would not have written them down in this way if they had already been present in the finer form already known to us. Here they are still unpolished, in their original state.

Comparison of a further sequence of almost identical lines in the dialogue with Mercury and in the monologue shows not only greater polish in the latter but also a sharper delineation of the childhood mythologem. We learn from the dramatic fragment that Goethe's Prometheus had Zeus for father and a goddess for mother. With this change from the traditional lineage the poet distinguished his hero from the race of the Titans. He also set him in conflict with them, by giving an intimation of dangers to which the boy or youth was exposed. Mercury reproaches him with lack of gratitude toward his parents who protected him.

PROMETHEUS: *From what! From dangers*
That they feared!
Did they protect my heart
From serpents that secretly tormented it!
Did they steel my breast
To defy the Titans?

In all probability the mythologem Goethe had in mind is an incident in the childhood of Zeus' son Herakles, who was saved from the menacing snakes not by his father but by himself. It is left uncertain whether Prometheus had to do with real or with psychic monsters. In the monologue there is a more distinct allusion to another son of Zeus, Dionysos, who was torn to pieces by the Titans or (in the Homeric hymn [8]) delivered into slavery:

8. The seventh (ed. Allen).

Who helped me
Against the pride of the Titans?
Who saved me from death
And slavery?

The fragment continues:

Was I not forged into a man
By all-powerful Time,
My Lord and yours?

Nor is Fate, whose life-giving power Prometheus learns of at the end of the second act, forgotten in the monologue:

Was I not forged into a man
By all-powerful Time
And eternal Fate,
My masters and yours?

Goethe Interprets His Mythologem

IN 1813 or 1814, in the first period of his writing of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*,[9] Goethe undertook, toward the end of Book XV, to explain the Prometheus fragments. It seems unlikely that he had forgotten the dramatic fragments which at that time were lost. The second sentence of his explanation mentions the "protection of parents and relatives," and Mercury also speaks of it in the first lines of the unfinished drama:

And protected thee!

The interpretation begins significantly with the first sentence: "The common fate of man, which all of us have to bear, | must weigh most

9. *Poetry and Truth from My Own Life* (tr. Minna Steele Smith), II, 177 ff.

heavily on those whose intellectual powers expand early and rapidly." [10] I have inserted a dividing line between the two elements which Goethe himself stressed at the outset as the most important for an understanding of his Prometheus mythologem: on the one hand, the common fate of men and, on the other, the more intelligent man who suffers more from it than others.

The youthful Goethe, evoked forty-two years later in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, had experienced both elements—the human lot and the fact that it is almost unendurable for the exceptional man. In retrospect he sees himself "treading the wine-press alone": a figure taken from Isaiah 63:3 [11] which at the same time recalls an occupation of the primordial men in Goethe's Prometheus play of 1807–8, the *Pandora:* [12]

All the vintners coming forth
From the wine-presses, the cliff cellars. . . .

In this primordial situation, which each man experiences for himself, in essential solitude, as though he were God, he had to establish the foundations of an "existence." Goethe utters the word and speaks of what made it possible for him to establish an existence at that time, namely, his productive talent: "I liked in thought to base my whole existence upon it. This conception soon assumed a distinct form, the old mythological image of Prometheus . . . who, apart from the gods, peopled a world from his own workshop." [13]

10. Ibid., II, 177.
11. This was pointed out to me by Professor B. B. Kurzweil, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel.
12. In *Werke* (ed. Beutler), VI, 406–43; the passage that we quote (tr. R. M.) is from p. 441.
13. *Poetry and Truth* (tr. Smith), p. 178.

Goethe's mythologem is not concerned with human existence in general and its founding. Nor with art and its invention or introduction for the purpose of softening human existence: this, too, like the heaviness of the human lot, Goethe had experienced in himself. This was the *other* fact, side by side with the common fate of men, upon which the poet wished to build his own individual existence. And so he thought of Prometheus, a particular sort of being between the gods and the Titans. Indeed, he describes his mythological method in some detail and clearly designates two elements: "The fable of Prometheus came alive in me. I cut the old Titan robe to my own size. . . ." [14] Prometheus is not the artist in general but Goethe as a young man: hence the lyrical character of what sprang from this mythologizing. But mythologizing it remained. The two characteristic elements of this occupation are indicated: the spontaneity with which a mythological figure and its story—a mythologem—seek expression as individual experience, and the search for expression in the mythological tradition.

In this, however, Goethe was freer than the old *mythológos*. He himself says that he cut the garment of the Titan to his own size. But his method strongly suggests the way in which I myself, following Mann and Ortega, have described the mythological attitude in speaking of peoples with a still living mythology; [15] archaic man, before doing anything, stepped back a pace like a bullfighter poising himself for the death stroke. He sought an example in the past, and into it he slipped as into a diving bell, in order to plunge, at once protected and distorted, into the problems of the present.

Goethe's problem at the time, according to his own statement, was

14. Goethe, *Werke* (ed. Beutler), X, 699.
15. Cf. the Introduction, p. xvi.

the grounding of his *individual existence,* something far more existential than any general theorizing about art and artists. In attempting to solve the problem of his own life by identifying himself with a mythological figure, he created a mythologem, and proceeded more in the manner of a *mythológos* than of a dramatist. But in holding fast to his own particular experience, that of his isolation, and slipping into the poetic expression of this state, the monologue, he not only burst out of the dramatic form that his material might still have permitted but broke with the mythological tradition as well—and fell back into the original mythologem, which he enriched with a trait that was new but that he discerned in the ancient image of Prometheus.

The Modern Element in Goethe's Mythologem

THE modern trait that stands out clearly in Goethe's experience at that time is the isolation of every man, a lot which the poet resolutely accepted. In his interpretation, he speaks, in the light of his mature wisdom, of this isolation and of the consequences of his acceptance of it. "My works that had met with so much approval were children of solitude and after my relation to the world had broadened, there was no lack of inventive power and enthusiasm, but the execution faltered, for I had no real style either in prose or in verse, and in each new piece of work, according to the nature of the subject, I had to grope forward and make new experiments. Since in this I had to reject, to exclude the help of men, I cut myself off, *like Prometheus, from the gods as well,* and this was all the more natural because, in

view of my character and manner of thinking, one attitude always engulfed and repelled all others." [16]

A consequence of this affirmation of human existence, including its isolation, and of the break with the gods it implies, was Goethe's Prometheus mythologem. His Prometheus was similar to the ancient god who went his own way by espousing the cause of men, and yet he did not resemble the true "gigantic, heaven-storming" Titans. This Prometheus only wished to isolate himself, and for this very reason he did not want to be a god but, like the young Goethe, wanted to found a "third dynasty"—mankind. Yet how could the founder remain isolated if with him mankind embarked on the common fate—isolation? But had this isolation not, from time immemorial, been a trait of human beings, which came to be known only now, so that precisely this new Prometheus was the genuine one, and his mythologem the true mythologem of the human lot—seen from the standpoint of the modern era? A far more complicated mythologem than the ancient one, but still the result of a mythological occupation continuing the old one.

One implication of all this was that Goethe saw the boy Prometheus in the situation of the primordial orphan child of the original mythologem: that is, in the manner of the ancient mythological tales which, in their images, directly reflect the condition into which every mortal is born.[17] Whether he was actually thinking of Herakles menaced by the serpents or of the child Dionysos dismembered by the Titans need not be decided. The Prometheus assailed by the Titans is no longer Greek mythology but a mythology created by Goethe. And it is typical

16. Goethe, *Werke* (ed. Beutler), X, 698 f.
17. Kerényi, "The Primordial Child in Primordial Times."

of his mythologizing that, of all the traditions concerning Prometheus, he chose to adopt a pictorial one based on a drawing after the Roman sarcophagus relief in Montfaucon:[16] There sits Prometheus, forming the image of a man, beside him a basket of clay, before him a finished figure receiving from Minerva a soul in the form of a butterfly [I, IIa].

Can we, indeed need we, supply an answer to the question of who Goethe's Prometheus is, if neither a god, a Titan, nor a man? Whether intentionally or unintentionally, his manner of creating man is Biblical; his emphatic contempt for God is in like degree anti-Biblical: that was the impression it was bound to arouse, and essentially this hostility to God seems to have been a different kind of dependence on the Bible. This role as a creator hostile to God defines Goethe's Prometheus. A poetic "middle figure," says Goethe in his interpretation, minimizing his significance and excluding any idea that mythologizing might not be a merely poetic occupation but carry a peculiar responsibility, although he does not pass over in silence the death of the pious Moses Mendelssohn, who died of his encounter with this new Prometheus. Goethe's Prometheus is no God, no Titan, no man, but the immortal prototype of man as the original rebel and affirmer of his fate: the original inhabitant of the earth, seen as an antigod, as Lord of the Earth. In this connection he seems more Gnostic than Greek, but he surely is in no way related to the childlike Gnosis of Goethe when he was still younger. He belongs rather to the more recent history of ideas and anticipates the Nietzschean or Existentialist view of man. Or perhaps he goes even further. Young

18. *L'Antiquité expliquée et representée en figures* (Paris, 1719), I, pt. 1, pl. fol. p. 24. Described also in Hederich's *Reales Schullexicon*, p. 2329; cf. Goethe's *Werke* (ed. Beutler), IV, 1038.

Goethe's mythologizing could not resurrect the classical figure of Prometheus, but inevitably gave rise to a thoroughly modern one, whose effect on the younger generation was greatly feared by the old master at the time when the lost pages reappeared (letter to Zelter, May 11, 1820[19]).

19. Goethe, *Werke* (ed. Beutler), XXI, 392.

II. THE TITANIC, AND THE ETERNITY OF THE HUMAN RACE

The Human Race and the Races of Men

ISOLATION as a *common* fate—this modern contradiction—was not part of the Greek image of man. In the eyes of the Greeks, humanity was distinguished from divinity with all possible clarity: it was at once *deilón* and *deinón*.[1] There was nothing poorer, more insignificant, more tormented in their eyes, than the lot of man. And yet there was ground enough for the words of the chorus in the *Antigone* of Sophokles:

> *Terrible are many things*
> *but nothing more terrible than man.*[2]

Thus was the human race conceived over against the race of the "lightly living gods." Hesiod, surely on the basis of oriental models, told of whole races of men that had died out,[3] and up to the end of antiquity men believed it necessary to celebrate certain festivals, such as the Eleusinian Mysteries, in order that the whole human race should not vanish.[4] The doom of mankind was expected of Neptunian or Vulcanic natural catastrophes—to use Goethe's terms—or from famine, war, or periodic upheavals. The death of the individual was no threat to the human race; the mortality of mortals was just one

1. "Der Mensch in griechischer Anschauung," in Kerényi, *Niobe*, pp. 240 ff. The *deilón* is the wretched, the *deinón* the terrible and prodigious.

2. 332–34 (cf. LCL edn., I, 340).

3. *Works and Days* 106–201. On Hesiod's oriental models: R. Reitzenstein and H. H. Schäder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus*.

4. Cf. my *Die Mysterien von Eleusis*.

shading—the darkest of all—in the comprehensive attribute of *deilón,* the general human wretchedness. A view of the eternity of the human race detached itself from the dark images of the future set forth in certain prophecies, but it was not incompatible with a recognition of the power of the gods of death. Let us consider this view.

A Pythagorean Doctrine

Illa sententia, qua semper humanum genus fuisse creditur, auctores habet Pythagoram Samium et Ocellum Lucanum et Archytam Tarentinum omnesque adeo Pythagoricos: According to these words of the Late Roman author Censorinus, in his book *On Birthdays,*[5] Pythagoras of Samos, Okellos of Lukania, Archytas of Tarentum, and in general all Pythagoreans were the authors and proponents of the opinion that the human race was eternal. The Pythagorean view of the matter is known to us from the work *On the Cosmos* bearing the name of Okellos. Somewhat freely translated, it runs as follows:

"Man arose neither from earth nor from other living things, animals or plants. For if we assume the cosmic order to be eternal, without beginning and without end—and that is the thesis of the Pythagoreans—then the whole, whose order (*diakósmēsis*) is the world order (*kósmos*), must likewise be eternal. In the first place, the parts of this eternal whole must always have existed: the heavens, the earth, and between them the air, since without them there can be no world, for the world after all consists of them. And if the parts are eternal, then everything they contain must also have existed from all time: in the sky the sun, the moon, and the stars, in the earth the

5. *De die natali* IV 3.

animals and plants, gold and silver, in the air the winds and the changes of temperature. For the sky is sky precisely because it contains these things, and for like reason is the earth earth and the air air. And now, since to each one of these parts a race is assigned that stands over everything else it contains—to the heavens the gods, to the earth men, to the sphere of the air the daemons—the human race must necessarily be eternal: that is, if we are right in assuming that not only the parts are coexistent with the cosmos—the order—but also that which is contained in the parts, namely, that which is ordered." [6]

Here, in a work written before the first century B.C., the Greek idea of the cosmos as *diakósmēsis*, of the world as order, is developed to its ultimate consequences. It is evident that this conception includes the idea that the human race is eternal, even though it does not, as in a naïvely anthropocentric cosmology, stand in the center, or even, as might be the case in a less naïve philosophical reflection, if man is not construed as the orderer of this order or as one orderer among several. The naïve, prephilosophical view of the world, the result not of philosophizing but of mythologizing, which underlies all this, does not have man as its center. It has two poles, man on earth, the gods in heaven. Merely for the sake of symmetry, as it were, the daemons—not evil spirits but beings intermediate between God and man—occupy a middle position in the air, the realm between heaven and earth. They were not a product of Greek mythology, but of the belief in daemons that had sprung up in various parts of the Mediterranean world and the Near East.

6. III 1–3 (cf. edn. and tr. into German by Rotermund, pp. 24–25).

The World View of Greek Mythology

THE duality of gods and men, two races standing in polar opposition, is expressed so clearly in some of the older poets that we may recognize it as a basic trait of the Greek mythological world view:

> *There is one*
> *race of men, one race of gods; both have breath*
> *of life from a single mother. But sundered power*
> *holds us divided, so that one side is nothing, while on the*
> *other the brazen sky is established*
> *a sure citadel forever.*[7]

Thus, in the sixth Nemean Ode, Pindar joins and separates the races of men and the gods. The division is absolute. On the one side, men: they are nothing. On the other, heaven eternal and unshakable, the abode of the gods. Eternal freedom from danger is here an attribute of the abode of the gods, the sky, which surrounds the human race as though with its body; but it is also a characteristic of those who dwell on high, whom the sky serves as a throne. By virtue of this attribute, the surrounding element, the sky, coincides with the gods, the other race, which delimits the human race. And yet this surrounding, delimiting element is not really corporeal—that is, tangible—for man, but intangible and yet hard: "brazen." Here the metal does not express any supposed materiality, or anything that can be visu-

7. **Pindar, Nemean Ode VI** (cf. tr. Lattimore, p. 111).

> ἓν ἀνδρῶν
> ἓν θεῶν γένος· ἐκ μιᾶς δὲ πνέομεν
> ματρὸς ἀμφότεροι, διείργει δὲ πᾶσα κεκριμένα
> δύναμις ὡς τὸ μὲν οὐδέν, ὁ δὲ χάλκεος ἀσφαλὲς αἰὲν ἕδος
> μένει οὐρανός.

alized in connection with the sky, but something paradoxical: the incomprehensible hardness of something intangible—the gods and their abode.

Pindar, however, not only divides but also unites the gods and men. Hesiod had done so before him in his *Works and Days* (108): he will sum up, he says, "how the gods and mortal men sprang from one source." [8]

To the minds of both poets, this is something that must never be forgotten, not even when they speak of the decline or the insignificance of the human race. According to the great mythological tradition of the Greeks, man as well as the gods is descended from Gaia, the Earth Mother. In this mythological world based on the earth and divided into gods and men, there is no suggestion of a creation of man. Man is represented neither as a creation nor as a rebel, but as one pole of the cosmos, the other being the heavenly gods.

Who Were the Titans?

THESE basic traits of the Greek mythological world view which, like the Prometheus of the young Goethe, stand here as a motto and preamble have made something clear to us. And at the same time they have raised a question. They have made it clear, as already intimated, that Hesiod and Aischylos, our sources for the Prometheus mythologem of the archaic and the early classical periods, are far removed from any notion that man was created by the Titan. For the mythologi-

8. All Hesiod quotations, with the exception of those on our pp. 45 and 47, are from Evelyn-White's translation. Here, his pp. 10–11.

ὡς ὁμόθεν γεγάασι θεοὶ θνητοί τ' ἄνθρωποι.

cal view of the world, like the figures of mythology, has this paradoxical trait: it was there before the poets, yet it is the poets who give it form. In interpreting the classical texts on Prometheus, we shall have to forget all about his creation of man. The question that has been raised is this: how could a cosmology include such beings as the Titans if they were neither gods nor men nor something in between after the manner of the daemons?

And so, even at the risk of anticipating some of our story, we must, before beginning to interpret the myth, reply to the question "Who were the Titans?" The texts provide an answer that speaks pretty much for itself. Of course we should know more about the Titans if the epic poem *Titanomachia,* the War of the Titans, which tradition attributes to Eumelos of Corinth, or to Arkinos of Miletos, or to another post-Homeric poet, had been preserved. Works of archaic literature, mythological epics, take on a particular importance in this connection because most of the Titans had no cult in Greece. Hesiod shows us that the Greek narratives of the gods were influenced by such poems, particularly by a work that had become almost canonical, and he also shows us the limits of such influence. I say "almost," because after all there were limits to the acceptance and influence of such poems, and I say "canonical" to indicate that a work of this kind cannot have been a free poetic invention—that would have been impossible both for chronological and for material reasons—but must have been a poetic treatment of a *tradition* and as such subject to certain restrictions, even if the tradition was oriental rather than Greek in origin. Successful poets "canonize," that is, they endow certain narratives with a special importance and influence; but they cannot "canonize" a tale that is generally regarded as their own invention. Anyone who chooses to find in this material purely poetic inventions or innovations such as

are customary in modern poetry must in every instance supply special proofs.[9]

Hesiod discloses a limit to the influence of the *Titanomachia* upon Greek mythology by this failure to accept the archaic genealogy of Uranos (which never gained universal Greek acceptance), namely, the descent of the god "Heaven" from a celestial father (Aither, "Light of Heaven," according to the *Titanomachia,* or Akmon, "Anvil," according to an unknown ancient source). After Hesiod, who next to Homer was the most successful "canonizer" among Greek poets, such a change in the genealogy of the gods would scarcely have been conceivable. Hesiod was able to express the mythological world view of the Greeks by way of genealogy.[10] The answer of his *Theogony* to our question is this: the Titans were gods, the earlier gods, *próteroi theoí* (424). Gaia, the Earth, the Pristine Mother, had borne them by Uranos, her firstborn son. As gods and sons of Heaven, they belonged to the divine-heavenly pole of the two-part cosmology. But nearly all of them ended up under ground, in the deepest maw of the earth, under Tartaros, where no cult could reach them. They bear—even proleptically, in anticipation of their subsequent fate (697)—the epithet *chthónioi,* the "subterranean"; otherwise they are called *hypotartárioi,* "subtartarean" (851), in agreement with the Iliad (XIV 279) and also substantially with the Homeric hymn to Apollo (335). When they broke loose, as when they appeared to slay the child Dionysos in the Orphic poem of Onomakritos,[11] a theologian of the sixth century, they

9. This was not done, for example, by Karl Reinhardt, who wished to ascribe so essential a trait in the tradition as the Titanic origin of Prometheus to the poetic invention or innovation of Aischylos and waged what strikes us as a strange "Titanomachia" against the *Titanomachia,* which *could* certainly have contained this trait. See his *Aischylos als Regisseur und Theologe,* p. 30.

10. Paula Philippson, *Untersuchungen über griechischen Mythos: Genealogie als mythische Form.*

11. Pausanias III 37 5; Onomakritos in O. Kern, *Orphicorum fragmenta,* p. 56.

joined with the daemons to whom the Pythagoreans assigned the middle zone.

But not all of them ended in this way: above all, not their sisters, the great daughters of Heaven. Hesiod, and perhaps also the *Titanomachia*, made them, like the Titans, six in number in order to complete the celestial number twelve. The tradition does not tell us whether they took part in the battle of the Titans, or if so, which of them. The battle and the defeat of the Titans account for the strange polarity "son-of-Heaven–subterranean" that is characteristic of the Titans. Where polarity is replaced by periodicity, as in the case of Phoibe, whose name assuredly means "moon goddess," there was no need for a battle or defeat. The names Titan and Titanis, "Titaness," imply more than merely gods who were defeated by other gods. In this view of the world, the others, "those descended from Kronos" (*Theogony* 630 and elsewhere)—Zeus, his brothers, sisters, and children—are only the dominant minority, a segment as it were of the "brazen sky," which includes so visible a Titan as the sun [12] and so visible a Titaness as the moon.[13]

The Titans were by no means limited to a single generation of "earlier gods." *Próteroi theoí* may be understood more accurately to mean "those who were gods even earlier" than Zeus and his Olympian family. Most of them waged war against Zeus and his followers and were defeated; others, like Okeanos and Tethys, retained their rank and functions; still others were perpetuated in their descendants as were Hyperion and Theia, the most notable couple among the Titans, in Helios and Selene, Sun and Moon. In Hesiod, descent expressed

12. Empedokles, in Diels, fr. 38 (an English version in K. Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p. 57).

13. Apollonios Rhodios, *Argonautica* IV 54 (cf. LCL edn., p. 299).

(continued...)

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