

On the God Cronus

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THE CHARACTER OF CRONUS seems to be made up of contrasting qualities. He is known especially as the archetypal antagonist of Zeus and the Olympian gods, and his ultimate defeat and relegation to the depths of Tartarus are an important and vivid episode in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Now, in the *Iliad*, Zeus is described by two very different epithets. He is often called *πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε*, inasmuch as he is the supreme god and source of all beings. On the other hand, he is called *Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω* no less than seven times.¹ That Zeus was Cronus' son was of course a fact not to be denied; but given the ill fame of Cronus, why does the poet put forward this identification of Zeus so often?² We might rather have expected him to pass over the matter in silence.

Elsewhere, Greek tradition preserves distinctly favourable aspects of Cronus. The first race of men, the golden race, depicted by Hesiod as the best, lived under the rule of Cronus (*Op.* 109–25). In Pindar and in Aeschylus, moreover, Cronus is represented as ruling afterwards in the Isles of the Blessed.³ Finally, in the song of the Muses that begins Hesiod's *Theogony*, Cronus finds a place among the several gods selected for praise (18).

Of these indications of a more positive regard for Cronus, the first might well have a merely chronological explanation: the first race, the golden one, will naturally have been placed under the reign of the earlier god. On the other hand, the opposite can be found among those who viewed the earliest race as primitive: thus Aristophanes uses the contemptuous expression *Κρονίων ὄζων* (*Nub.* 398, *cf.* 1070), and the abusive epithet *Κρονόληρος* appears elsewhere in comedy (*Adesp.* 1052 Kock, *cf.* 510).⁴ In the *Iliad*, moreover, Cronus and the Titans

¹ *Il.* 2.205, 319, 4.75, 9.37, 12.450, 16.431, 18.293; in the *Od.*, 21.415; of Hera, *Il.* 4.59.

² The patronymic, given its epithet, is not simply formulaic and neutral, as when Agamemnon is called *Ἀτρεΐδης* despite the evil deeds of Atreus (where in fact the patronymic emphasizes Agamemnon's royal descent).

³ *Ol.* 2.70; Wilamowitz, *Kleine Schriften* V.2 (Berlin 1971) 161.

⁴ Compare the twofold way in which Greek authors regard old age: both as an age of wisdom (e.g. Nestor in the *Iliad*) and yet again as an object of ridicule (Peleus in Eur. *Andr.* 745f).

are confined to Tartarus (*cf.* 14.274, 279), and the ancients conceived also of a *Κρονία θάλασσα*, to be found on the northern borders of the earth.⁵ This, I believe, was thought to be a sea of ice, for Cronus was associated with the frozen waste of Tartarus. Against these negative views, however, remains the tradition of *ὁ ἐπὶ Κρόνου βίος*, represented in the comic authors as a happy life in the Land of Coccagne. And the *Κρόνια* was a festival in which slaves and masters seem to have mingled freely.⁶ These facts are consistent with a Cronus presiding over the golden age, for they associate him with a life of freedom and ease.

This more favourable portrait of Cronus is supported by further evidence. Here we should consider the third point mentioned above. In the proem of the *Theogony* Hesiod relates how he was called by the Muses themselves to his profession as a poet. In lines 1–21 he pictures the Muses of Helicon performing their usual duties: they execute their dances and celebrate the gods. The song is a general one, encompassing the gods worthy of praise. The list, as might be expected, begins with Zeus and Hera (11f), followed by the principal offspring of Zeus, Athena and Apollo, which entails inclusion of Apollo's twin sister Artemis. It is important to note that neither Ares nor Hephaestus is mentioned, although they are children of Zeus and Hera. It seems clear that Hesiod did not wish to make his list tiresomely long.⁷ Accordingly, of the remaining Olympian gods he now includes only Poseidon (15). He could feel entitled to such omission because he has the Muses say at the end of their song that they also praise *ἄλλων τ' ἀθανάτων γένος αἰὲν ἔόντων* (21).⁸ So much for the Olympians. The elemental gods—sun, moon, night, *etc.*—end the list (19–21). This is understandable in Hesiod, for these gods and their progeny⁹ play an important rôle in the poem. Between these two groups a third class is described (16–18), which includes Aphrodite; this is curious, as she is known as an Olympian goddess. Aphrodite, however, is the source of procreation of all beings, and she was gener-

⁵ On this see *e.g.* Wilamowitz (*supra* n.3) 165.

⁶ See Wilamowitz (*supra* n.3) 160; though admittedly it is a tendency of any festival that persons may be inclined to mingle more freely.

⁷ Ares, moreover, may well have been avoided deliberately, being an inauspicious god responsible not only for war but also for other calamities: see *e.g.* Soph. *OT* 190. For the same reason the inauspicious Hades, god of the dead, was also omitted.

⁸ In this way the poet could avoid the wrath of any god left unnamed. The same practice is found in the Homeric Hymns, where at the end the poets commonly say *καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ' ἀουδῆς vel sim.*

⁹ The latter are not mentioned here doubtless because many of them were inauspicious or even monstrous.

ated (as Hesiod relates later on) from the sperm of Cronus. Accordingly Hesiod places her here,¹⁰ together with Hebe and Dione.¹¹ This selection is natural, as is that of Leto, mother of Apollo and Artemis, and of Themis, the great goddess of right and justice who in fact opens this part of the list. This group comprises goddesses (Themis, Aphrodite, Hebe) who fulfil important functions in human life. But to our great surprise we find that at the end of this group the Muses also included for praise Ἰαπετόν τε ἰδὲ Κρόνον ἀγκυλομήτην.¹² This honorific mention can, however, be explained if we connect with it the more favourable portrait of Cronus surveyed above.

This interpretation may be corroborated by another means. In his treatment of the several races of man, Hesiod makes a curious statement in the section on the age of heroes (156–73). As noted above, both Pindar and Aeschylus supposed that Cronus later ruled in the Isles of the Blessed. We might take this to reflect the ideas of a particular sect, such as the Orphics. If however the idea can be traced to Hesiod, far earlier, the situation will be otherwise.

In describing the race of heroes, Hesiod says that some enjoyed a happy fate, going to the Isles of the Blessed. In this passage, line 169 is found in only a few inferior manuscripts.¹³ If we had at our disposal only this testimony, it would be very easy and (in my opinion) obvious to bracket the line. But the same line is found in two papyri, which place it, however, at the end of the passage (as *Op.* 173a) and then add lines 173b–e:

τηλοῦ ἀπ' ἀθανάτων· τοῖσιν Κρόνος ἐμβασιλεύει.
αὐτὸς γάρ μιν ἔλυσε πατ[ῆρ ἀνδρῶ]ν τε θε[ῶν τε·
νῦν δ' αἰεὶ] μετὰ τοῖς τιμῆ[ν ἔχ]ει ὡς ἐ[πιεικές].
Ζεὺς δ' αὐτ' ἄλλο γένος θῆκ[εν μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
ὄσσοι νῦ]ν γεγάασιν ἐπὶ [χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρη].

¹⁰ M. L. West, *Hesiod, Theogony* (Oxford 1966) 156, wrongly thinks that in this song of the Muses Hesiod has followed a “traditional catalogue.” On the contrary, the list (excepting Cronus for the moment) is consistent with the representation offered in the *Theogony*. This can be seen in the case of Aphrodite, and also in the inclusion of the elemental gods, whose importance was suggested above. The representation found in the *Iliad*, Aphrodite as daughter of Zeus and Dione, was in my view also known to Hesiod.

¹¹ Dione especially may owe her mention here to her connection with Aphrodite.

¹² West (*supra* n.10) treats this fact too lightly: we “cannot be surprised if the next in the list are the arch-Titans.” On the contrary, Cronus is the archetypal enemy of Zeus. Just as in the case of the offspring of the elemental gods, Hesiod could easily have omitted these gods from the list of those celebrated by the Muses.

¹³ See M. L. West, *Hesiod, Works and Days* (Oxford 1978) 103 *ad* 173a; P. Mazon, *Hésiode* (Paris 1928) 92 *ad* 169 (“hic habent deteriores”); T. Sinclair, *Hesiod, Works and Days* (London 1932) 22, reports that the line is found in two inferior Paris MSS.

This testimony alone seems to me to carry little weight, for two reasons. First, lines 173c–e are very weakly attested (only these papyri); second, it is understandable that the poems of Hesiod, which presented the oldest religious system of the Greeks, were liable to interpolation and thus falsification.¹⁴ Accordingly we might easily bracket the entire passage, if it were not for other facts that cannot be ignored.

A scholium of Proclus (64f Pertusi) has been placed beside *Op.* 160–61, but this position is obviously mistaken: the comment in fact concerns line 173. The line quoted as a lemma in the scholium says of the heroes who lived in the Isles of the Blessed (*Op.* 173a), *τηλοῦ ἀπ' ἀθανάτων, τοῖσιν Κρόνος ἐμβασιλεύει* (schol. *ἐμβασίλευε*, wrongly). On this the commentator says: *τοῦτον καὶ τὸν ἐξῆς*¹⁵ *ὡς φληναφώδεις ἐξοικίζουσιν τῶν Ἡσιόδου κτλ.* The scholiast then argues that the lines in question diminish, according to the critics, the enthusiastic tenor of the lines that follow. This proves that according to Proclus the lines preceded the passage about the iron race. So Proclus' notice is in agreement with the position that the lines have in the papyri. From the scholium we further learn that Proclus was acquainted also with line 173b, which does not occur in the MSS. but has been partly preserved on papyrus: *[αὐτὸς γὰρ μ]ιν ἔλυσε πατ[ῆρ ἀνδρῶ]ν τε θε[ῶν τε]*.¹⁶ We can state¹⁷ that the mediaeval tradition (at least the leading one) did not know or acknowledge the lines, whereas at the end of antiquity Proclus apparently found lines 173ab in the edition of Hesiod that he used.¹⁸ In this connection we should note Proclus' *ἐξοικίζειν*, the poignant term for expulsion from one's home; it occurs only here of textual matters. Accordingly I think that Proclus not only found these lines in his edition of Hesiod, but did not agree with their removal from the text.

West has observed that “to judge from Homer, genuine lines do not disappear just because of critical objections to them.”¹⁹ In fact we

¹⁴ See Jacoby *ad FGrHist* 328F97 (p.301 n.19), who considers the line an Orphic interpolation.

¹⁵ *τοὺς ἐξῆς* Schoemann, accepted by Solmsen.

¹⁶ See West (*supra* n.13) 103, app.crit. on 173b. It is practically certain that Weil's *πατῆρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε* offers the correct supplement. The beginning of 173b concerns Cronus and his release.

¹⁷ On the whole situation see West (*supra* n.13) 194f, who gives an extensive account of the testimonies that present the lines.

¹⁸ To all appearances Proclus is speaking of only two lines, as the scholium says (*τὸν ἐξῆς*). West rightly follows the text of the scholium. When the situation is so ambiguous, it is inadvisable to alter the text of the scholium (*τοὺς ἐξῆς*). In that case, moreover, one would expect Proclus to offer a more accurate report and say: *πέντε στίχοι ἐκβάλλονται*.

¹⁹ West (*supra* n.13) 195.

may be thankful that the Alexandrian critics, when taking exception to Homeric lines, mostly made use of critical signs and so retained the lines in the text, enabling us to form an independent judgement about their authenticity. In a few instances, however, their objections were so grave that they did not resort to their usual expedient, but in fact removed from their editions Homeric lines that appear to be genuine. Thus *Iliad* 9.458–62, missing in all the mss., are known to us only through Plutarch.²⁰ That Achilles' tutor Phoenix was ready in anger to kill his own father was, understandably, so repellent to the Alexandrian critics that they deleted this from their texts, acting out of considerations that are surely subjective.

In the Hesiodic passage, I believe, we are confronted with a phenomenon similar to what we see in Homer.²¹ The combat between Zeus and Cronus and the banishment of the latter to Tartaros formed one of the most striking parts of the *Theogony*. Two lines (173ab) seemed in glaring contrast to one of the dominant and memorable scenes in the poem. So one can understand that the lines, provided they were genuine, were removed from the text (as happened for example to some genuine lines of Euripides on the grounds of inconsistency).²²

We can corroborate this line of argument by other witnesses who presuppose that Hesiod mentioned Cronus' rule in the Isles of the Blessed.²³ Zenobius (3.86) and Marcellus of Side (II A.D.) allude to our passage, and both imply the presence of *Theog.* 173a. The two witnesses are completely independent of each other and are not connected in any way with Proclus. If therefore 173a—to which 173b, attested by Proclus, must in my view be added—should be unauthentic, then we must assume that in antiquity three different and independent witnesses made use of an interpolated text of Hesiod:

²⁰ *Mor.* 26F, 72B, *Cor.* 32.4: discussed in M. van der Valk, *Textual Criticism of the Odyssey* (Leiden 1949) 87 and *Researches on the Text and Scholia of the Iliad II* (Leiden 1964) 483–86; see also Wilamowitz, *Die Ilias und Homer* (Berlin 1916) 66, who accepted the lines as genuine.

²¹ Compare *Op.* 370–72, lines rightly accepted by the editors but absent from all our MSS. Known to us only from a scholium vetus (120.20–22 Pertusi), these lines evidently were deleted by ancient critics, and the ancient editors of the text preserved in our MSS. followed the critics' lead. On the question see West (*supra* n.13) 249.

²² I have in mind the notice in the scholia to Euripides, ἔν τισιν οὐκ ἦσαν οἱ στίχοι: I have discussed this point in two papers, one on the *Phoenissae* to be published by A. Hakkert, the other on *Orestes* forthcoming in *REA*. I may add, however, that this is a somewhat different matter, for the Euripidean lines in question were removed from the text in only some ancient editions, but have been preserved in most MSS. that have come down to us.

²³ For the testimonies see e.g. West (*supra* n.13) 194.

for as we have seen, Pindar and Aeschylus presupposed the idea that Cronus ruled in the Isles of the Blessed. If we assume that this was already stated in Hesiod, then this idea is older than the fifth century and need not be ascribed to some particular sect: on the contrary, it can be connected with and belongs to the older and original Greek religion.

If this is so, then one has the impression that Cronus was from earliest times viewed in at least some ways in a favourable manner. As we have seen, Zeus is often described in the *Iliad* with the phrase Κρόνου παίσι ἀγκυλομήτεω. This ought to be a laudatory epithet, not a derogatory one, and we may suppose that Homer is applying here an inherited formula. The most obvious interpretation of ἀγκυλομήτης seems to be 'with wily, cunning, crooked designs'.²⁴ Similarly, Hesiod describes Prometheus as ἀγκυλομήτης (*Op.* 48, *Theog.* 546), and also ποικιλόβουλος (*Theog.* 521, 546), for his great exploit is the deception of Zeus.²⁵

Nevertheless, it is strange that Zeus, the highest god, who has supreme wisdom and in Homer as well as Hesiod is often called μητίετα, with Themis as his closest assistant (*Hymn.Hom.* 23), should have been connected with crooked designs. How can these contradictory features be reconciled? We can look for comparison to the Hebrew prophets. Isaiah (9.6), speaking of the divine child who is to come, uses epithets that suggest the rational and the irrational side of divinity. The titles begin *pel'e yo'ez*. The word *yo'ez* indicates the idea of counsel; the Septuagint renders it by βουλή. The word *pel'e* can be rendered by 'marvel' and indicates those things that human understanding cannot penetrate. Thus the first word denotes the rational and logical side of the divinity, the second the irrational side. In Greek religion Zeus is called μητίετα, Cronus ἀγκυλομήτης, 'of curved counsel'. Of course the latter epithet may indicate the cunning of the god; but it may also have had the meaning that Cronus' counsel is irrational, not fathomable by human reason. This might explain why Zeus is called the son of of Cronus ἀγκυλομήτης: the rational divin-

²⁴ For this characterization see now E. Cosset, *REG* 96 (1983) 273, who points out that the cunning and astute Odysseus is the typical Greek hero.

²⁵ West (*supra* n.10) 158, following a suggestion of Cook, interprets ἀγκυλομήτης as 'Cronus of the curved sickle'. Unlike his Latin counterpart Saturnus, however, Cronus was not associated with agriculture; and I doubt that the epithet can refer to the shameful deed of Cronus in emasculating Uranus (on the question see also P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* I [Paris 1968] 11 s.v. ἀγκ-, with bibliography). The fact that ἀγκύλος in a metaphorical sense is first found only in Lycophron (see West) is unimpressive: the rhetorical meaning of the word ('intricate', cf. LSJ s.v. II.1) is metaphorical, too, and is far earlier.

ity, incorporated for the Greeks in Zeus, has supreme wisdom; but precisely because we are speaking of divinity, whose ways are ultimately inscrutable to human understanding (*cf.* Aesch. *Suppl.* 92–94, *δαυλοὶ γὰρ πραπίδων δάσκιόι τε τείνουσιν πόροι κατιδεῖν ἄφραστοι*), we can imagine that the divinity has also an irrational side, which might be embodied in Cronus. Cronus was said to rule in the Isles of the Blessed, and this life, strictly speaking, is not rational and not comparable to ordinary human life.²⁶

This interpretation of the facts is admittedly hypothetical. But another testimony may lend support. Plutarch (*Mor.* 941–42, *cf.* 420A) reports the curious fact that an island lies beyond Βρεττανία, in the Cronian sea, on which Cronus is sleeping (here again we are at the end of the earth). Cronus is tended by δαίμονες who, while they also prophesy in their own right, predict the most important things (τὰ μέγιστα καὶ περὶ τῶν μεγίστων) as the dreams of Cronus, for ὅσα ὁ Ζεὺς προδιανοεῖται τοῦτ' ὄνειροπολεῖν τὸν Κρόνον. It is obvious that Plutarch is following a source, probably Posidonius,²⁷ that might be disregarded as late. From Tertullian, however, we learn that the idea of the sleeping Cronus was already mentioned by Aristotle (*De anim.* 46.10). It seems that in one of his lost works Aristotle mentioned this fact expressly, because the dreams of Cronus were considered important. According to Plutarch, Cronus dreamed ὅσα ὁ Ζεὺς προδιανοεῖται, and evidently “the most important things” concerned the governance of the world. Dreaming is of course an irrational state, in which we seem to see and connect things that are in actual life unconnected. In this scene, I would speculate, the irrational character of Cronus and the rational governance of the world by Zeus are linked.

PAPENDRECHT

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²⁶ Plutarch (*Mor.* 996C), speaking of Cronus' brothers and colleagues the Titans, says τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἄλογον and adds καὶ ἄτακτον καὶ βίαιον (*cf.* 926E). It is understandable that here the negative character of the Titans is mentioned; but ἄλογον can also contain another side, the ‘irrational’.

²⁷ See M. Pohlenz, *RE* 11 (1922) 2013 s.v. “Kronos.”