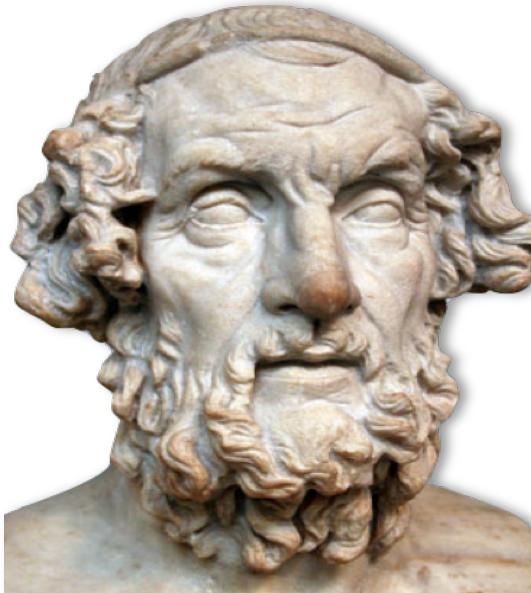


2. From Chaos to Cosmos:
Primordial Gods & the Birth of the Titans

Assigned Reading: Chapter I.3, “Myths of Creation”,
 in Mark Morford et al., *Classical Mythology* (11th ed.), pp. 59-81

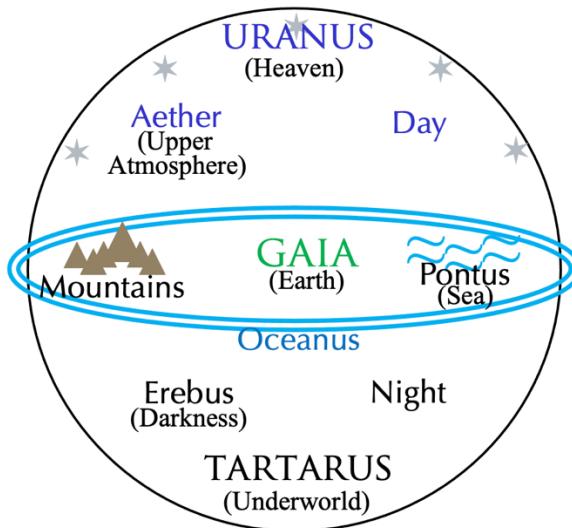


Hesiod and Homer on the Gods

1. “The origin of the gods, or whether they have existed always, and what their visible forms [*eideia*] are, the Greeks did not know until yesterday or the day before, so to speak. For Hesiod and Homer, I think, lived not more than four hundred years ago, and these are the men who composed a theogony for the Greeks, who gave epithets [*epōnymiai*] to the gods, who distinguished their various spheres of influence [*timai*] and activity [*technai*], and who indicated their appearances.”

Herodotus, *Histories* 2.53.1f.
 (5th cent. B.C.)

(left) Bust of the poet Homer (fl. 750 B.C.).
 Roman copy of a lost Hellenistic original.
 British Museum, London.



(above) Hesiod's cosmos, with the Primordial Gods

Children of the Night

Your textbook presents the opening sections of Hesiod's Theogony, in which the poet traces the emergence of the first gods from Chaos (the chasmic 'Void')—namely, Gaia (Earth), Tartarus (the Underworld), Eros (Sexual Union), Erebus (Darkness), and Night—to a second generation of elemental deities: Uranus (Heaven), Pontus (the sea), mountains, and the two children of Erebus and Night, Aether (the upper atmosphere) and Day. After a digression on the extraordinary

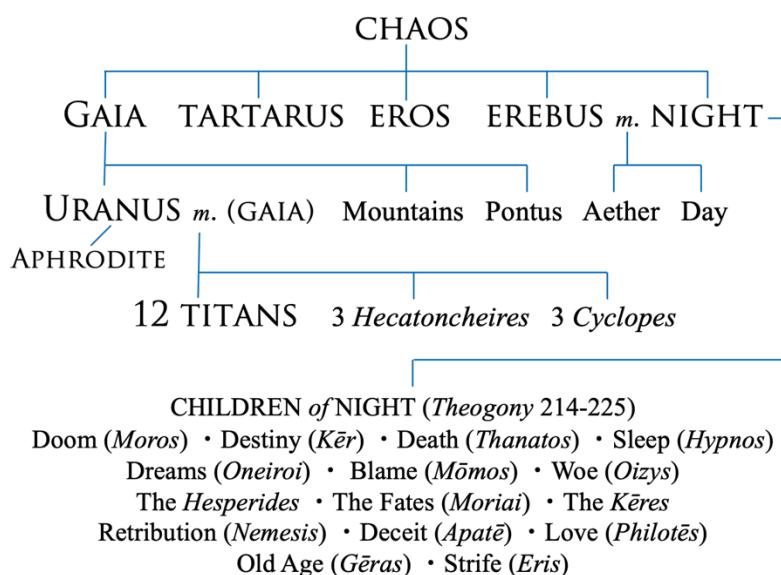
generation of Aphrodite from the castration of Uranus (the subject of our next lecture), the Theogony lists the numerous offspring of Night by herself—without the help of Eros. These have mostly symbolic names related to the frightening qualities of nighttime (see below); the fact that (sexual?) love is included among them reveals Hesiod's pessimistic attitude towards relations between the sexes, evident elsewhere in his poem.

2. “And Night gave birth to hated Doom [Moros] and black Destiny [Kēr] / and Death [Thanatos]; she also bore Sleep [Hypnos] and brought forth the tribe [phylon] of Dreams [Oneiroi]. / Next, Blame [Mōmos] and painful Woe [Oizys] / did the goddess, gloomy Night, bear, though she lay with no one, / and the Hesperides,* too, who tend the beautiful apples / and fruit-tree on the other side of glorious Ocean. / She also gave birth to the Fates [Moirai] and relentless Kēres,** / Klōthō, Lachesis, and Atropos, who alot / to mortals good and evil at their birth. / These goddesses track the transgressions of men and gods, / nor do they ever cease from their dread anger / until they render evil vengeance upon anyone who goes wrong [hamartēi]. / And deadly Night bore Retribution [Nemesis], an affliction upon mortal humans, / and after her Deceit [Apate] and Friendship [Philotēs] / and Old Age [Gēras] and stout-hearted Strife [Eris].”

Hesiod, *Theogony* 211-225 (8th cent. B.C.; tr. J.R. Hume; not in Morford)

*The Hesperides ('Daughters of Evening') are here represented as offspring of Night alone, though other ancient sources name their father as Hesper (so Diodorus Siculus) or as the Titan Atlas (so Hyginus). They will reappear in the myth of Heracles as guardians of the golden apples.

**Kēr (Destiny) was already mentioned a few lines earlier; here they are multiplied by three—a regular tendency in Hesiod—and given names elsewhere associated (by Hesiod himself!) with the Moirai: Klōthō ('she who spins'), Lachesis ('she who draws out'), and Atropos ('she who cuts').



The Hieros Gamos of Gaia & Uranus and the Birth of the Titans

3. “But then Gaia lay with Uranus and bore [the *Titans*, namely] the deep-eddyng *Oceanus*, and *Coeus*, and *Crius*, and *Hyperion*, and *Iapetus*, and *Theia*, and *Rhea*, and *Themis*, and *Mnemosyne*, and golden-crowned *Phoebe*,* and lovely *Tethys*. After them, she brought forth wily *Cronus*, the youngest and most terrible of her children and he hated his lusty father. Moreover, she bore the *Cyclopes*, insolent at heart, *Brontes* and *Steropes* and bold *Arges*, who fashioned and gave to Zeus his bolt of thunder and lightning. They had only one eye, set in the middle of their foreheads, but they were like the gods in all other respects Might and power and skill were in their works. In

turn, Gaia and Uranus were the parents of three other sons, great and unspeakably violent, *Cottus*, *Briareus*, and *Gyes*, arrogant children. A hundred invincible arms and hands sprang out of their shoulders and also from out of their shoulders grew fifty heads . . . Of all the children that Gaia and Uranus produced these were the most terrible and they were hated by their father from the very start.”

Hesiod, *op. cit.* 132ff. (cf. Morford, p. 63)

*Morford's text mistakenly reads "Thebe" for "Phoebe".

Homer's 'Cosmology'

An alternative genealogy to Hesiod's is found in the pages of Homer, who identified Ocean and Tethys (whose name means 'grandmother') as being older, in fact, than the Titans. Homer calls them, instead, "the source of the gods", allotting them the same role that Hesiod gave to Gaia and Uranus.

4. [Hera speaking to Aphrodite:] “I am about to visit the limits of the all-nurturing earth [Gaia], / and those two, Ocean and mother Tethys, the source [genesis] of the gods, / who nursed and cherished me in their halls, when they had taken me / from Rhea, at the time when Zeus, whose voice is borne afar, thrust Cronus down / to dwell beneath earth and the unresting sea.”

Homer, *Iliad* 14.199ff. (8th cent. B.C.; not in Morford)



The Titans Ocean and his wife/sister Tethys ('Grandmother'), whom Homer called "the source of the gods" (Iliad 14.201). Roman mosaic from Zeugma in Asia Minor, 2nd cent. A.D. Gaziantep Museum, Turkey.

Hesiod's Succession Myth, Part I

5. “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 . . . She hid [Cronus] in an ambush and placed in his hands the sickle with jagged teeth and revealed the whole plot to him. Great Uranus came leading 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 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 . . . and nymphs of ash trees (called Meliae on the wide earth).”

Hesiod, *op. cit.* 156-187 (cf. Morford, p. 71)