Contents

List of Figures	viii
Preface and Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction: Language and Literature from Greek Thought to Roman Religion	1
Chapter One: Hesiod's *Theogony*: The Beginning of Reality	17
Chapter Two: The *Iliad*: The *Eros*-filled War at Troy	29
Chapter Three: The *Odyssey*: The Last Homecoming and Love Delayed	65
Chapter Four: Lyric and Tragic Journeys Out and Back, from Sappho and Pindar to Aiskhylos and Euripides	145
Chapter Five: *Eros* and *Eris* in Sophokles and Euripides Beyond the Trojan War	191
Chapter Six: Comic, Platonic, and Visual *Eros* and *Eris*	221
Chapter Seven: Greek Epic Becomes Romanized: Vergil's *Aeneid*	263
Chapter Eight: From Latin Epic to Lyric	345
Chapter Nine: From Roman Philosophy to Comedy and Satire	417
Chapter Ten: An Epilogue of Sorts: From the Bible to the Baghavad Gita++	443
Chapter Eleven: The Western Return to Epic and the Epilogue of Music: From Nikos Kazantsakis and Derek Walcott to *West Side Story*	475
Notes	513
Bibliography	545
Index	551

Introduction

Language and Literature from Greek Thought to Roman Religion

Robert J. Littman, in the first chapter of his classic volume, *The Greek Experiment*, reviews theories that account for what he calls the *disunity* of the Greek character: the geographic isolation of community from community—which he wisely terms "simplistic"[2]—and competition, upon which he focuses approvingly:

> Everything was made into a contest, from athletics to the great drama festivals, such as the Dionysia at Athens, where playwrights vied for prizes. Competition was formalized in the great *agones*, public festivals at which competitors contended.[3]

Littman turns further to an anthropological summary of the Greek competitive urge. In observing the often non-productive nature of their competitions in the concrete sense, he observes that "the Greeks had a shame culture rather than a guilt culture"[4]—that their sense of worth was dependant entirely upon the opinion of others, rather than on any sort of internalized standards. And because the internal results of one's efforts are the only obvious basis for one's being judged by others, "the Greeks regarded any kind of defeat as disgraceful, regardless of circumstances... the glory of winning accrued to the victor from the lost glory of the defeated"[5]—as if there were a finite volume of glory to be gained from any given competition that had to be shared in greater and lesser measure by the victor and the victim.

In turn, the psychological foundation of this anthropological commentary is based on narcissism, "which led them into a

continuing struggle for personal glory and fame, as well as for the wealth and power by means of which these were to be acquired. Personal ambitions were unquenchable."[6] Against such a backdrop, Littman notes that treason and betrayal were common enough to be considered "national pastimes." Greek history with its disunity and dissent, both within and without the *polis*, might be said then to derive from these marked propensities.

In an attempt to explain the depth and basis of the narcissism that he finds foundational to Greek culture—for it requires explanation as much as does the competitive nature of which it is part of an explanation—Littman refers to Philip E. Slater's psycho-sociological study, *The Glory of Hera*. Slater traces the etiology of narcissism—particularly in Greek males—to the structure of the family as it develops within the structure of the *polis*.[7] His focus, indeed, is on the *polis* and people within it at the time of its peak of developmental prowess, the fifth century BCE. But his psycho-sociological interest is based on his consideration of the mythological and literary background of the great works produced, primarily in Athens, at that time.

Slater begins by observing an apparent paradox in the role of women in fifth- and fourth-century Athens:

> On the one hand, one is usually told that the status of women in fifth-and fourth-century Athens achieved some kind of nadir. They were legal non-entities, excluded from political and intellectual life, uneducated, virtually imprisoned in the home, and appeared to be regarded with disdain by the principal male spokesmen whose comments have survived. (Kitto, 1960, pp 219-22; Bluemner, n.d., passim). On the other hand, as Gomme points out: "There is, in fact, no literature, no art of any country, in which women are more prominent, more important, more carefully studied and with more interest, than in the tragedy, sculpture, and painting of Fifth-century Athens" (Gomme, 1937, p. 92).[8]

Slater goes on to note Gomme's subsequent rejection of the first half of this perspective as a valid view of women's role in fifth-century Athens, and then proceeds to adjudicate between the "dissenting voices of Gomme and Kitto" in the discussion that follows.

He begins by observing that the position of women inside and outside the home are two very different aspects of their socio-psychological role vis-a-vis males—that their powerlessness out in the workings of the *polis* is, paradoxically, the basis of extreme power in the household where the males who will run the *polis* undergo their most potent psychological development: "The Athenian male fled the home, but this meant that the Athenian male child grew up in a female-dominated environment. As an adult he may have learned that women were of no account, but in the most important years of his psychological development he knew that the reverse was true."[9]

It is the consequence of this state of affairs, and of the relationship between sons and mothers in particular that Slater outlines in his book. "The [ancient] Greek male's contempt for women was not only compatible with, but also indissolubly bound to, an intense fear of them, and to an underlying suspicion of male inferiority. Why else would such extreme measures (of limiting what is permitted to females) be necessary?"[10] Therefore, Slater suggests, "the low status of women and the male terror of women were mutually reinforcing in Hellenic society"[11] and traceable to the societal configuration that engenders a particular account—what the Greeks before the fifth century simply called *mythos*—of mother-son relationships within that society.

Slater continues his analysis with reference to the kind of women portrayed in Greek drama in the context of the often-present theme of intra-familial conflict, as well as with a discussion of homosexuality as "an essential part of a total pattern of response"[12] to mother-son, female-male conflicts present in classical Athenian society. His conclusions are astute; he fills out a theoretical Freudian understanding with concrete instances drawn from modern psychoanalytic literature.

Accordingly, he furthers the starting point of Freud's (and others') conclusions regarding the psychological bases of Greek

(and other) myths, focusing that furtherance on Greek myth, literature, and society at its cultural zenith. These Slater sees as largely a consequence of male fear of the female resulting in and from circumstances that leave the female largely unfulfilled and with little other direction to exorcise and exercise her male-induced frustration than toward her son(s). While it is important to note that, like most non-classicists, Slater confutes "Athenian" with "Hellenic"—using the most culturally prominent *polis* at its apogee to represent Greece at large, and thus ignoring, most obviously, Sparta and its far more equal genderal ways—for our purposes we can and shall follow his lead, *because* Athens was so culturally and politically pre-eminent.

The ultimate consequence of the familial-societal configuration of fifth- and fourth-century Athens as perceived by Slater is the narcissism that Littman, in turn, places in the foundation of his analysis of the development of the *polis* in evolving Greek history. But it seems to me that one may seek still further for the etiology of that familial-societal configuration in the tension between two apparently contradictory forces: love and strife. It is the pervading dynamic tension between these apparently opposed forces that, perhaps as a universal, will be found at the root of the Hellenic matter, and which reveals itself throughout the length and breadth of Greek mythology and literature.

No opposition is more compelling than that between love and strife—in Greek, *eros* and *eris*. In Greek literature—and beyond it, Latin literature (and Western literature well beyond the time of the Romans)—these two apparently antithetical concepts are consistently glued to each other: you rarely find one depicted in action without the other involved. Interestingly, Euripides, the fifth-century BCE playwright who again and again, like other Greek writers, exemplifies this truth, made the offhand observation in a work of which only fragments have survived, that the terms "*eros*" and "*eris*" derive, linguistically-speaking, form the same root. They look at first glance as if they could, but it turns out that they don't; Euripides is wrong (he was, after all, a playwright, not a linguist). What is interesting is that he thought so: it was apparently not just the identical first syllable and last phoneme in each word that led him to think this, but what he saw around him and read in

prior Greek poetry. The interwoven relationship between these two ideas evidenced as early as Homer's epic *Iliad* would continue with the *Odyssey*, Hesiod's *Theogony*, subsequent lyric poetry, the tragic theater of Aiskhylos, Sophokles, and Euripides three hundred years after Homer; and with Greek comedic playwrights from Aristophanes to Menander in the generations after Euripides.

Moreover, the dynamic of this tension pervades Latin literature—on both Greek-borrowed and distinctly Roman terms—as, in fact, it will be seen to move forward through the sweep of Western thought and literature, as they build on the legacy of the Greeks and Romans. We can see it in Dante and Shakespeare, identify it in Cervantes and Melville, and find it on Broadway in *West Side Story*.

Littman's conclusions are not diminished by recognizing that the narcissism to which he calls attention is not the point of *origin* of *polis* development as he discusses it, but in large part a *consequence* of the problematic mother-son relationship that Slater discusses (and that, to repeat, Littman acknowledges). Similarly, the significance of Slater's argument is by no means diminished by the suggestion that I shall put forth. In effect, my argument will be that what Slater describes is part of a larger psychological condition; that the mother-son complications that he analyzes are merely an aspect of a struggle visible in Greek (and Latin) literature on all levels of gender and generation relations; that what one finds in the literary tradition may well, as Slater observes, "mirror directly the modal patterns of the culture;"[13] and, indeed, reflects precisely the tensions between contradictory psychological forces to which Slater himself alludes in his preface and beyond.[14]

What follows, then, is a study of the interweave of *eros* and *eris* in the key works of Greek and Latin literature—from epic to lyric, tragic and comedic poetry, with reference to Plato's very relevant prose. As such, I will be offering psychological and therefore cultural conclusions regarding the society in which those literary works were created. I will further propose, in arriving toward the concluding chapter of this volume, that this interweave and the conclusions to which we arrive for the Greeks and Romans have ongoing implications in thinking both laterally toward the Hebrew Bible as another foundation stone in the edifice of Western

thought and literature and forward to the long sweep of that thought and literature (and not only in the West) that leads to our own time and world.

Two further notes are essential before one moves forward. The first pertains to the Greek vocabulary with which we begin. Our starting point is *eros* and *eris* and the mistaken presumption of a relationship between those two terms etymologically that reflects and is reflected in the interwoven relationship between the concepts underlying the terms. Were this a study of a different sort, it would be imperative not only to limit ourselves to those two terms as the poles that must sustain the discussion, but to clarify the distinctions between them and other Greek terms that are near synonyms. We would thus be following the course apparently laid out by the great sophist and contemporary of Sokrates, Prodikos, whose process of synonymy was well-known and well-regarded in the Athens of the late fifth and early fourth pre-Christian centuries.

In Plato's *Kratylos*, however, it becomes clear that Plato's own interest—even as he references Prodikos early on—is not in comparing terms in order to parse sometimes subtle distinctions of nuance, but to focus on any given term with regard to understanding in a definitive manner its essential conceptual underpinnings. Not "what is the difference between near-synonyms 'x' and 'y'?" but "what is the true meaning of 'x' and what is the true meaning of 'y'?"[15] Thus the discussion that follows is more Platonic than Prodikean, and when, say, the term *philia* is used in an *eros*-bound context, the fact that *philia* rather than *eros* is the term of use will not alter the direction of the discussion.

The second further note is this: given both the first, lateral, part of the epilogic assertion regarding the Hebrew Bible and the fact that most of the Greek and Latin literature under discussion includes within its pages the imputation of an important role to the gods in *eros/eris* as in other aspects of human affairs—and in the case, for instance, of Greek theater, every drama is understood to take place under the patronage of gods—our narrative requires a few further introductory comments pertaining to religion and its concomitants, by way of specific vocabulary derived from the Romans.

Religion presupposes a dichotomy to reality. On the one hand, the realm in which humans operate in the everyday sense—the realm, in time, from sunrise to sunset (daytime) and from birth to death; the realm, in space, of the community in which I am comfortable and safe, whether I construe that community to be my small village or planet earth; the realm that encompasses humanity and its preoccupations—all of this diversely construed realm is what the Romans termed the *profanus*. It is that aspect of reality that we know—or believe we can or do know—and in which time moves in a reliable, linear manner and distance is measurable in agreed-upon, consistent units.[16]

The other side of reality is called the *sacer*. This term refers to the realm of sleep and dreams, of night, of death, and of the unknown vastnesses beyond the community: the ocean, the woods, the mountains, the desert, outer space. The *sacer* is that which is not human: it is the realm of animals, particularly wild animals, and above all, it is the realm of divinity. As such, the *sacer* does not conform to our patterns of pre-expectation; rather than offering safe circumscription it operates unpredictably—sometimes with positive results (thus it is a realm embedded with hope) and sometimes with negative outcomes (thus it is a realm fraught with fear).

This understanding of a fundamental dichotomy to reality is endemic to human thought, across the entire panoply of our cultures and civilizations, even as myriad differences of detail distinguish one culture or civilization from another. Moreover, within this dichotomous thinking, the *sacer* offers a two-fold possibility in its relationship to the *profanus*. For it is intrinsically neutral in its disposition toward the *profanus* but potentially positive or negative in its interaction with us, a source of help and harm, of obstruction and promotion. Moreover, while all aspects of the *profanus* and the *sacer* are analogues of each other, the most profound and profoundly disturbing aspect of the *sacer* is divinity—for the obvious reasons: if divinity, as humans believe, has created us, it has the power to destroy us; if it can help us and it can also harm us—further or hinder us, bless or curse us; it can exercise the potential of the *sacer* to affect the *profanus* in either positive or negative ways more extremely than is true of other aspects of the *sacer*.[17]

Particularly in its divine aspect, the *sacer* is a realm of paradox, beyond straightforward understanding. It is ultimately eternal, and fundamentally spaceless in our sense of "space" and timeless in our sense of "time." Every inch of reality is part of the continuum of its awareness; all of time is present tense to its consciousness—in contrast to our limited spatial sightlines and our senses of easily forgotten past and invisible future. Yet we establish precisely—emphatically precise—circumscribed times and spaces in attempting to engage the *sacer*. The times are most often border times (for their very being as borders connotes our intention to cross a border in engaging the *sacer*)—sunrise, sunset, noon, midnight—from which we diverge at the minimal peril of the inefficacy of our rituals and the maximal peril of disaster.

We define precise spaces in which to interact with the *sacer*: locations that are known or believed to offer a point of contact with the *sacer*; border places where that interaction has a maximal chance of success. Each of these places functions as a kind of center—a sacred center—around which our *profanus* reality revolves, and that connects us to the *sacer*. Thus the *omphalos* at Delphi—the Greek word is cognate with the Latin "umbilicus"—suggests a consciousness of that site as propitiously connected to that particular aspect of the *sacer* that offers guidance to human petitioners, divinity articulated, in this case, as the god Apollo.

Similarly, when in Genesis 28, Jacob flees the wrath of his brother Esau, his first night away from home on the way to his uncle's home in Haran is spent in the wilderness—the *sacer*. At night—a *sacer* time—he has a *sacer* experience—a dream—in which he sees some sort of ladder-like entity connecting heaven (*sacer*) and earth (*profanus*) with beings going up and down (moving between *profanus* and *sacer*) on it. When he awakens he is astonished regarding what he has understood to have been a message to him from the *sacer* and asserts that "I did not know that the God of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac dwelt here." He takes the stone upon which he had slept and other stones and creates a tangible marker of that experience to indicate this site as propitious of divine-human contact: a high place—an *altar* (from the Latin *altus*, meaning "high"—see the English word "altitude")—and to his descendants, that place, called *Beit-El* (Hebrew for "House of

God") will be an important spatial point of *sacer-profanus* contact forever thereafter.

Moreover, to repeat, the *sacer* is inherently neutral in its disposition toward the *profanus*, while its response to and interaction with us is *potentially* either positive or negative. We may sleep and have no dreams, or we may dream and the dreams are not particularly memorable, or they can be so sweet that we don't wish to wake up or so nightmarish that we cannot wait to get out of them and remain profoundly disturbed by them long after we are awake. In the woods my fairy-god-mother may touch me on the shoulder and give me three wishes that transform my life wonderfully—or wild beasts may attack me and tear me apart. When we die nothing may happen—or we may go to a wonderful place called heaven or paradise or a horrific place called hell. When we seek contact with divinity, it may not respond at all, or it may respond in an altogether positive way by giving us precisely what we need or in an enraged manner that is intensely destructive to us.

So: the *sacer* is that which is outside and beyond the *profanus*. The *profanus* may be understood as the community, and the *sacer* is beyond and outside the community. It is not only the realm of gods and animals and foreigners—friend or foe—but even a member of the community who becomes estranged from it is by definition *sacer*. Some individuals are habitually half out of the community: prophets and seers, priests and pharaohs: beings who are both part of the community but stand apart from it and possess a unique connection to the *sacer*. Such beings are termed *sacerdotes* (*sacerdos* in the singular)—a word that attaches the suffix "-*dos*," from the Latin "*do, dare*," meaning "to give"—to the noun/adjective "*sacer*."

Thus such individuals can give to us what the *sacer* would have us be (its instructions) and give to the *sacer* what we need from it (our petitions). Differently, heroes are also *sacerdotes*: Akhilleus is literally comprised of both divine (*sacer*) and human (*profanus*) elements; Odysseus, while fully human, has an unusual connection to the divine *sacer*—Athene—who makes it possible for him to accomplish and to survive dangers that ordinary humans cannot (and in the case of his crew, do not) accomplish or survive. Even—symptomatic of the inherently paradoxic nature of the *sacer*—among the *sacer* gods, a divinity like Hermes is also a *sacerdos*: a

liminal character who, as a messenger and *psychopompos* (guide of souls into Hades), straddles the *sacer* and *profanus* realms.

Religion is that construct that articulates this understanding of reality and seems to have existed as long as humans have. Its purpose is to bind us back to divinity as that aspect of the *sacer* that is the source that has made us. We can see this in the Latin term from which the word itself derives: *religio*, whose three etymological components are *re-*, (meaning "back" or "again"); *l-vowel* (usually "i" or "e" and in this case "i")-*g*, meaning "binding" (as in *lig*aments, or *lig*atures); and the suffix, -*io*, indicating that it is a grammatically feminine-gendered noun. The purpose *within* the purpose of "binding us back"—to the source that we believe has made us—is survival. Based on the belief that that which has created something can destroy it—can hinder or further it, help or harm it, curse or bless it—religion has, as far back as humans have existed, sought to ensure that the relationship between divinity and ourselves has a positive and not a negative outcome.

Religious rite and ritual regulate the separation between *sacer* and *profanus*, and guide us toward the appropriate times, places and manner of transgressing the boundaries between realms. One might ask how we know what the proper rituals are and where and when to perform them so that divinity is pleased and not offended by our performance. The answer resonates with the larger problematic of religion, and not just its rites and ceremonies. Every religious tradition offers revelation as its starting point; every tradition believes that there are individuals—*sacerdotes*; prophets and priests—to whom and through whom divinity communicates, revealing itself and instructing them with regard to guiding their constituents in general terms as they relate to the *sacer* and specifically with regard to rituals and ceremonies, whether communal or individual, on a defined periodic basis or occasionally.[18]

This entire matrix of ideas can be understood in a succinct manner by considering the Roman inscription in which the term "*sacer*" first appears (albeit in a pre-classical form); this is the earliest Latin inscription available to us. It is found on an object called the *lapis niger*—the black stone—that, as early as the seventh pre-Christian century, marked the boundary between the amorphous

center (the old forum) of the early town (village, really, at that point) of Rome and an area that was separate and dedicated to a goddess, perhaps Diana.

The inscription indicates that whoever upsets this boundary stone—together with his cattle (presumably a symbol of wealth and well-being)—will be *sacer*. The inscription offers us three obvious questions: What exactly does "*sacer*" mean in this context? Why would someone who upset the stone become *sacer*? What might that individual do, assuming that the condition of being *sacer* is not a desideratum, to reverse that condition? The intention is obviously to curse the individual—so "*sacer*" means "cursed"—but in practical, actualized terms it means "not be part of the *profanus*." Since the *profanus* is, in effect, the community, the individual so-labeled, no longer part of the *profanus*, is estranged from the community. As a further practical consequence, s/he is no longer protected by that which binds a community together—its *religio* and its *leges* (laws)—and may be assumed to be at potential risk: if she has enemies, this condition will offer them a chance to do her in.

So the offender had better leave town quickly, for his own protection. But that departure has a more profound motivation: to protect the community. The offending individual must be separated from those around him because, within the reality of *sacer/profanus* relations as they are governed by religion—a realm of analogues—every boundary connotes the ultimate *sacer-profanus* boundary. Thus, to upset any boundary (particularly one that marks the separation between an area set aside for a goddess and the area of human action) is potentially to upset the ultimate boundary between the community and its gods—or in this case, a particular goddess—thereby inviting their (her) wrath upon the entire community. So the offender must disconnect himself from the community in order to draw the anger of the goddess onto him and away from the community of which he was formerly part.

This situation is well exemplified in the Greek story of Oidipos. At the outset of Sophokles' play, *Oidipos the King*, the city of Thebes of which Oidipos is the ruler has been decimated by plague. By the end of the play, he, they and we have learned that Oidipos is himself the unwitting source of the plague, because he has—again, unwittingly—killed his own father and married his own mother,

producing four children with her, and thereby offended the gods. In order for the plague to be removed, Oidipos leaves Thebes, going into exile accompanied by the more loyal of his two daughters.

The last of the three loosely-linked plays on this topic that Sophokles (ca 497/6-406/5 BCE) wrote (*Oidipos at Colonus*) presents Oidipos years later, having made amends to the gods, having assuaged the gods' anger, permitting him to die in peace, albeit never having returned, and never having desired to return, to Thebes. But what of the offender who has disturbed a goddess by disturbing the *lapis niger*—what if, unlike Oidipos, she wishes to return to the community? How is it possible for her to make amends to the offended goddess and to return? She must first of all consult someone who will be able to answer that question: a *sacerdos*.

The *sacerdos* will inevitably instruct him along three lines all of which converge on the principle of precision. At a precisely prescribed sacerdotal place, at a precisely prescribed—almost inevitably, a border-type—time, he must perform a precisely prescribed ritual. Any number of rituals may fill out this third aspect of the process, but more than likely it will involve making something other than herself *sacer*. "To make *sacer*" in Latin is "*sacer facere*." Certainly a very common sort of ritual would involve taking some animal—perhaps a lamb, or a goat, or a bull—and then slaying it (in a precisely prescribed manner), thus making it *sacer*, since death is an aspect of the *sacer*.

This must have happened pretty frequently, under diverse conditions, since ultimately the two words, *sacer facere*, coalesced to produce one word: *sacrificare*—that becomes "to sacrifice" in English. But the Latin term, meaning "to make *sacer*" does not only or necessarily mean to slay—although to go to the gods, while it implies going to immortal life (a positive outcome), at the same time, does mean "to die" in the sense of being separated from human affairs (a presumably negative outcome in most people's view).[19] In any case, the animal that is slain (if that is the process) by the one who disturbed the *lapis niger* is both *sacer* in being a gift to the goddess to atone for the offender's guilt and, if it has indeed been killed, is also *sacer* in that death is an aspect of the *sacer* realm.

It is very likely that part of the process—before slitting the animal's throat—will be to touch it; to lay one's hands upon it,

transferring the guilt for the offense from the *sacer* individual to the animal by physical contact. We may recognize this sort of process in the account of what happened on the annual Day of Atonement in the courtyard of the Jerusalem Temple of the Israelites and Judaeans. The High Priest, who was understood to have taken upon his shoulders a year's worth of God-offending sins from the entire people, laid his hands on a goat—the *Azaz-El*, as it was called in Hebrew, rendered in English as "scapegoat"—that was then pushed off the precipice of the Temple Mount into the valley below that led out into the Judaean wilderness. Put otherwise, then, the *Azaz-El*, to which those sins had been transferred by the laying on of the High Priest's hands, was made *sacer*—protecting the *profanus* by being made *sacer*—in the sense either of perishing (assuming that it died in the fall into the valley) or of wandering out into the wilderness (if it did not die). Or both. Either way, the sins were conveyed into the *sacer*, away from the *profanus*.

Of course, we must distinguish a ceremony that was an annual event—or periodic according to whatever timetable—and enacted by a *sacerdos* on behalf of the community, from one that involved an individual who has committed a one-time offense that requires expiation, as in the *lapis niger* context. But in both cases the same fundamental methodological issue is operative—precision with regard to time, space and ritual act, and border/boundary contexts for all three aspects of that precision—and the same fundamental goal: to protect the communal *profanus* from the potentially negative action toward it by the *sacer* in its overwhelming aspect as divinity. The need for precision offers an inherent paradox. For the realm of the *sacer* is by definition spaceless and timeless—it may not be boxed in with *profanus*-style borders—yet our engagement of it with such precision does just that.

Moreover, both the communal/periodic and the individual/occasional types of situations underscore the above-noted paradox of the *sacer*: that it is inherently neutral but potentially negative or positive in its disposition toward the *profanus*. For the animal that is sacrificed—made *sacer*—particularly if that means that it is killed, may be assumed by us to experience a negative fate, if we understand death as a fate that is negative. But if we think that death is "going to a better place" then that fate is positive. To become one

with the gods, since they are also *sacer*—assuming that the gods are at least partly good if not mostly good; and if there is only one God, that that God is even understood to be all-good—can only be a positive experience, while at the same time most of us are likely to prefer to live than to die, which means that it is perceived to be a negative experience.

There remains at least one further pressing question evoked by this discussion: how do the *sacerdotes* whom we consult about all of this know what they know so that they may instruct us as to what to do under whatever *sacer*-related circumstances we encounter? How are they privy to the information that they provide for us? It is *revealed* to them. Every religious tradition, as we have observed above, offers as its starting point the conviction that there are certain individuals who are particularly conducive to s*acer-profanus* contact, as there are certain times and places that are.

The beliefs concerning revelation carry within them a layered complication that pertains to the second part of the process of religion: interpretation. We might ask how precisely divinity communicates with the sacerdotal individuals to whom it reveals itself and through these individuals communicates to the *profanus*. Does it have a voice as we do? Does it shape words with a throat, tongue, teeth and lips? When in Exodus 3 Moses "encounters" God at/through the Burning Bush, how exactly does Moses perceive the God that pushes him to return to Egypt and engage the Pharaoh toward allowing the Israelites to go free? And did Moses correctly understand the Lord—standing before the Burning Bush, and later on, when he and the Israelites were standing at the edge of the Sea of Reeds (Ex 14:16), or later still when, following the death of his sister, Miriam, he would importune God on behalf of the people to provide them with water and is told to speak to the rock (Numbers 20:8)?

For Moses—even Moses—is not infallible in his understanding of God's word. In his hurry to return to Egypt from the wilderness of Midian, he completely forgets to circumcise his son—God almost slays Moses for this omission, his error corrected through the remedial action of his wife, Tzipporah (Ex 4:24-7). And instead of speaking to the rock, Moses hits it—twice—with his staff (Num 20:11), provoking the anger of God, and thus, "because you did

not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them! (Num 20:12)" Thus the greatest of Israelite prophets will be denied entrance into the Promised Land toward which he leads his flock for 40 years in the wilderness, for having misconstrued the word of the Lord.

So a prophet, however great, is still human and humans make mistakes, including that of misinterpreting revelations. And what happens when the prophet is gone? The texts that eventuate—for example, the Torah, the Gospels, the Qur'an—are all written down well after the events that they describe and the oral shaping of those texts by the prophets to whom their content has been revealed by God. How incontrovertibly accurate are such texts, written down after the prophet has left us—and thus reliant in part, at least, on the memory of those writing it all down?

As often as not, the text as we receive it in writing may be sufficiently obscure that we need to interpret it carefully in order to understand God's intentions. What exactly does it mean "not [to] seethe a kid in its mother's milk" (Ex 23:19) for the purposes of an everyday traditional Jew in the twenty-first century? Why and how does it come to mean that he may not eat a cheeseburger, or either drink a glass of milk with her steak or follow that steak immediately with an ice cream sundae? A series of interpretations pertaining to the underlying intent of the commandment and also connecting it to a different commandment—to "build a fence around the roof of your house that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone should fall from it" (Deut 22:8)—and its own interpretative chain lead, in combination, to this post-steak, sundae-less conclusion.[20]

This issue of distinguishing revelation from interpretation and correct interpretation from false may be seen in any number of contexts. It is not limited to the Abrahamic traditions that include Judaism, Christianity and Islam, for instance, but encompasses other faiths, as well. The issue, in short, carries far and wide.

In ancient pagan Greece, these issues center in particular on that most important of sites, Delphi, with its *omphalos* and its Pythian *sacerdos*. She sat on her tripod over a cleft in the earth from which noxious fumes apparently emerged, enveloping her

and in-spiriting her—causing her to babble in a manner well-nigh incomprehensible to ordinary people. It fell to the priests to interpret her ravings and transmit the messages of the god, Apollo, to those inquiring of the oracle. In turn, the statements of the priests might be obscure, so the inquirer, departing the site, would have to decide what exactly the words of the god had been and had meant.

Perhaps the most notorious instance of a misinterpretation is that recorded by Herodotos in his *Histories*. In that work the "Father of History" tells the story of Croesus, the enormously wealthy King of Lydia, who is not sure whether or not to wage war against the Medo-Persians and their shah, Cyrus the Great, in 547 BCE. The oracle informs him that if he does so, he "will destroy a great kingdom." It is only after being defeated by Cyrus that Croesus realizes that he had misinterpreted the oracle: the great kingdom that he destroyed was his own.

Moreover, both the sense of how the divine *sacer* is configured and of what awaits us in the *sacer* of afterlife are not a constant throughout Greek history and culture; perceptions and beliefs and interpretations evolve. If, for instance, a Homeric audience understood death to be an intense condition of deprivation, as suggested in *Odyssey* 11, Sokrates and hopefully his audience saw it as offering wonderful opportunities for learning about the Truth that the *profanus* of life made more difficult to access.

All of this in any case, as we shall see, offers important and interesting contexts within which the problematic of *eros* and its relationship to *eris* may be seen to play out for the Greeks and Romans in their literary legacy—and to reverberate from that legacy down through the centuries.[21]

Chapter One

Hesiod's *Theogony*: The Beginning of Reality

The question of creation is an inherently vexing one, for at least two reasons. One, that no human was around when it began, to witness it, so that knowledge of it can only have come from a divine source that vouchsafes the information to some human—a prophet, like Moses, or a poet like Hesiod (that is: a *sacerdos*). Two, if the Creator is by definition something other than what we humans are—even if we assume, by paradox, that some of the Creator is breathed into us and that therefore there is a bit of us that is like the Creator and conversely a bit of the Creator that is like us—then anything we say about It/Him/Her/Them—*anything*—is said from our own perspective, our own understanding, our own reality. Thus, if I say, for example, that God is all-powerful and all-just, I must understand these descriptives as metaphors: I have no way of knowing what "power" and "justice" truly mean in God's terms, only my own.

Language, which so extends our species beyond others, is nonetheless a limited and limiting instrument: if someone could even come up with a definitive account of a fairly common aspect of human reality, parental love, for instance, or beautiful sunsets, then poets would stop writing about these things. How much the more so if the object of our description is beyond anything within our reality. So everything we say about divinity falls short of being absolute; every attribute that we ascribe to (the) God(s) is an approximation at best, derived from our own sense of things.

The earliest work of surviving Greek literature that addresses the question of how the world—the *kosmos*, or "order"—came into being is Hesiod's *Theogony*: "The Coming to Be of the Gods." Hesiod

(fl ca 700-650 BCE), a poet who also wrote on very down to earth topics as they relate to the history of humankind in its relationship to the gods, as in his *Works and Days*, cannot obviously have been there when the gods came into being. So he is a poet whose work may be understood as analogous to that which adherents to the Abrahamic religions associate with prophecy. Both prophets and poets are *sacerdotes* in-spirited—inspired—by divinity with the other-worldly knowledge that they possess and which they share in their utterances. Not surprisingly, Hesiod spends the first 115 lines of his poem invoking the gods, by way of their handmaidens, the muses, to inspire him not only with the skill to tell their story effectively but with a true understanding of the details that shape the story that he is about to tell.[22]

When the poet arrives past that long invocation to the substance of his tale he informs us that *Khaos* came into being first. This Greek term—from the verb, *khaomai*, meaning "to yawn," and cognate with the English word, "chasm"—implies a vast emptiness, although if one considers its English-language derivative, "chaos," one realizes that *kosmos* could be understood as the filling of the void with physical matter as much as organizing a radically disorganized mess into order; it ends up at the same place. The point is that this beginning is followed by a rapid filling in: Earth (*Gaia*) first, and then *Eros*, "the most beautiful of the immortal gods," and then Darkness, Night—out of which came Light and Day; after which Earth produced Heaven (*Ouranos*), "to cover her on all sides" (126).

Earth and Heaven together produce a whole slew of offspring, from Ocean (*Okeanos*) to Memory (*Mnemosyne*), culminating with Kronos, "the youngest and boldest of her [Earth's] children" (137). There are three things that stand out as the narrative proceeds. One is the absence of a simple, straightforward, linear chronology of creation, as we shall see more fully shortly. Two is the way in which both abstract concepts and natural elements begin to assume anthropomorphic qualities. Three is how quickly relationships among these beings that we might expect to be dominated by love are instead dominated by strife. For *Ouranos* "their father hated them from the beginning," and, as the last of them emerged into the light—three huge creatures, each with a hundred arms and

fifty heads—"he hid them all away in the bowels of Mother Earth; Heaven took pleasure in doing this evil thing" (154-5).

This ultimately became unbearable for Gaia, for "in spite of her enormous size, [she] felt the strain within her and groaned." She came up with a plan, however, and using a new metal—iron—that she produced, she fashioned a huge sickle.

> Then she laid the matter before her children, the anguish in her heart making her speak boldly: "My children, you have a savage father; if you will listen to me, we may be able to take vengeance for his evil outrage: he was the one who started using violence" (163-7).

All of her children are afraid to take up the challenge, however—except Kronos, the youngest of the group later (as we shall see) called the Titans. So

> She hid him in ambush and put in his hands the sickle with jagged teeth, and instructed him fully in her plot. Huge Heaven came drawing night behind him and desiring to make love; he lay on top of Earth stretched all over her. Then from his ambush his son reached out with his left hand and with his right took the huge sickle with its long teeth and quickly sheared the organs (*medea*) from his own father and threw them away, backward over his shoulder (174-82).

So between generations and genders—husband-wife and father-son—two genres of relationship where we might hope for and expect love, instead we encounter strife of a rather extreme variety. The context—a reality before our reality has come into existence—also interweaves natural forces and their anthropomorphization. Thus we might understand that Kronos hides in a cave in mother earth, which we may also understand to be the entrance to her womb—her vaginal orifice. So, too, Heaven, self-evidently spread over the earth as night falls and the separation between them—

the horizon line—disappears, follows (or sets an example for) the human custom of love-making at night, male lying on top of female.

The Greek verb that is rendered above as "sheared"—*emese*—also connotes the idea "harvested," (as grain would be cut down/harvested with a sickle such as Kronos wields)—appropriate to an eristic act that yields a very fertile outcome. For while out of the bloody drops that were a by-product of this act, the Erinyes (Furies, but more literally, "Strife-bound ones") were eventually born, the organs were thrown by Kronos into the sea, where they floated around for a while until "white foam (*aphros*) issued from the divine flesh, and in the foam a girl began to grow" (191-2).

> First she came near to holy Cythera, then reached Cyprus, the land surrounded by sea. There she stepped out, a goddess, tender and beautiful, and round her slender feet the green grass shot up. She is called Aphrodite by gods and men, because she grew in the foam (*aphros*), and also Kytherea, because she came near to Kythera (Cythera), and Kyprogeneia, because she was born in watery Kypros (Cyprus), and also Philommedea (organ-loving), because she appeared from organs (*medea*). Eros and beautiful Himeros (Passion) were her attendants both at her birth and at her first going to join the family of the gods (192-202).

So out of the eristic act of castration, the goddess of love and beauty is born. Moreover, she is born during the time of the Titans, a "generation," one might say, before the other Olympians will be born, although she will be one of them, underscoring for us that we cannot understand the chronology of the narrative in the linear terms that are standard in our reality. This is what we might expect from a time that, in being pre-time as we know it, is *sacer* and not *profanus*, and which deals entirely with *sacer* creatures, for whom time is an altogether different construct from what it is for us humans. The non-linearity is further underscored by the presentation of Eros as attending her washing up onto the shores of Kypros, having been referred to as coming into existence at the

same time Gaia did, right after *Khaos* came into being—yet in the classical Greek tradition Eros will be treated as if he is the son of Aphrodite.[23]

This, too, is the point at which the dominant group within the generation of supernatural, pre-human-time beings led by Kronos is first called by the term "Titans,"—so-named by Ouranos, "because of his feud with them: he said that they blindly had tightened/strained [from the Greek verb, *titaino*] the noose and had done a savage thing for which they would have to pay in time to come."

That time is, in pre-time terms, not far off. Another series of concept-creatures is produced by Night, such as Destruction (*ate*), Specter, Death, as well as Sleep and Dreams, and next, Blame and Grief, as well as Retribution, "then Deceit and Love and accursed Old age and stubborn Strife. So Love (*Eros*) and Strife (*Eris*) are born at the same time—although Eros was also already created earlier on, and although Aphrodite is the personification of Eros, even as she presides over Eros and even as Eros is present at her birth but also her son. There follows a long delineation of others born in the timeless time stretching forth, in which, to repeat, creatures share qualities of being abstract, being forces of nature and being anthropomorphic. Among those birthed during the next several hundred verses are the gods.

With them, the drama of *eris-eros* interweave moves into the next act. For

> Rhea submitted to the embraces of Kronos and bore him children with a glorious destiny: Hestia, Demeter, and Hera… Hades… Poseidon… and Zeus the lord of wisdom, the father of the gods and men, whose thunder makes the broad earth tremble. As each of these children came out of their mother's holy womb onto her knees, great Kronos swallowed them. His purpose was to prevent the kingship of the gods from passing to another one of the august descendants of Ouranos; he had been told by Gaia and starry Ouranos that he was destined to be overcome by his own son.

Once again, then, inter-genderal and inter-generational strife where we might hope for love prevails. For the Greek verb that is here rendered as "submitted" (*dmetheisa*, from *damao*) can imply a forced/subdued/conquered condition, as opposed to one done in mutual affection or passion. And this time the paternal perpetrator swallows up each of his would-be off-spring as soon as he or she is born. Interestingly—in another example of how divine behavior mirrors human behavior (or is it that *we* emulate *them*?)—Rhea turns to both her parents, Gaia and Ouranos, the would-be grandparents of her children, to assist her against her husband, Kronos, the obstructive parent of those children. So one might say that, in the case, at least, of Ouranos (who is apparently quite reconciled with Gaia; they are a pair that doesn't age, yet grows old together, peacefully) a bit of revenge against the son who castrated him is made possible: they formulate a plan, together, "whereby she [Rhea] might bear her children without Kronos' knowing it, and make amends to the vengeful spirits of her father Ouranos" (471-3).

Heaven and Earth tell Rhea what destiny has in store for

> Kronos and his bold son. When she was about to give birth to great Zeus, her youngest child, they sent her to the rich Cretan town of Lyktos [a town that somehow, already existed]. Huge Mother Earth undertook to nurse and raise the infant in the broad land of Create. Dark night was rushing on as Gaia arrived there carrying him, and Lyktos was the first place where she stopped. She took him and hid him in an inaccessible cave, deep in the bowels of holy earth, in the dense woods of Mount Aegaeon (477-84).

One of the first things we might notice is how limited the knowledge of Kronos is regarding things future and even things in the present: the would-be victim of his fearful voraciousness can be spirited away and hidden from him without his realizing that it has happened, much less where the victim is hidden. Moreover, Gaia then "wrapped a huge stone in baby blankets and handed it"

to Kronos, who swallowed it without realizing "that a stone had replaced his son, who survived, unconquered and untroubled, and who was going to overcome him by force and drive him from his office and reign over the gods in his place" (488-91).

The fear of being overtaken by his son is what generated Kronos' eristic behavior toward his offspring and in turn generated the plot against him by his wife and his own parents. Years later, in fact, Kronos was again tricked by his mother, Gaia, and vomited up the stone and all the gods that he had swallowed as infants; Kronos' brothers were also set free by Zeus "from the cruel chains in which their father Ouranos had in foolish frenzy bound them." These victims of paternal *eris* would of course be grateful to their nephew, giving him the thunderbolt and the lightning flash in gratitude.

Shortly after this part of the narrative, humans enter the picture, without much explanation as to exactly when, where or why, but the story of Prometheus' gifts to humans—most importantly, fire—and Zeus' anger as a consequence; and the creation of the spectacular human female, Pandora ("all-gifts," for the immortals seem to have given her every gift that would make her perfect); suggests if not a less-than-wonderful birth, a quickly diminishing condition for humans. Woman is blamed for bringing into being all things catastrophic for humankind, a far-from-unique perspective within the realm of creation stories shaped by men.

Meanwhile the long-incarcerated "Hundred-Armed ones—Briareos, Kottos, and Gyges… restored to the light by Zeus and the other gods born of the loves of Kronos and fair-haired Rhea" (617, 624-5) decide, in gratitude, to join Zeus and the gods as they continue to fight a war against Kronos and the Titans—the gods from Mount Olympos and the Titans from the top of Mount Othrys—that had been going on for ten years, with the two sides fully balanced. "Then the Olympians provided the Hundred-Arms [Briareos, Kottos, and Gyges] with full equipment, with nectar and ambrosia, the gods' own food, and restored their fighting spirit,[24] … [t]he limitless expanse of the sea echoed terribly; the earth rumbled loudly; and the broad area of the heavens shook and groaned" (640-1, 678-80). The decision of these huge monsters to support Zeus, combined with his decision, finally, not "to restrain his own power [any] longer, [so that] a sudden surge of energy filled his spirit,

and he exerted all the strength he had... [caused] the whole earth's ocean-streams and the barren sea to begin to boil… The sight there was to see, and the noise there was to hear, made it seem as if the Earth and vast Heaven were colliding" (687-8, 695, 701-3), and in the end the Titans were finally beaten, and tied up deep beneath the earth—in the lowest region of Tartaros—with "cruel chains."

The further outcome of this victory, "when the Olympian gods had brought their struggle to a successful end" was that Earth suggested that they invite Zeus "to be king and lord over the gods," which they did. He in turn distributed among the gods their various rights and privileges. We are then presented with a review of all of Zeus's consorts, from Metis (Wisdom) to Themis (Law) to Eurynome (of Broad Pastures), the daughter of Okeanos; and then Demeter (Earth Mother—but not to be confused with the Earth herself, Gaia)—followed by Mnemosyne (Memory) and then Leto, which last union yielded the twin Olympians Apollo and Artemis; and finally, Hera (with whom, among others, he fathered Ares, God of war), who would be his enduring consort.

That said, the relationship between Zeus and Hera is depicted as fraught with both love and strife. He produces Athene out of his own head, without a consort, and "Hera, in turn, in resentment and jealousy, without union with her husband, produced famous Hephaistos, the master craftsman…" (929-32).[25] Hera's resentment might certainly be understood, given the continuum of Zeus' extra-marital dalliances: with Maia, Atlas' daughter (who gave birth to Hermes) and also with mortal women, such as Semele, who bore Dionysos, and Alkmene, who gave birth to Herakles—the figure with whom our own narrative began, as it were.

Other stories then briefly focus on mortals who had particularly strong connections to the Olympians, by blood-line or otherwise. Thus, toward the end of the poem both Kirke (Circe) and Kalypso are mentioned, both minor goddesses who had relations with Odysseus, the Akhaian hero from Ithake who was forced to wander for ten years after the end of the Trojan War—seven of which years he spent with the second of these goddesses and one year with the first—who survived the long journey home thanks to his being favored by Athene, and whose story will shape the third chapter of this narrative.

Aside from the reference to Odysseus that comes at the end of the *Theogony*—and not all scholars agree that the last 74 verses in which that reference is embedded were actually originally part of the poem—the only mention of humans is the occasional, somewhat anachronistic mention of them, as we have noted. They would seem to be an afterthought, as far as the *Theogony* is concerned, but make a fuller-fledged appearance in a second work by Hesiod, the *Works and Days*, which, within the context of what is ostensibly a treatise advising humans—directed in form to the poet's brother, Perses, (who is thus a stand-in for all of us), regarding how to be in the world and how, most specifically, to farm properly—presents a precis of human history as a process of degeneration.

A more detailed elaboration in the *Works and Days* of Prometheus' gift of fire to humans, against the will of Zeus, and the shaping of Pandora as punishment—through the false gift brought to her by Epimetheus (the brother of Prometheus) from Zeus, the jar filled with sicknesses and troubles—underscores the admonition that "[t]here is no way to avoid what Zeus has intended" (105). From this prelude comes the human genealogy that moves from a generation of gold, followed by one of silver, "far worse than the other" (128), and in turn by a generation of bronze. The generation of heroes that follows is presented as better and nobler than that of bronze, "but of these too, evil war and the terrible carnage took some" (161)—some at Thebes (the story of the offspring of Oidipos) and others at Troy, while others were settled by Zeus in "a country of their own, apart from humankind, at the end of the world… in the islands of the blessed by the deep-swirling stream of the ocean" 167-9).

Hesiod's own—our—generation is referred to as an age of iron, the most degenerate of the five, "yet here also there shall be some good things mixed with the evils. But Zeus will destroy this generation of mortals also, in the time when children, as they are born, grow grey in the temples, when the father no longer agrees with the children nor the children with the father, when guest is no longer at one with host, nor companion to companion, when your brother is no longer your friend, as he was in the old days" (180-5). In that era that is fast-arriving, "men will deprive their parents of all rights as they grow old… (185). There will be no favor for the man

who keeps his oath, for the righteous and good man… (190). The spirit of Envy, with grim face and screaming voice, who delights in evil, will be the constant companion of wretched humanity … (195). And there shall be no defense against evil" (200).

It is a dark vision of humankind, its evolution and its fateful direction—but not altogether surprising in a world the very shaping of which, from the advent of *khaos* to the assumption of power by the Olympian gods, is understood to be marked by such violent expressions of strife, even—particularly—in contexts where we might hope for love to dominate. If the coming into being of the gods is dominated by the presence of *eris* interwoven with *eros* at its most potentially powerful, then what can one expect of the world of humans?

As the narratives of the lives of the Olympians expand into a rich and complex tapestry, further threads underscoring this interweave will reveal themselves. Most directly will be the betrayal by Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, of her husband, Hephaistos, impelled by Eros itself who is both a witness to her birth and her son: she engages in an intense affair with Ares, god of war—whose sister is Eris. If love may be said to conquer war, in fact that conquest yields both laughter (when Hephaistos captures the naked Ares and Aphrodite in an unbreakable golden net, and all the gods come to seem them thusly humbled) and strife among the gods.

Laughter, because ultimately the gods never pay a price for what they do wrong: they don't grow ill, don't grow old, and don't die, so they have all the time in the world to correct any mistakes that they might make. Mortals, on the other hand, live lives that are relatively short, and are constantly confronted with choices in which, when they mis-choose, they only find out the error when it is too late to avert the disasters that mis-choices yield for humans. This is one of the ways in which the early Greeks perceived the human condition to be ironic: that we achieve the kind of knowledge that might save us when it is too late to be saved because of the mistake(s) made in ignorance.

Cognate with this sense of paradox is the co-existence of ideas that, in our reality, cannot co-exist—like mortality and immortality. So: like all non-divine species, we die; but unlike

the other species we wonder and worry about what immortality might be, and express a yearning for it. The most stupendous of the characters in the heroic age of which Hesiod speaks exemplify this *in extremis*, which is why, in large part, they are heroes: they are like you and me, only more so, and that "moreness" is facilitated by their connections—that you and I don't possess—to divinities.

Within the Theban narrative centered around Oidipos that Hesiod specifically references, that character (as we shall discuss more fully later, in Chapter Five), exemplifies the irony of human ignorance in the face of choice-making. He stands—literally—at a cross-roads—twice, in fact. At one he meets and kills his father, not knowing that it is his father; at a second he meets the Sphinx and solves her riddle, saving Thebes of her murderous presence. At a crossroads one must choose: does one go to the right or to the left? Were we gods looking from above, we would recognize that there is a third choice: to go back whence we came. In graphic terms, (picture a kind of wish-bone seen from above), this particular aspect of irony is to mistake the number of choices: one thinks that there are two when there are three, or where there is really one; or thinks that there is only one when there are two. The human experience is fraught with these, all along the paths of our lives.

The further narrative of the human experience in *Works and Days* suggests how thoroughly Zeus keeps an eye on our activities (232), so that those who commit evil acts ultimately find that the evil recoils back upon them, for unlike the wild beasts who simply feed on each other, humans were gifted by Zeus with justice (279). Thus, he has set before us two roads, the road toward evil, which is smooth and easy; and "[t]he road to virtue, [which] is long and goes steep up hill, hard climbing at first, but the last of it, when you get to the summit, (if you get there), is easy going after the hard part" (290-91). The poet enjoins Perses (and through him, us) to work hard, for the gods don't favor idleness; and poverty, derived from laziness, is disgraceful. Mistreating family and friends draws the anger of Zeus, who loves the pious.

Hesiod's instructions continue: "when you deal with your brother, be pleasant, but get a witness, for too much trustfulness, and too much suspicion, have proved men's undoing" (371-2)—in other words, don't trust anyone. And start your work before dawn

and early in the season—whether to sow or to reap. Plan ahead. Take good care of your (farming) equipment. Make your prayers to Zeus and to Demeter. And if instead of farming you have to go to sea (against which he advises), he suggests the best time to sail—not from experience, but from inspiration, "for the Muses have taught me to sing immortal poetry" (661). We are reminded, therefore, of the source of the poet's knowledge of matters both divine and human.

He concludes with a run-down on which days of the month are best for what, within the context of reminding Perses to be pious, to pray to the gods, to limit the number of friends he makes, to marry at an ideal time (age 30, to a woman of 18) and to raise a family properly—while noting that everything is, ultimately, unpredictable within the human experience, but those who follow the kind of advice that he has laid out are most likely to succeed and be happy.

Within the Trojan War narrative to which Hesiod specifically refers in the course of what is intended as an everyman's sermon-narrative, the consummate hero-symbol is Akhilleus: the son of a goddess (the sea-nymph, Thetis) and a mortal father, Peleus. He will be confronted with the choice of choices when Odysseus comes along to push him to join the other Akhaians in the great war at Troy. Unlike ordinary mortals—thanks to his divine connection—he knows something about his death: that if he goes and fights at Troy, he is fated to die there; but he will gain a kind of immortality: *kleos aphthiton* ("undying glory") on that battlefield. His reluctant choice—to go to Troy and fight—helps form the backdrop of the most majestic of Greek epics, the *Iliad*, in which the intersplicing of love with strife reflected in divine reality in the *Theogony* is explored in the great conflict in which gods participate with men. It is to this epic that we turn in the chapter that follows.