

Creation Account Comparisons

This is not meant to be a definitive comparison, but it should help clarify the specific concerns of the *Theogony* if we look at the similar and different issues addressed in creation accounts that are roughly contemporary with it, closely related culturally with it, and/or later classical literary alternatives (Ovid). The outline should be elaborated, corrected, and modified as you think best.

HESIOD:

<p>Nature = (initial state, inherent qualities)</p>	<p>excess of creative immanent energy--tense, competitive, dynamic proliferation of beings emanating from and procreated by Gaia, a teeming fecundity--Eros and Aphrodite at large and uncontrolled</p>
<p>Goal = (Problem to be solved)</p>	<p>need for the sovereignty of a single force to produce unity, order, stability, and permanence within the dynamic world</p>
<p>Means =</p>	<p>acts of conquest and procreation, exercise of power, struggle between generations, the harnessing of potentially disruptive powers and skills of prior generations--i.e., Zeus brings the Cyclopes, Giants, Styx, Hecate, Metis, etc. over to his side through gift-exchange and other means--including a smarter version of his father's 'incorporation' of his own offspring. Cronos swallows his children to keep them from becoming powerful rivals. Zeus swallows Metis so that she won't have a son and so that her daughter will be a guarantor of his own power. He may or may not definitively usurp the power of female creativity, but he certainly becomes the controller of female fertility. Gaea is subdued.</p> <p>The success of Zeus is dependent upon his use of a combination of Brute Force and Cunning Intelligence and upon the mastery of complex interactions with all parts of the universe--the successful king ruling a hierarchically structured, diverse cosmos. He masters the creative immanent energy, controls proliferation, organizes competitive interactions. Though Aphrodite is still at large in this cosmos, Zeus extricates himself from the succession one generation by the next; partly he does this by displacing the disorderliness of women and succession onto the human race, which will from now on be defined by familial struggle.</p>

<u>Progression</u> =	<p>in the direction of civilized sovereignty and control and explaining the current benevolent, improved state of things (with some qualification because of Prometheus, of course)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — from arbitrary force and oppressive tyranny (Uranus) to just, political rule (Zeus) — from a natural/unnatural world (the offspring of Pontus and Uranus) to a human-centered world order (the offspring of Cronus and Zeus). The Titans themselves are an intermediate stage; about half of them represent bodies of the natural world (rivers, stars, etc.), whereas Cronus and Rhea's children are aimed at the human world. <p>The myth of the 5 ages, of course, posits the opposite direction: from leisured paradise to debased and depraved wickedness.</p>
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<u>Humanity</u> =	<p>clearly demarcated, though not severed, from the gods. Because of Prometheus' 'benefaction,' we come to be distinct from both divine society and the animal world, and we lose what <u>may</u> have been a privileged position of interaction with the gods and now live under totally ambiguous conditions:</p> <p>we live in a world inhabited by both the offspring of Chaos/Night (abstract evils) and those of Zeus (primarily goods)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — and between the offspring of Nereus and Oceanus (the benefits, glories of SEA and RIVERS) and those of Pontos (primarily monsters) — between Olympus and Tartarus — between Aphrodite and Athena, etc. — between Pandora's gifts and those of the Graces and Muses — i.e., within a cosmos characterized by all the ambiguous benefits and difficulties of what we call 'civilization,' a cosmos filled still with contradiction, but enjoying, as a whole, stability and regularity.
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	<p>We enjoy the benefits and suffer the consequences of living in a world where divinity is everywhere</p> <p>— and everywhere under Zeus' kingship. Though the human race is not 'accounted for' in the poem, the conditions of human life can be inferred from the description of just about every divine, natural, and monstrous being that has come to be. Consequently we live in a world that regulates and fosters all our civilized needs (Order, Justice, Peace, etc.), but also one in which we have become clearly subject to a superior race of beings, who may, because of Prometheus, be distinctly hostile to us—although this 'hostility' may just be what indifference looks like from a distance. We, unlike the gods, must live in a mortal world of women, work, and ambiguity. Our future is dependent on agriculture and marriage. The gods have evolved out of the tyranny of succession, but we have devolved into it, and it becomes our more definitive characteristic. If we are lucky, our family life may have some degree of happiness mixed in with its toil and trouble.</p>
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<p>Deity =</p>	<p>immortal, but not eternal, creatures rather than creators, anthropomorphic beings that arise within the cosmos and master it, finally being organized as one big patriarchal family</p> <p>[— from a radical feminist perspective, perhaps, a family and a state built upon the subordination of women]</p> <p>[— from a neo-Freudian perspective, perhaps, a family and state built upon the path of the successful son succeeding to secure fatherhood.]</p>
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OVID:

<u>Nature</u> =	disordered, strife-ridden chaos of elements and forces
<u>Problem</u> =	<u>Change</u> —how to construct order, stability, fixity
<u>Means</u> =	acts of separation, division, shaping, setting boundaries — by and unnamed deity
<u>Progression</u> =	towards static, rigidly bounded, harmonious cosmos (compare life in the golden age—a series of negations)—perhaps a picture of perfect order that is set up to contrast with the poet's evident fascination with constant change and fluidity.
<u>Humanity</u> =	a lofty experiment in the image of the gods, but a dangerous mixture—needing repeated re-working. The final creation is durable, though not unchanging.
<u>Deity</u> =	unaccounted for, but probably viewed as part of the creation. Perhaps Ovid assumes we know how the gods came to be (he assumes Hesiod's text as prerequisite for reading the <i>Metamorphoses</i>). He modifies Hesiod's <i>cosmogony</i> because his own version has thematic importance for his concentration upon CHANGE, but his gods will act much as they do in the Greek traditions, and Ovid is more interested in their stories than in their births. We might note, however, that Jupiter (Zeus) presides over the degeneration of humankind, and he himself is a prodigious 'mixer' of elements and 'changer' of shape. The world of CHANGE is the world as it exists under Jupiter's rule.

GENESIS 1-2:3

Nature =	created and thus distinct from the Creator, who alone is to be worshiped—it is idolatry to worship anything created. The chaotic, unformed 'Deep' that is referred to immediately after 'God created heaven and earth' is usually understood not as pre-existent matter, but as itself the result of God's creating activity—though this is certainly not explicitly stated in the text. And this 'Deep' may be the equivalent of the <i>Enuma Elish's</i> Tiamat—that is, a dark, watery chaos. Thus, in the usual interpretation, creation in Genesis 1 begins with a desolate watery expanse.
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Problem =	Order and Form; the sovereignty of God is not at issue and needs no 'victory,' but sovereignty among the creatures is an issue—i.e., the imposition of order and authority upon teeming fertility
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Means =	God summons the cosmos into being--systematic and planned separation of elements and production of distinct life-forms —by divine word, speech:	
	1st Day: Light (and Dark)	4th Day: Lights (Time)
	2nd Day: Heaven (and Waters)	5th Day: animate beings of sky and sea
	3rd Day: Earth (and Vegetation)	6th Day: animate beings of earth

Progression =	from indifferentiation to ordered hierarchical structure — an orderly, purposeful process
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Humanity =	the culmination of creation, male and female together 'in the image of God' — given dominion over the rest of the created order — responsible for maintaining its order
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Deity =	transcendent, single godhead having absolute sovereignty — the creating deity is also the ruling deity—first, last, and always.
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GENESIS 2:4-4.16

<u>Nature</u> =	dry dust, watered by God
<u>Problem</u> =	initially, Fertility and Life; then Society and Companionship; <u>later</u> , Obedience, Freedom, and Knowledge—that is, the problem of the human will
<u>Means</u> =	God's experimental acts of molding matter and breathing life into it, then later setting limitations to it 'for its own good'
<u>Progression</u> =	initially, barrenness to fertility; then from solitude to 'society'; <u>later</u> , from harmonious right relationship to rebellion, knowledge, sin, exile, the division of the world's 'people' into isolated nations, i.e, from Paradise to Hell on Earth; the fall from grace
<u>Humanity</u> =	<p>not the culmination, but the initiation of the creative process--a single 'earth creature' (adam) to begin with, then a 2nd 'experimental' one in order to distinguish between male and female and to create society:</p> <p>Adam and Eve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">— created for life, but ending in death— created for harmony, but resulting in hostility and dispersion— created for obedience, but becoming rooted in disobedience— created for unrestricted enjoyment of life without moral complication, but sinning into life of enmity and patriarchal dominance— living with the consequences of moral knowledge— created for intimate relationship with God, but ending in alienation, pain, and death— not unlike Prometheus in presumption, rebellion, and consequences
<u>Deity</u> =	Yahweh, that upon which all life depends for its very being and order, and therefore that which must be obeyed

ENUMA ELISH:

<u>Nature</u> =	undynamic watery masses (salt and fresh, female and male)--unlike the abundantly fecund and dynamic Gaia, Chaos, and Ouranos
<u>Problem</u> =	inertia vs. noisy activity; inactivity vs. movement
<u>Means</u> =	combat, cunning, conquest, finally the killing of 'Nature' (Tiamat) and the construction of the cosmos out of her body.
<u>Progression</u> =	from monstrous nature to patriarchal theocratic state
<u>Humanity</u> =	created from blood of Tiamat's consort to be slaves/servants of the gods, tools of the state—so that the gods can live in ease
<u>Deity</u> =	Marduk, product of internal evolutionary process, becomes both creator and king of cosmos and state

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