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Titans and Time

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ABSTRACT

To construe Cronos mythological approach is undertaken to behold its primordial image and discern its meaning in purity and fullness. The myth of Cronos is subjected to interpretation and reflection from Jungian perspective. The research paper also includes the relation of Cronos with the omphalos (the navel-stone), Cronos as presented in the cosmology of Pherecydes and Cronos in Orphic Theogony. The legacy of Cronos in terms of predominance is also highlighted. In summation: Cronos disseminates fertility; along with his spouse Rhea and children—Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Pluto, Poseidon and Zeus—personify home, child rearing, death, natural disaster and fecundity from the sky; time is the detached preserver of all that has always been; Cronos is the begetter of the prima materia—Fire, Air and Water; and the feminine face of time is the fate. Cronos is placed from the Golden to the Heroic Age of Greek mythology and in depth psychological experience envelopes our collective unconscious in the Iron Age.

Key Words: *Titans, Cronos, Myth, Time*

INTRODUCTION

Cronos, one of the Titans in Greek mythology, personifies time. The myth on time manifests in our daily life and extends to scientific applications. The youngest of the Titans—Cronos—who once governed the world in the Golden Age of mythology, in spite of being dethroned, still regulate nature and man. He presides over every regular mode of existence. The myth of Cronos is man's experience of mutations in history, changes in nature, flow of one's age, regularity in work, and life in general which is well-measured. The myth of Cronos in-itself relates gods and humans for ever-lasting time. Following is the mythological story of time.

I. Myth of Cronos

Cronos is the son of Uranus (Heaven) and Ge (Earth).

Ge, the Earth Goddess, born from Chaos along with Tartarus (abyss) and Eros (love), gave birth to Uranus (sky), Ourea (mountains) and Pontus (sea) on her own before marrying Uranus. With Uranus, the God of Sky, the first ruler of the world, Ge gave birth to the Titans, the Cyclops and the Hecatoncheires.

The Titans are six sons and six daughters. Oceanus, the God of Ocean, is the eldest who married his sister Tethys. Coeus married sister Phoebe and Hyperion married sister Theia. Crius and Iapetus are the names of two more brothers. Sisters Mnemosyne and Themis married Zeus. Cronos the youngest Titan married his sister Rhea.

The other sons of Uranus and Ge, the Cyclops (Arges, Steropes and Brontes) and the Hecatoncheires (the Hundred-Handed Briareus, Cottus and Gyes), known for their supreme strength and uttermost ugliness, were much hated by Uranus who discarded them into Tartarus.

The act of Uranus against the Cyclops and the Hecatoncheires gave sadness and anger to the Great Mother. Her anger towards the husband and love for all her children persuaded the Titans, except Oceanus, to rise up against their father.

Ge made a sickle and gave it to the Titan Cronos who fulfilled the purpose of the weapon by castrating Uranus, as she lay with him. Cronos threw the severed male member into the sea. The white foam forms in the surging sea where the male member of Uranus falls and Aphrodite emerges from the water. Out of the drops of blood of Uranus which fell on the earth, Ge gave birth to the Furies—the three winged maidens Alecto, Megaera and Tisiphone—the monstrous Giants and Meliae the nymphs of the manna ash trees. With Pontus, later, Ge bore Nereus the sea-god, Thaumastus and Phorcys the sea god who married his sea monster sister Ceto.

Having castrated and dethroned Uranus, the Titans librated their brothers the Cyclops and the Hecatoncheires from the Tartarus, and Cronos became the ruler of the world. Once enthroned, Cronos, like his father Uranus, disposed of the Cyclops into Tartarus after which he married his sister Rhea.

Ge and Uranus shared prophesy that Cronos too would be dethroned like his father by one of his own children. With that foreknowledge in view, in order to retain his kingly status, Cronos swallowed his children after their birth. The children of Cronos within him were: Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Pluto and Poseidon. There was, however, yet another birth of a divine child...

Prophesy needed protection. Rhea, pregnant with Zeus, went to Crete to give birth to the child in a cave in Mount Dicte. After giving birth to Zeus, she entrusted the divine child to the Curetes. The nymph daughters—Adrasteia and Ida—attended to the upbringing of child Zeus. To keep the divine infant safe, the two nymphs guarded him and would strike their shield with the spears. That shielded the voice of child Zeus from Cronos who could never hear him. Rhea, on her part, with the assistance of her mother Ge, offered a stone to Cronos covered in cloth. Cronos thinking that it was a baby swallowed the stone.

When Zeus became an adult, he approached Metis, the daughter of Oceanus and Thetys, to deliver a potion to Cronos. Cronos consumed the emetic and vomited Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Pluto, Poseidon and the stone. The brother and the sisters of Zeus rose against Cronos, their father and dethroned him.

Zeus becomes the ruler of heaven and earth. Jupiter the *Optimus Maximus* (Best Greatest) is equivalent of Zeus in the Roman mythology.

Hypothetical Interpretation

Time is ingrained in man's experience of life and intimate with his mythological relationship with the gods and creation. Cronos, the Greek Titan God of Time, is due to the sacred union of Uranus (Heaven) and Ge (Earth). Birth of time is the intangible yet tangible link between heaven and earth. Heaven and earth begets time, and the complexities of creation commence and continue with all the changes till the present time...

The cosmology within which man exist is born out Chaos—out of Chaos issues Ge (Mother Earth), Tartarus (the abyss) and Eros (love). Down-to-earth realities of life consist of earth, the place wherein one is placed and that is prior to one's thoughts and emotions; the inferior region (Tartarus) of the unconscious and the instincts that we need to live the conscious life; and love (Eros) that is central to everyone's heart and hearth. Without warmth and care—love—it is difficult for the plants and humans to grow. The constituents of creation is ordered and made conducive or even splendid by Eros. Earth, abyss and love are the elements of life. For life to germinate and grow we need earth—earth that consist of sky, land and water. The Earth Goddess Ge gives birth to Uranus (sky), Ourea (mountains) and Pontus (sea) on her own, and unites with Uranus and Pontus, extending man's utilization of the sky and the sea.

In union with Uranus, Ge begets the Titans who personify the fundamental aspects of life. The eldest Titan Oceanus with his sister and wife Tethys, the sea-goddess, surround the earth with water. Oceanus and Tethys are vital in making our home a green planet. Besides being the parents of all the river-gods and Oceanides or the ocean nymphs, their virtuous parenting extends to the Goddess Hera who personifies the home-making instinct. Coeus is the Titan God of intelligence along with his sister-wife Phoebe the Titan Goddess of brightness and radiance. Hyperion and Theia are the God of heavenly light and watchfulness, and the Goddess of the sky and the sight respectively. Hyperion and Theia are the parents of Helios (the sun), Selene (the moon) and Eos (the dawn). Goddess Theia personifying the blue sky and the sight, by extension, endow the precious metals namely the gold and the silver with brightness and consequently with their intrinsic worth. Crius personify uniqueness, distinction, prominence, being famous and infamous, and glory. Iapetus is the God of mortality. Along with his wife Clymene the Renowned One, he is the father of Atlas the wise who is the founder of astronomy; Menoetius who personify power or pain, the ways in which we lose strength or defy fate; and Prometheus (forethought) and Epimetheus (afterthought). Mnemesyne is the Titan Goddess of memory and the mother of Muses. Titan Goddess Themis personify order and justice. Cronos is the time and his sister-wife Rhea personifies the ever-flowing time and perpetuity of generations. Rhea underscores motherhood and the timeless propagation and prolongation of the family.

Other members of the family of Uranus and Ge are the one-eyed bright and thunderous Cyclops and the Hundred-Handed and fifty headed Hecatoncheires. The extremities of the strength and ugliness of the Cyclops and the Hecatoncheires remain in the hidden and the dark potentials of our Tartarus psyche. The anger of Ge to liberate Cyclops and Hecatoncheires is our daily earthly-worldly struggle and war to live through one's singularity and multiplicity (Cyclops and Hecatoncheires), to realize our potentialities and to fight for a balanced life as we deal with our virtues and vices to live a meaningful and fruitful life.

The fruitfulness that Ge personifies is also passed in the hands of Cronos: Ge's sickle given by her to Cronos to spread fertility. Even though Cronos is not a fertility deity, he measures the same and is instrumental in regulating the outcome. Cronos with the sickle places him parallel to Saturn, the Roman god of agriculture. The sickle of Saturn is the scythe of time (Cronos). The act of Cronos—castration of Uranus—makes water mirror the sky and it is the reservoir of the fecundating aspect of the sky, as earth (Ge) lay with the sky (Uranus). The blood of Uranus on earth becomes the other side of blessings, the Furies personifying the curses: Alecto (never-ending anger), Tisiphone (vengefulness; avenging murder) and Megaera (jealously) passing from one generation to the next, becoming diabolical in us (the Giants), and monstrosity that we often display in various personal and social context. Along with curses, we also possess the spirit of mythopoetic imagination—the tree nymphs—in us concerning the earth.

Ge's fertility extends in union with Pontus, the sea-god, begetting Nereus, Thaumás, Phorcys and Ceto. Nereus resides as the sea-god in the depths of the water along with his Oceanid-nymph wife Doris who is the Goddess of the fertile ground for fishing. Thaumás (or Thaumus) the sea-god and his water-nymph wife Electra are the parents of Iris and Harpies. Iris personifies the rainbow and she is the golden-winged messenger of the gods of the Mount Olympus. The youthful winged maiden goddesses the Harpies, half-human and half-birds, personify the storm as the snatcher. Phorcys, the Old Man of the Sea, is a marine-god of dangers hidden in the water. Phorcys and his sister-monstrous-wife Ceto are parents of the Gorgons, the winged-monster-sisters: Stheno (personifying the moral or emotional strength), Euryale (the far-roaming one) and Medusa. An increase in the offspring of Ge marks her primacy over the sky and man's preoccupations with matters pertaining to life on earth.

Castration and dethronement of Uranus, liberation of Cyclops and Hecatoncheires from Tartarus crowned Cronos as the ruler of the sky, water and earth.

Cronos like Uranus, son like the father, reiterate the act against the Cyclops: history repeats and prophesies is the foreknowledge of the history. Prophecy is a part of time. The youngest son of Cronos, according to the prophecy, repeats history and fulfills prophecy. Prophecy communicated by Uranus and Ge concerning Cronos makes him devour his own children.

The children of Cronos personify the establishment of home, child rearing, death, natural disaster and fecundity from the sky: Hestia is Goddess of hearth; Demeter is the Goddess of corn, earth and fruitfulness; Hera is the Goddess of menstruation, marriage and childbirth; Pluto presides over the spirits of the dead and the underworld; Poseidon is the God of the sea, the earthquake and the horses; and Zeus is the God of the sky, thunderbolt and rain.

Cronos could not devour Zeus because Rhea nurtured Zeus in a clandestine manner away from home with the assistance of Adrasteia, the nymph Goddess of ineluctable fate, and the industrious nymph of the wooded Mount Ida. Up on the mountain, Zeus is "suckled by the goat-nymph Amaltheia who passes on to him, in her milk, the divine powers of the Goddess. Hyginess identified Capricorn with Amaltheia, telling us that Zeus set her image among the stars to show his gratitude to her; and it is one of Amaltheia's horns that became the horn of cornucopia, of everlasting plenty and prosperity" [1].

When Zeus becomes an adult, prophesy is fulfilled giving us yet another mythic view of life...

In order that life on earth may unfold in time, Metis the Goddess of counsel, cunningness and wisdom, gives a potion to Cronos that regurgitate the swallowed children including the stone. To save Zeus, the offering of the stone wrapped in cloth by Rhea with the support from Ge is the basic prehistoric measure of life and time on earth: Paleolithic, Mesolithic/Epipaleolithic, Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods. Stone stands for memorial. Stone preserves the time and the memory of previous times. Stone stores the memory of the departed souls: tombstone. Stone establishes the memory for the future times: cornerstone. Time allows the birth of its children, time consumes its own creations (devouring its own children), time envelopes its own creation (the swallowed children in the belly of time; they are within time), and time emits (vomits) its own children all the time.

Cronos, the son of Uranus, becomes the father of various aspects personified by Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Pluto, Poseidon, Zeus and the stone. Zeus, the son of Cronos, defeats his father in Titanomachy and becomes the Sky Father to rule the heaven and the earth. Zeus is the Father "Who art in heaven..."

II. Cronos and *Omphalos*

The stone swallowed by Cronos was the *omphalos* from the Temple of Oracle and after he regurgitated the same, Zeus returned and enshrined it in the Temple "to be a sign in after times and a marvel to mortals" [2].

Hypothetical Interpretation

The Temple of Oracle at Delphi was dedicated to Apollo. The sacred *sanctum* of the time, the soul and the dreams was presided over by the priestess Pythia specializing in the office of time, diving prophesies and the times to come.

Omphalos means the navel. Olive oil was poured on the *omphalos* every day and on the solemn days raw or white wool was offered.

Omphalos reminds us of the *padma* (the lotus) sprouting from Padmanabha, the Lord with the lotus-navel: Vishnu. Narayan (Vishnu)—the Lord who dwells in the water of the primeval milky ocean, *Kshir Sagar*, wherein *Samunder Manthan*, the churning of the ocean, was situated—sleeps on the snake for infinity (time symbolized by snake), holding *Sudarshan Chakra* (the discus symbolizing the auspicious vision of the sun and the time), begets then *elumbo nucifera* belonging to the water. When the Lord of Dreams sleeps on the coiled *Adishesh*, the First Snake or the World Snake, who is *Anant* meaning eternal or endless, lotus rooted in Vishnu's navel grows and he beholds the dream of the birth the blooming of the time, creation, life and creativity inside the lotus of longevity. The navel of Vishnu is the earthly root of creation, the stalk of the lotus is the *Axis Mundi* and the flower itself is the world as the dream of the Lord.

The mythic image imagines me because I am a part of the divine dream of Lord Vishnu. If Lord Vishnu wakes up from his sleep, it will be the end of time. Since we are still being dreamt of by Lord Vishnu, the *omphalos*, the navel, is symbolic of the time as the preserver along with creation and destruction.

Time as the preserver is the navel detached from the womb of the earth. *Omphalos* the navel-stone is symbolic of the essence of time as detached. Cronos possesses his children through matrimony, in his belly and out of him—detachedly related to everyone—in the world. Cronos surrounds us, but we never get to possess time according to our convenience and likings. Time is impersonal, yet personally connected to each of us. Time is objectively flowing in our subjective experiences. Time is emotionally distant-indifferent observer to one's failures and fulfillments.

Out of the mother's womb, blessed with life, each one of us is the *omphalos*-offspring of time.

III. Cronos in Cosmology of Pherecydes

There were three primeval deities—Zas, Chronos and Chthonie. “Chronos made out of his own seed fire and wind [or breath] and water... from which, when they were disposed in five recesses, were composed numerous offspring of gods, what is called ‘of the five recesses’” [3]. Sometimes, instead of five there are seven recesses.

Zas and Chthonie are wedded and on the third day of the wedding Zas create a great cloth adorning it with Ge (earth) and Ogenos (speculated by scholars to be Okeanos or the oceans). After presenting the gift to Chthonie Zas asks her to be his consort, this is the first unveiling (*anacalypteria*).

Eros is in between Zas and Chthonie and the embellished cloth robed the oak-tree.

Ophion (his birth is unclear; some scholars speculate him to be the offspring of Chronos and Chthonie and sometimes Zas and Chthonie) and Eurynome (daughter of Okeanos) used to rule over the sky but were defeated by Kronos and Rhea. After the defeat they fell into the sea (Okeanos).

Hypothetical Interpretation

Cronos appears in the cosmology of Pherecydes of Syros along with Zas and Chthonie as one of the three principal-primeval deities.

Cronos, on his own, begets the three Elements of the Wise: Fire, Air and Water. Out of the three Elements all the beings and things—the gods (called “five or seven recesses”)—came into existence in different periods. For Thales, the first pre-Socratic philosopher, the world and all the things are “full of gods”. In the doctrine of Thales, everything is made up of water. For Anaximenes, one of the disciples of Thales, air is the principle from which all things are composed. Heraclitus of Ephesus proposes fire as the *Anima Mundi* for the animate and the inanimate things. Empedocles, the Chief of Rhetoricians, considers all the Four Elements—Fire, Air, Water and Earth—that makes the bodily universe. This is how the world came to be. The Elements of the Wise have long been the *prima materia* of contemplation among all the pre-Socratic philosophers. The philosophers before Socrates envisioned the world due to one Element or a mixture of four. Everything that exists is based on and due to Fire, Air, Water and Earth.

The Fourth Element of the Wise (Earth) is a revelation (*anacalypteria*) of the gods to mankind, which we have taken long to discover (*anacalypteria*) in terms of land, water, flora, fauna, minerals and races. Myth is an *anacalypteria*, revealing to me itself thus I can attempt to discern its meaning and reflect. We still continue to find (*anacalypteria*) and understand the earth...

Chthonie personify the earth and the underworld. The spirit of the earth—Chthonie—is in union with Zas the God of Sky. Marriage is not a provisional relationship of love (Eros). Love is the unifying force between Fire, Air, water and Earth in the doctrine of Empedocles. The marriage between Zas (sky) and Chthonie (earth) is not merely a mythical union but a biological synthesis symbolized by number three. The third day of the wedding is symbolic of the spirit union between sky (father) and earth (mother) that begets an offspring—the physical earth.

For consummation of matrimony, Zas creates the primordial image of the green planet—the great cloth—and offers the same to his bride. Earth with her ocean is the wedding gift unveiled as *anacalypteria*—the first revelation of the essence of life on earth as evident and enigmatic, mundane and mythical.

The cloth given by Zas adorns the winged oak-tree, which is sacred to Jupiter and Cybele as a symbol of durability, strength, energy, health and long-life. “The tree gives eternal life, children to women, husbands to girls, and horses to men” [4]. The oak-tree in the myth is one of the primordial images of the *Axis Mundi*.

The myth ends with the defeat of Ophion and the Oceanid Eurynome who once ruled the Olympus. As Ophion and Eurynome falls in the Oceanus, Cronos prevails...

IV. Cronos in Orphic Theogony

The story of Ananke and Cronos is attributed to Orphic Theogony. Cronos is the third principle engendered by water and earth. This unaging Cronos is the winged serpent with three heads—bull, lion and god’s face in the middle (the three heads together is seen as Heracles), in union with Ananke or Adrasteia stretched through the universe. Another version of the cosmogony does not even differentiate between Cronos and Ananke. It is simply suggested that Heracles who denotes Cronos begets an egg that divides into upper part as Uranus and lower part as Ge and a double bodied god. Uranus and Ge unite then Ge gives birth to Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos.

Hypothetical Interpretation

Orphic Theogony envisions Cronos as an amphibious offspring of water and earth. Cronos is engendered as the Celestial God with the heavenly bodies—the lion (sun) and the bull (moon). Sun and moon, day and night, light and darkness presents the heavenly face of time. Movements of the sun and the moon are the measurement of time.

The feminine face of time is the self-begotten Serpentine Goddess Ananke, since the beginning of time, embracing and encompassing the whole cosmos, is in union with Cronos. While serpent is one of the symbols of time, Ananke holding the spindle also symbolizes the same. Ananke as time personified represents necessity, inevitability, destiny and fate. Time and fate are all pervasive.

Cronos as the three-headed Heracles, without a consort, gives birth to the cosmic egg. The upper part of the egg is Uranus and the lower part is Ge. The egg beholds all that hatches as life. The dual division is the union which begets the human experience of time—Parcae, the Fates: Clotho, Lachesis and Atropes. The young sisters spin and determine the fate of individual’s life. Clotho the spinner has the wool and the spindle. Lachesis spins to control the lot of life and the individual horoscope. Atropes the inevitable one holding the scales or the sundial cuts and ends the thread of life when time comes. The sisters of fate are inexorable and the serpentine time with wings flies...

V. The Human Race:

Legacy of Cronos

In the Greek Trinity, Uranus, Cronos and Zeus, it is only Cronos who has prevailed on the races of humankind. The Greek Gods have created five ages and races. Mythology of man consists of divine and semi-divine exemplars before the emergence of man in their “image and likeness”.

The Golden Race—Cronos is the founder and ruler of the Golden Race. The first race lived in the Golden Age of Greek mythology. Inhabitants of the Golden Race lived a prosperous and happy life. Having lived to the fullest, the inhabitants of the Golden Race “rest in peace”. After their peaceful death, they have become the guardian spirits of humankind. As we unconsciously imitate their lives, we also wish for a life that is fulfilling until death. As they died in peace, Roman Catholics still bless the deceased individual that his/her soul may “*requiescat in pace*”—rest in peace.

The Silver Race—Race living in the Silver Age did not live a well contented life compared to the ones in the Golden Age. Their disrespect towards the Olympian Gods caused their end.

The Brass Race—The Brazen Race was preoccupied with wars; the wars put an end to the inhabitants of this race.

The Heroic Race—Even though the wars continue like the most celebrated war of the “Seven against Thebes” and the “Trojan War”, the remaining, the survivors, lived happily in the “Island of the Blessed” ruled by the deposed Cronos. The Heroic Race is that of the demigods of half-divine and half-human origin, and they were revered for their strength and wisdom. They were honored as patrons of secular and sacred places, and families. They too continue to live in us unconsciously...

The Iron Race—Iron Race is the present times we live in. The mortals of this race are considered inferior due to their ever-growing sinfulness. The inhabitants of the Iron Race are a summation of the preceding races and they have made the world their home with bipolar qualities of goodness and wickedness. According to the mythological belief Zeus will end

the Iron Age when infants will begin to take birth as already old. Such a belief could be seen a point of saturation that needs a change in time...

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