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Zeus' tomb. An object of pride and reproach

I. In his account of Antiochus from Aegae¹, Flav. Philostratus praises the sophist's efficiency in declamation based "on a sure grasp of arguments, intensity in accusation and invective as well as on brilliance in the genre of 'apologies'". Amongst the latter the biographer of the 2nd Sophistic singles out Antiochus' *melete* in defence of "the Cretans standing trial for the grave of Zeus²". Incidentally, it is surprising that this testimonium is not entered in R.Kohl's copious catalogue of declamatory topics³. Concerning the contents of the above "melete", besides vague and rhetorical statements to the effect that Antiochus gave a splendid performance by drawing material from φυσιολογίᾳ τε καὶ θεολογίᾳ πάσῃ, Philostratus does not provide precise information about the arguments adduced by the defendants or by the hypothetical counsel for their defence.

As Philostratus' text is the unique evidence available so far of Zeus' grave being handled as a subject of declamation, one has to presume at least a great deal of personal resourcefulness on the part of Antiochus to vindicate the awkward paradox of Zeus' burial, so strikingly contrary to the familiar Greek concept of the supreme god. A particular approach that the sophist may have given to his argumentation will be proposed later.

It is acknowledged that references⁴ to graves of other divinities as well (Dionysus, Apollo, Asklepius, Cronus, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Ares, Helios, Hermes, Selene, Isis and Osiris) occur indeed in literary sources. This phenomenon in particular recently led H. Verbruggen⁵ to grant a genuinely Greek identity to Kretagenes Zeus. His thesis, however, refuting a firmly

¹ P. Anteios Antiochus (c. 160 - 230 A.D.), contemporary of Philostratus: F. BUECHELER, *Miscellen*, in *RbM*, 61 (1906), p. 626; cf. A. STEIN, in *PIR*², I (1933), p. 135-136, n° 730; J. & L. ROBERT, *La Carie*, II, Paris, 1954, p. 318-319; G.W. BOWERSOCK, *Approaches to the Second Sophistic*, Harvard Univ., 1974, p. 36.

² PHILOSTR., *VS*, 2, 4 (569): ὑπὲρ τῶν Κρητῶν τῶν κρινομένων ἐπὶ τῇ τοῦ Διὸς σήματι.

³ *De scholast. declamationum argumentis ex historia petitis (Rhetorische Studien IV)*, Paderbonae, 1915.

⁴ Fr. PFISTER, *Der Reliquienkult im Altertum*, Giessen, 1909, p. 385-391; A. St. PEASE, *M.T. Cicero, De natura deorum II-III*, Cambridge Mass., 1958, p. 1097.

⁵ H. VERBRUGGEN, *Le Zeus crétois*, Paris, 1981.

established conviction in a prehellenic stratum⁶ underlying the cult of the Cretan Zeus, has met with scepticism or blunt rebuttals⁷.

To begin with, references and allusions to Zeus' burial place are more numerous⁸ and, significantly, all confined to Crete. Moreover, in the light of a persistent Minoan theology of a youthful vegetation god who dies and is reborn every year, certain festivals and rites performed there through the Christian era can make sense. The most notable of these are: a) The invocation of the Kouretes of Palaikastro to the "Kroneian greatest Kouros" of Dicte to reappear annually (εἰς ἐνιαυτόν, κατήτος) in order to give fertility to cattle herds, fleecy flocks and the fields as well as good fortune and bliss to the cities of eastern Crete; b) The yearly celebrations in honour of (Zeus) Velchanos —depicted on coins as a beardless, i.e. young, figure, or in bird form— associated with a goddess and "hieros gamos"; c) The evidence of continuity of worship from LM period to the 4th cent. A.D. deduced from finds of recent excavations at the Idaean cave⁹; d) The story told in the *Metamorphoses*¹⁰ of Antoninus Liberalis, who quotes from the hellenistic poem *Ornithology*¹¹, to the effect that a miraculous fire flashes annually from the Idaean (?) cave "when the blood from Zeus' birth streams forth"¹²; and finally, e) Porphyry's account of the ceremony of the god's throne "being strewn with carpets every year"¹³ —though the contextual information concerning Pythagoras' descent and the funeral sacrifice within the cave including his own inscribing of the epitaph on Zeus' tomb may be discarded as fanciful¹⁴ or anachronistic. Accordingly, the persisting worship of a Zeus presumably conflated at an early stage with an indigenous fertility divinity accounts for the various sites on the island which were venerated as the burial (and rebirth) places of the Cretan god: (i) Quoting from Ennius' (239-169

⁶ A.B. COOK, *Zeus*, II, Cambridge, 1925², p. 940; J.E. HARRISON, *Themis*, Cambridge, 1927, *passim*; M.P. NILSSON, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, I, Lund, 1950², p. 555-556; *ID.*, *Geschichte der griech. Religion*, I, München, 1967³, p. 321-322; R.F. WILLETTTS, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, London, 1962, p. 80, 91-92, 199 sq.; M.L. WEST, *The Dictaeon Hymn to the Kouros*, in *JHS*, 85 (1965), p. 154-155; *ID.*, *Hesiod, Theogony*, Oxford, 1978 [1966], p. 291; B.C. DIETRICH, *The Origins of Greek Religion*, Berlin-New York, 1974, p. 13-17; Y. DUHOUX, in *RBPb*, 61 (1983), p. 236-237, etc.

⁷ E.g. in *WS*, 17 (1983), p. 254; *CR*, 33 (1983), p. 144-145; *REG*, 96 (1983), p. 295; *RBPb*, 61 (1983), p. 236-237. Favourable comments in *G&R*, 30 (1983), p. 109 and *RHR*, 200 (1983), p. 432-433; a detailed and judicious review is published by A. CHANIOTIS in *Κρητικά Χρονικά* (1986), p. 299-330.

⁸ Amounting to 43: P. FAURE, *Le mont Jouktas, tombeau de Zeus*, in *Minoica, Festschrift Job. Sundwall*, Berlin, 1958, p. 134; cf. A.B. COOK, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 940-943 and *ID.*, I, p. 157, n. 4.

⁹ J.A. SAKELLARAKIS, *The Idaean Cave. Minoan and Greek Worship*, in *Kernos*, 1 (1988), p. 207-214.

¹⁰ Ch. 19, 1-2. Antoninus Liberalis is dated c. 200 A.D. (M. PAPATHOMOPOULOS, *Ant. Liberalis, Les Métamorphoses*, Paris, 1968, p. IX).

¹¹ By a certain poet Boios (assuming the name of an ancient Delphic priestess Βοιῶ).

¹² "Ὅταν ἐκζέῃ τὸ τοῦ Διὸς ἐκ τῆς γενέσεως αἷμα.

¹³ PORPH., *Vita Pyth.*, 17: τὸν τε στορνύμενον... θρόνον; cf. *Orac. Sibyll.*, VIII, 47-49 (ἡρησκεύουσα θρόνων).

¹⁴ Cf. E. ROHDE, *Psyche*, I, Tübingen, 1925^{9/10}, p. 129, n. 3.

B.C.) work *Euhemerus* or *Sacra Scriptio* (or *Sacra Historia*) Lactantius (c. 250-325 A.D.) names Cnossus¹⁵ as the locality of the grave, adding that in it *est inscriptum antiquis litteris Graecis ZAN KPONOY id est Latine Juppiter Saturni*¹⁶. (ii) It is in the Idaean cave, where Varro¹⁷ sets Zeus' tomb affirming that it is a spot of pilgrimage in his own days. The same location is taken up later by Porphyry (3rd cent. A.D.) in his tale of Pythagoras' cult practice there. (iii) According to Nonnus' (5th cent. A.D.) *Dionysiaka* (8, 117) Apate used to stay on mount Dikte "by the false tomb of Zeus" (Διδὸς ψευδήμονι τύμβῳ). (iv) Finally, though ancient sources never mention mount Juktas as Zeus' burial ground¹⁸ local hearsay brought (Sept. 1415) the clergyman Cristoforo Buondelmonti to recognize within a cave to the north of the mountain *sepulcrum Iovis Maximi* and an epitaph "with letters totally effaced"¹⁹. He was to acquiesce, he says, in what local people told him because he realized *per totam insulam ita esse provulgatum*. However, later travellers echoing ancient sources aired different views, either conveying the alleged monument to the mountain peak or near Cnossus or on mount Ida or relating it to the legendary cave and burial place of Minos.

Apparently the literary allusions or references to the display of Zeus' tomb are not traceable²⁰ earlier than the 4th cent. B.C.; yet the story becomes increasingly talked of in the following centuries²¹ as a salient feature of Cretan mythomania²². Nevertheless, judging from the traces of prehellenic religious ideas identified in later periods one is reluctant to agree that the 4th cent. B.C. marks the creation of the tale of Zeus' grave or blame the whole story on certain writers, notably Euhemerus and Callimachus.

¹⁵ Cf. IOANNES OF ANTIOCH (7/8 cent. A.D.) in *FHG*, 4, p. 542 (fr. 5: Ζεὺς... θανὼν θάπτεται ἐν Κνωσσῷ τῆς Κρήτης).

¹⁶ LACTANT., *Divinae Institutiones*, 1, 11, 46 (= T 69 A in M. WINIARCZYK, *Euhemerii Messenii Reliquiae*, Stuttgart-Leipzig, Teubner, 1991). The alleged epitaph with slight variations is recorded in numerous Hellenistic and Byzantine texts including the epigram *Anthol. Palat.*, VII, 746 ascribed to Pythagoras (see *supra*, n. 13).

¹⁷ According to SOLIN. (soon after 200 A.D.), *Collectanea*, 11, 6-7; Varro probably visited the cave himself (C. CICHORIUS, *Römische Studien*, Leipzig-Berlin, 1961² [1922], p. 212).

¹⁸ Pace A. KARETSOU, *The Peak Sanctuary of Mt. Juktas*, in *Proceedings of the 1st Intern. Symposium of the Swedish Institute at Athens 1980*, Stockholm, 1981, p. 153, and E.F. BLOEDOW, *Evidence for an early Date for the Cult of Cretan Zeus*, in *Kernos*, 4 (1991), p. 162; P. FAURE, *Minoica*, art. cit. (n. 8), p. 135, rightly stated: "de toutes façons, le mont Iouktas semble exclu de la tradition antique".

¹⁹ Cr. BUONDELONTI, *Descriptio insule Crete et Liber insularum*, cap. XI: *Creta*, 154 (685-690), ed. by M.-A. VAN SPITAEI, Herakleion, 1981.

²⁰ Cf. VERBRUGGEN, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 82-83.

²¹ The topic is exploited by LUCIAN no less than five times: *De sacr.*, 10; *Tim.*, 6; *Zeus Trag.*, 45; *Philops.*, 3; *Deor. Concl.*, 6; cf. [*Philop.*] 10.

²² POMP. MELA, *De Chorographia*, 2, 112: *Crete multis famigerata fabulis... maxime tamen eo quod ibi sepulti Iovis paene clarum vestigium sepulcrum*; cf. DIOD. SIC., 3, 61.

It is for the most part round these two figures that the following discussion will revolve, not as being really the originators of the legend but because subsequent generations quoted them as pivotal authorities in support of diametrically opposed versions of the subject of Zeus' grave: as an object to be proud of or as a cause for condemnation.

II. In the proem to his convivial *Hymn to Zeus* Callimachus (310-c. 240 B.C.) wavers between two rival claims: the one of the Cretan Dicte, the other of the Arcadian mount Lycaeus as the birthplace of Zeus. The poet elicits a solution from the notorious saying ascribed to Epimenides: "Cretans are always liars"²³. Callimachus endorses this verdict with a supplementary proof of its validity: "Indeed, the Cretans even contrived a tomb for you, O Lord; but you did not die, for you live for ever"²⁴.

The Hymn to Zeus is assumed to be the earliest of the six²⁵ despite disagreement as to the year of its composition, which is variously dated between 286 and 270 B.C. The majority of scholars, however, favour a date²⁶ before 280 B.C. It is important to stress that Callimachus here is holding the Cretans alone²⁷ guilty of the blasphemy of the grave. Since the hemistich is traditionally attributed to Epimenides one may wonder whether the celebrated Cretan seer, purifier and poet did rebuke his fellow-countrymen on account of their pretended Zeus' grave and accordingly branded them as liars, unwittingly involving himself too in this logical vicious circle²⁸. If this is the case —on condition that this hemistich is a genuine passage from a poem by Epimenides²⁹— our written evidence for the existence of Zeus' grave must be antedated by two or three centuries, i.e. to around 600 B.C.

Epimenides' abuse of the Cretans is later quoted as a complete hexameter³⁰ (Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύσται, κακὰ θηρία, γαστέρες ἀργαί) by St. Paul in his Epistle *Ad Titum* (§ 12) with no explanation of the circumstance affecting the

²³ Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύσται: G. KINKEL, *Epicorum graecorum fragmenta*, I, Lipsiae, 1877, fr. 5; W. DIELS - H. KRANZ, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, I, 1951⁶, p. 31-32..

²⁴ CALLIM., *Hymn.*, 1, 4-7.

²⁵ Cf. W. CHRIST - W. SCHMID, *Geschichte der griech. Literatur*, I, München, 1920, p. 135 ("gedichtet 283-280 B.C.).

²⁶ See WINIARCZYK, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 2, n. 2.

²⁷ This fact is unduly slighted by most scholars taking Callimachus' passage as a "reaction against Euhemerus and his philosophy": G.R. MACLENNAN, *Callimachus, Hymn to Zeus*, Roma, 1977, p. 38; yet, see U. VON WILAMOWITZ, *Euripides Hippolytos*, Berlin 1891, p. 224, n. 1.

²⁸ G.L. HUXLEY, *Greek Epic Poetry*, London, 1969, p. 81-82; but see M.C. LECLERC, *Épiménide sans paradoxe*, in *Kernos*, 5 (1992), p. 225-226.

²⁹ The extant fragments presumably originate from later writers: H. DIELS, *VS II*, 1912², p. 188; cf. SCHMID - STÄHLIN, *Geschichte der griech. Literatur*, I, 1, München, 1974 [1929], p. 305, etc.; Lobon of Argos (3rd cent. B.C.) —from whom Diogenes Laertius derives his material about Epimenides' works (I, 34, 111-112)— is deemed a deliberate forger.

³⁰ An echo of the Hesiodic verse *Theogony*, 26.

adverse criticism of "the Cretans' own prophet". Christian commentators, however, readily connected the verse with Zeus' tomb, at the same time charging Callimachus with misappropriating Epimenides' own testimony³¹.

In 1912 J.R. Harris³² attempted to reconstruct four verses supposedly belonging to a poem by Epimenides *On Minos and Rhadamanthys*, in which Zeus' son Minos was presented as eulogizing his divine father against the impious Cretan claim of the tomb. Harris' unconvincing attempt was founded upon an artificial compilation of phrases from the commentary on *Acts* 17, 28 by the Nestorian Bishop Isho'dad de Merv (c. 850 A.D.) —who in turn drew from Theodorus Bishop of Mopsuestia (c. 350-403 A.D.)— and extracts from Callimachus, Aratus and Cleanthes. What can be safely admitted is that, while the famous utterance assigned to Epimenides may be authentic³³, its relation to the tomb motif remains unproved³⁴. Callimachus' offensive against the rumoured Zeus' grave was again manifested in the 202, 15-16 fragment ἀψευδέα λέγων καὶ τάφο[ν τὸ]ν Κ[ρ]ῆτα γινώσκειν κενόν as well as in his derogatory allusion to Euhemerus³⁵.

Before we attempt a brief survey of the lasting effects which lines 8-9 of the Hymn to Zeus exercised on opposing social groups, it is worth commenting on a text which probably takes us back at least a century earlier and may shed some light on the question of Zeus' grave and the negative approach to it.

In the extant *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*³⁶ by an anonymous compiler of the Antonine period³⁷ Hesiod tries to confound his rival rhapsode by putting forward the riddle: "Muse tell me about those events which neither have happened before nor shall ever betide now or in the future". Homer, however, wittily retorts: "Never will the steeds with galloping hoof-beats crash their chariots with each other round Zeus' tomb, as they eagerly compete for victory"³⁸. In other words, the immortality of the supreme god entails both the unreality of the tomb tale³⁹ and the impossibility of any funeral games being

³¹ Cf. EPIPHANIUS (bishop of Constantia = Salamis of Cyprus, 367-403 A.D.), *Panarton adversus haeres.*, 1, 3, 42 (= PG, 41, 793); HIERON., *Comm. in Epist. ad Tit.* VII, 606: *dicitur iste versiculus in Epimen. Cret. poetae Oraculis reperiri*; I, 166: *culius heroici hemistichium postea Callimachus usurpavit*.

³² *Expositor*, 1912, p. 348-353; cf. P. CHRISTOU, 'Ο Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος καὶ τὸ τετράστιχον τοῦ Ἐπιμενίδου, in *Κρητικά Χρονικά*, 3 (1949), p. 118-126; VERBRUGGEN, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 61.

³³ Cf. WEST, *Hesiod Theogony*, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 162.

³⁴ Cf. U. VON WILAMOWITZ, *Hellenistische Dichtung*, II, Berlin, 1924, p. 3: "Am hübschesten wäre es, wenn Epimenides selbst von dem Grabe geredet hätte, aber das ist unerweislich".

³⁵ R. PFEIFFER, *Callimachus*, I, *Iambi*, fr. 191, 9-11; [PLUT.], *Mor.*, 880e.

³⁶ U. VON WILAMOWITZ, *Vitae Homeri et Hesiodi*, Bonn, 1916 (*Kleine Texte*, 137), p. 34-45; T.W. ALLEN, *Homeri opera* V, Oxonii, 1952 (*OCT*), p. 226-238.

³⁷ "Not long after Hadrian's death": M.L. WEST, *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, in *CQ*, 17 (1967), p. 433.

³⁸ WILAMOWITZ, *Certamen*, *op. cit.* (n. 36), p. 37, 30-31 (= ALLEN, 100-101).

³⁹ Exactly as in CALLIMACHUS' *Hymn to Zeus*, 4-7.

held round it. It is generally agreed⁴⁰ that large parts of the *Certamen* narrative are taken over by the 2nd cent. A.D. compiler from the miscellaneous *Mouseion* of the sophist Alkidamas of Elaia in the Aeolis, a slightly older antagonist of Isocrates. His *Mouseion* was apparently published at the beginning of the 4th cent. B.C., perhaps even earlier⁴¹. The theory (by Bergk, Allen a.o.)⁴² that the original source of Alkidamas—who depicted Homer as the first great exponent of extemporaneous speech—was the 7th cent. cyclic poet Lesches, may be dismissed; yet Alkidamas retold the old popular story of the “contest”, and the riddles, including the above cited, allegedly answered by “Homer”, are thought to be “traditional”⁴³. If so, one can plausibly speculate whether the same cause (as in Callimachus) of widespread rumours of Zeus’ grave motivated Alkidamas too or his authority to relegate the story to the realm of unreality⁴⁴. At any rate, Callimachus figures at the head of a long tradition of writers who use his verses either positively —i.e. subscribing to the rebuttal of the Cretan claim— or negatively, i.e. taking them as evidence for the existence of Zeus’ real grave in Crete. Adherents to the former attitude are of course the conscious or feigned supporters of the religious establishment, one of whom, the poet Gaetulicus of the Flavian period, closely follows Callimachus in an epigram⁴⁵: a “lying tomb” (ψεύστας τύμβος) has been raised to cover the Cydonian Astydamos though the man was actually drowned while rounding Cape Malea. No wonder! Since “Cretans are liars and even Zeus has a tomb there”⁴⁶.

More persistent is the treatment of Callimachus’ passage by the Christian apologists of the early Church, who choose rather to ignore the Alexandrian poet’s denial of the tomb: Tatian (c. 120-173 A.D) in his virulent polemic against the Hellenistic learning (Πρὸς Ἑλληνας § 27) which is dated c. 155-165 A.D., returns to the pagans the imputation of atheism by reminding them of the grave of Olympian Zeus “even if one may accuse the Cretans of being liars” (καὶν ψεύδεσθαί τις τοὺς Κρήτας λέγῃ). Though the source of his information is

⁴⁰ Cf. Fr. BLASS, *Die attische Beredsamkeit*, II, Leipzig, 1892², p. 349-350; M.J. MILNE, *A Study in Alcidas and his Relation to Contemporary Sophistic* [Dissert.], Pennsylvania, 1929, *passim*; WEST, *art. cit.* (n. 37), p. 433-450.

⁴¹ Cf. MILNE, *op. cit.* (n. 40), p. 64: “perhaps before Aristophanes’ *Frogs* and almost certainly before the completion of Thucydides’ *History*”.

⁴² More recently adopted by HUXLEY, *op. cit.* (n. 28), p. 160.

⁴³ WEST, *art. cit.* (n. 37), p. 438-441; cf. R. PFEIFFER, *History of Classical Scholarship*, Oxford, 1968, p. 50.

⁴⁴ Cf. the puzzle about ὅστέα λευκὰ Διός (WILAMOWITZ, *Certamen*, p. 38, 21-23 = ALLEN, 121-123).

⁴⁵ *Anthol. Palat.*, VII, 275. According to PAGE, *Further Greek Epigrams*, Cambridge, 1981, p. 41, his dates are “within the first half of the 1st cent. A.D. or even earlier”.

⁴⁶ Gaetulicus of course imitates earlier models in sepulchral epigrams, that speak of cenotaphs as “lying tombs”, cf. CALLIMACHUS (*Anthol. Palat.*, VII, 271), LEONIDAS OF TARENTUM (VII, 273), HONESTUS OF BYZANTIUM (VII, 274).

not specified, it is obvious that Tatian draws⁴⁷ —directly or indirectly— from Callimachus with the latter's retrospection to Epimenides' saying. A few years after Tatian⁴⁸ the "Athenian Philosopher and Christian" Athenagoras is more explicit: in his *Plea for Christians* —addressed to the co-emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus between 176 and 178 A.D.— he quotes the verses 8-9 and blames the Alexandrian poet for contradicting himself: for whereas he admits Zeus' birth in Arcadia he denies his burial place in Crete. But "the uncreated God is alone eternal". The same verses (8-9) of Callimachus' Hymn are quoted also by Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c. 215 A.D.) in his *Exhortation to the Greeks*⁴⁹: "Leda is dead; the swan is dead; the eagle is dead. Search for your Zeus. Search thoroughly not heaven but the earth. The people of Crete⁵⁰, where he is buried, will tell you; Callimachus in his hymns: καὶ γὰρ τάφον etc".

Probably a few years before Clement and using rhetorical questions and answers, yet without verbatim quoting or naming Callimachus, Theophilus of Antioch (bishop 170-180 A.D.) had stressed the mortality of Zeus by reference to his burial in Crete: "ὅπου καὶ τάφος αὐτῷ ἕως τοῦ δεῦρο δέικνυται"⁵¹.

In the year 178 A.D. Lucian's friend and Platonic philosopher Celsus published the first serious criticism of Christianity under the heading *The True Discourse* ('Αληθὴς Λόγος). About 70 years later⁵² Origen (c. 184-c. 254) refutes Celsus' censure that although the Christians sneer at the pagans for worshipping Zeus buried in Crete, they themselves venerate τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ τάφου⁵³. Callimachus is again summoned from the opposite camp to verify Origen's thesis with the same couplet (v. 8-9); nevertheless, the Alexandrian poet is blamed by Origen for ignoring that Zeus' birth in Arcadia is correlative to his death⁵⁴.

III. A second line of thought in the tomb tradition stems from the *Sacred Record* ('Ιερὰ Ἀναγραφὴ), the notorious fiction circulated in Alexandria by

⁴⁷ Tatian "in early life was trained in the learning of the Greeks and gained great distinction": EUSEB., *Eccles. Hist.*, 4, 16, 7.

⁴⁸ See W.R. SCHOEDEL, *Athenagoras, Legatio and De Resurrectione*, Oxford, 1972, p. XI.

⁴⁹ *Protrept.*, 2, 37, 4.

⁵⁰ The passage is curiously mistranslated by G.W. BUTTERWORTH in the Loeb edition (*Clement of Alexandria, The Exhortation to the Greeks*, 1982 [1919], p. 78) as "Callimachus the Cretan (!), in whose land he (i.e. Zeus) lies".

⁵¹ *Ad Autol.*, 2, 3; cf. 1, 10. G. BARDY (*Théophile d'Antioche, Trois livres à Autolyce*, Paris, 1948 [*Sources chrétiennes*, 20], p. 78) contends that the apologist "ne sait pas en réalité si, de son temps, le tombeau de Zeus est encore montré aux visiteurs"; yet, Theophilus' assertion τάφος αὐτῷ ἕως τοῦ δεῦρο δέικνυται points in the contrary direction.

⁵² ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum* (written probably in 248 A.D.).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3, 43.

⁵⁴ Ἦκολούθει τῇ ἐν Ἀρκαδίᾳ γενέσει καὶ ἀποθανεῖν τὸν γεγεννημένον. This axiom is traced back to the Epicureans, the consolatory literature and sepulchral epigrams.

Euhemerus (flor. 300 B.C.) of Messene —the Peloponnesian or the Sicilian town— who professed to have undertaken distant journeys in the service of King Cassander (317-298 B.C.). Euhemerus' not very original⁵⁵ theory —embedded into a geographical-political framework— on the origins of the gods as deified former kings attracted Callimachus' scorn: he is depicted as "the babbling old man who has concocted the Panchaia Zan and scrawls blasphemous books"⁵⁶.

That both writers chanced to head the long succession of testimonia on Zeus' grave does not necessarily carry the conclusion that "cette croyance est restée limitée à un petit groupe d'évhéméristes" nor that "n'était certainement pas la conception généralement répandue parmi les Crétois"⁵⁷.

The chronological order of events should rather be reversed to agree with Edwin Rohde's⁵⁸ old observation that Euhemerus "die Sage, als zu seinem kläglichen Mythen-pragmatismus scheinbar trefflich passend, hervorgezogen und in die Literatur eingeführt habe"⁵⁹. For, indeed, several points in Euhemerus' narrative suggest his indebtedness to Cretan religious folklore, e.g. the alleged presence of Cretan immigrants in the society of Panchaia; the privileged position of the Panchaia priests claiming a Cretan ancestry, since they were brought to the island by Zeus from Crete in the course of his earthly reign⁶⁰; the use of Cretan words etc. Though not isolated in an age of bizarre travel stories and a rationalistic approach to mythology, Euhemerus' book had far-reaching consequences. Whether or not generated by tendencies in the Ptolemaic court⁶¹, it certainly encouraged the rise of ruler-cults among the successors and Epigonoι of Alexander by providing them with supposedly historical precedents⁶². On the other hand, as a document of humanistic godlessness it became the target of polemics from philosophic schools and followers of the official religion but also an invaluable weapon in the hands of Jews and Christian apologists. In the Greek speaking East Euhemerus' pronouncements are taken seriously by Polybius and fully adopted by Diodorus; but Eratosthenes, Apollodorus, Strabo and Plutarch dismiss them as spurious.

⁵⁵ P. DECHARME, *La critique des traditions religieuses chez les Grecs*, Paris, 1904, p. 372-374; P. WENDLAND, *Die Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur*, Tübingen, 1912, p. 120.

⁵⁶ See *supra*, n. 35.

⁵⁷ VERBRUGGEN, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 68.

⁵⁸ *Op. cit.* (n. 14).

⁵⁹ Cf. S. SPYRIDAKIS, *Zeus is dead. Euhemerus and Crete*, in *CJ*, 63 (1968), p. 340; J. FERGUSON, *Utopias of the Classical World*, London, 1975, p. 104.

⁶⁰ DIOD. SIC., 5, 45, 3-5; 5, 46, 3.

⁶¹ Cf. J. HANI, *La religion égyptienne dans la pensée de Plutarque*, Paris, 1976, p. 137.

⁶² M. BROZEK, in *Meander*, 25 (1970), p. 249-261, 299; cf. M. GRANT, *From Alexander to Cleopatra*, London, 1982, p. 256; S. BLUNDEL, *The Origins of Civilization in Greek and Roman Thought*, London-Sydney, 1986, p. 171.

In the latin West, however, the authority of the poet Quintus Ennius (239-169 B.C.), who published (between 201 and 181 B.C.) an adaptation of either the entire *Ἑρὰ Ἀναγραφὴ* or a part of it, probably in prose, under the heading of *Sacra Historia* —or *Sacra Scriptio* or *Euhemerus*— secured a far greater following despite occasional reaction. Thus, in Cicero's *De natura deorum*⁶³ the academic C. Aurelius, after attacking Epicurus, Protagoras and Prodicus on account of their rationalizing of divinities, aims his arrows at Euhemerus by whom *mortes et sepulturae demonstrantur deorum*. As a result Euhemerus *videtur religionem totam sustulisse*⁶⁴. Again in Bk III 53 the attack is resumed against those *qui hos deos ex hominum genere in caelum translatos non re sed opinione esse dicunt*. In the course of the dialogue homonymous deities are differentiated and of the three "Joves" the third is styled "Cretan, son of Cronus, whose grave is demonstrated in that island" (*cuius in illa insula sepulcrum ostenditur*). Also Cicero's biographer, the platonizing⁶⁵ Plutarch inveighs Euhemerus' stories as "quackeries" (*φενάκισμοί*⁶⁶). Their author "after drawing up copies of an incredible and non-existent mythology, spreads all manner of atheism over the entire inhabited world; indeed he obliterates all our accepted gods by uniformly reducing them to names of generals, admirals and kings, who allegedly lived long ago and are recorded in golden letters at Pancho; yet neither a foreigner nor any Greek has come across them except Euhemerus himself, who, it seems, alone sailed to the Panchoans and Triphyllians who never existed nor do they live today anywhere on earth⁶⁷". Euhemerus' doctrine, however, was made popular following Diodorus Siculus' publication of the *Bibliotheca*, in which excerpts and epitomes of the "Sacred Record" were intertwined with pertinent sources and the historian's own points of view⁶⁸. Jews and Christians alike take advantage of Diodorus' testimony to fight pagan polytheism. Of the miscellaneous collection of oracles known as *Oracula Sibyllina* the first section (hexameters 1-216) of the 8th book (admittedly dated before Marcus Aurelius' death⁶⁹ —180 A.D. or, more

⁶³ Written c. 45 B.C. with a dramatic time set between 77 B.C. and 76 B.C.: M. BRUWAENE, *Cicéron, De natura deorum*, I, Bruxelles, 1970, p. 6. Cicero used Ennius' version rather than the original Greek text.

⁶⁴ CIC., *De nat. deor.*, 1, 119; on Cicero's sources see WINIARCZYK's edition of Euhemerus (10 T 14).

⁶⁵ K. ZIEGLER, *Plutarchos von Chaeronela*, Stuttgart, 1949, p. 302.

⁶⁶ PLUT., *On Isis and Osiris*, 23 (= *Mor.*, 360a-b).

⁶⁷ The faulty names of the island and of its inhabitants, plus the listing of generals and admirals as allegedly awarded divinity status, imply Plutarch's use of an indirect source rather than Euhemerus' text: G. NÉMETHY, *Euhemerii reliquiae*, Budapest, 1889, p. 12; G. VALLAURI, *Evemero di Messene*, Torino, 1956, p. 48; J.G. GRIFFITHS, *Plutarch, De Iside et Osiride*, Cambridge, 1970, p. 380, etc.

⁶⁸ K. THRAEDE, *Euhemerismus*, in *RAC*, VI (1966), p. 878.

⁶⁹ J. GEFFCKEN, *Komposition und Entstehungszeit der Oracula Sibyllina*, Leipzig, 1902, p. 38; cf. D.S. POTTER, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1990, p. 99.

precisely, c. 175 A.D.⁷⁰— and whose authorship is Jewish⁷¹ rather than Christian⁷²) predicts the end of the world and the collapse of Rome which is accused of injustice and idolatry (45-49)⁷³:

ποῦ 'Ρεῖης ἡὲ Κρόνοιο
 ἡὲ Διὸς γενεὴ καὶ πάντων, ὧν ἐσεβάσθης
 δαίμονας ἀψύχους, νεκύων εἴδωλα καμώντων,
 ὧν Κρήτη καύχημα τάφους ἢ δόσμορος ἔξει,
 θρησκεύουσα θρόνῳσιν ἀναισθήτοις νεκέεσσιν.

Significantly, Crete is portrayed here as boasting about the graves of bygone rulers, this detail no doubt reflecting the prevailing opinion of the outside world⁷⁴.

The Verses 47-48 will soon be declared by Lactantius (*Div. inst.* I, 11, 47) as a confirmation of the preceding lines of Ennius' on Zeus' administrative arrangements, his death in Crete and the burial rites performed by his sons Curetes: *aetate pessum acta in Creta vitam commutavit et ad deos abiit eumque Curetes filii sui curaverunt decoraveruntque eum; et sepulcrum est in Creta*⁷⁵... Lactantius' wrong belief in the remote antiquity of all the "Sibylline oracles" is unanimously shared by Church fathers⁷⁶ against outspoken charges by pagan intellectuals —e.g. Celsus⁷⁷— to the effect that numerous interpolations into the old stock were intentionally devised by the Christians in order to buttress their own faith. In particular, the argument about Zeus' tomb was recalled during their hearings before Roman proconsuls or the Senate by the early martyrs Ignatius⁷⁸ (d. 108 A.D.) and Apollo(niu)s —"also called Sakkeas"— executed under Commodus (c. 183-185 A.D.) according to the extant *Acta*⁷⁹ which in fact subsequently suffered apologetic alterations. Nevertheless, since Apollonius, in the words of Eusebius⁸⁰, "was famous among the Christians for his education and philosophy" and his apology to the Roman

⁷⁰ J. COLLINS, *The Development of the Sibylline Tradition*, in *ANRW*, II, 20.1 (1987), p. 447.

⁷¹ A. RZACH, *Sibyllinische Orakel*, in *RE*, II A 2 (1923), col. 2144; cf. COLLINS, *art. cit.* (n. 70).

⁷² As maintained by GEFFCKEN, *op. cit.* (n. 69), p. 44.

⁷³ J. GEFFCKEN, *Die Oracula Sibyllina*, Leipzig, 1902.

⁷⁴ Cf. HIERON., *In epist. Pauli ad Titum*, 26, 573 Migne: *Cretenses qui sepulcrum eius ostendere gloriantur*.

⁷⁵ See *supra*, n. 16.

⁷⁶ E.g. HERMAS, *Shepherd*, 2, 4; [JUSTIN], *Cohort. ad gent.*, 38; THEOPHILUS, *Ad Autol.*, 2, 31; ATHENAGORAS, *Legatio*, 30, 1; CLEM. ALEX., *Coh. ad Graecos*, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10; *ID.*, *Paed.*, 3, 3; *Strom.*, 1, 15; 21, etc.

⁷⁷ ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, 7, 53; cf. LACT., *Divin. Inst.*, 4, 15, 26.

⁷⁸ A. DRESSSEL, *Patrum apostolicorum opera*, Lipsiae, 1857 (*Martyr.*, 7), p. 354.

⁷⁹ H. MUSURILLO, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, Oxford, 1979 [1972], n° 7, 22, p. 96.

⁸⁰ *Eccles. Hist.*, 5, 21.

senate proved "a most learned one", he naturally invoked such salient features of heathenism as Dionysus torn to pieces, Heracles brought to the flames alive and Zeus' interment in Crete.

During the same period bishop Theophilus of Antiocheia (169-c. 180 A.D.)—apparently trusting compendia with lists of atheists—brands Euhemerus as "the most atheistic philosopher"⁸¹ though elsewhere (*Ad Autol.* 1, 10; 2, 3) he twice cites the Euhemeristic stock argument of Zeus' grave. In contrast to Theophilus and other Greek apologists, Clement of Alexandria (died before 215 A.D.) exonerates Euhemerus ("of Acragas"!) and a good many others from the stigma of godlessness on the grounds that these thinkers "discerned more acutely the error connected with the alleged gods even if they did not perceive the truth itself"⁸².

In direct line with Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-340 A.D.)—"in some ways the last and greatest of the Apologists"⁸³—uses Euhemerus' doctrine at second hand, through the medium of Diodorus⁸⁴, whom he praises as "most notable amongst the Greek erudite intellectuals". In his *Praeparatio Evangelica* Eusebius quotes extensively from Diodorus' 3rd book, including his reference to Zeus' grave, with slight verbal changes⁸⁵. A valuable fragment from Diodorus' lost 6th book⁸⁶ is also found in Eusebius. The accumulation of lengthy extracts on religion from Diodorus and other ancient writers purports to convince the intellectual elite of the opposite camp about the absurdities of their divinities. Thus Eusebius gratefully endorses Clement's refutation of the traditional cults⁸⁷ as expounded in the *Cohortatio ad Graecos* more than a century earlier.

The apologists of the western provinces of the Roman empire naturally drew on Ennius' version of Euhemerus' book though few of them acknowledge their indebtedness as well to Greek apologetic tracts or Diodorus' text. Around 197 A.D. Tertullian⁸⁸ (c. 160-230 A.D.) who was born in Carthage, addressing his *Apologeticum* to the Roman provincial administrator, calls upon Diodorus' statement on Saturnus' human nature (*Apolo.* 10, 7: *Saturnum ... neque aliud quam hominem*) while elsewhere (*Ibid.* 25, 7) he sarcastically taunts with the worship of Zeus, "who would not allow his Crete to be subdued by Romans" (*Cretam suam Romanis fascibus*) and *omni Capitolio tumultum illum suum*

⁸¹ *Ad Autol.*, 3, 7.

⁸² CLEM. ALEX., *Coh. ad Graecos*, 2, 24, 2. Clement does not have a first hand acquaintance with Euhemerus' text: NÉMETHY, *op. cit.* (n. 67), p. 18; ZUCKER, in *Philologus*, 64 (1905), p. 468.

⁸³ K. LAKE, *Eusebius, The Eccles. History*, I, Cambridge Mass., 1980 [1926] (*Loeb*), p. XVI.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Praep. evang.*, 2, 3, 52; 3, 54; 3, 55; 3, 62.

⁸⁵ Cf. DIOD. SIC., 3, 61, 2 = EUSEB., *Praep. evang.*, 2, 3, 48 and 3, 10, 21.

⁸⁶ DIOD. SIC., 6, 1 = EUSEB., *Praep. evang.*, 2, 3, 57.

⁸⁷ EUSEB., *Praep. evang.*, 2, 3, 64.

⁸⁸ The first writer to initiate theological terminology into Latin.

praeposuisset, ut ea potius orbi terra praecelleret quae cineres Jovis textit. Perhaps a few years later Minucius Felix, a Roman lawyer and probably Tertullian's fellow-citizen, wrote the dialogue *Octavius* in which his lifelong Christian friend Octavius Januarius urges the skeptic pagan Caecilius Natalis to consult the writings of wise men and historiographers, who equate the false gods with mortals. Euhemerus in particular describes their eventual deifications *ob merita virtutis aut muneris* (*Octav.* 21, 1) and enumerates their mother-countries and graves (*eorum natales patrias sepulcra dinumerat*). Then the historians are referred to (Nepos, Cassius, Thallus and Diodorus) who bear witness to the same facts, namely "that Cronus' son expelled his father and ruled over Crete, where he died; Zeus' cave is still being visited and his tomb shown off; even the rites performed there prove his human nature"⁸⁹.

Another rhetorician of some note in the African province who turned Christian, Arnobius —from Sicca Veneria of Numidia yet probably of Greek extraction⁹⁰— in his hastily composed *Adversus nationes* (dated between 297 and 311 A.D.) adopts the habitual arguments of the earlier apologists —above all of Clement of Alexandria, whose error regarding Euhemerus' birthplace⁹¹ he inadvertently repeats. Arnobius extolls Euhemerus and the other "atheists", who *scrupulosae diligentiae cura* brought to light *res abditas*⁹² of the heathen gods, e.g. of Zeus, who *tertius vero Saturno (i.e. patre progenitus) apud insulam Cretam et sepulturae traditus et procreatus*⁹³. Arnobius' inference is of course the typical one: *possumus quidem ... omnis istos, nobis quos inducitis atque appellatis deos, homines fuisse monstrare*⁹⁴.

To Arnobius' celebrated pupil Lactantius —born in Africa before 250 A.D.⁹⁵— we owe the survival of a large number of verbal quotations or paraphrases from Ennius' *Sacra Historia* in his major work *Divinae Institutiones* (= Divine Precepts) and their *Epitome* written afterwards on someone's request. The first⁹⁶ of the seven books of *Div. Inst.* comprises Euhemerus' information on pagan gods, mainly of Zeus' worldly career until his

⁸⁹ MIN. FELIX, *Octav.*, 21, 8: *eius filius Iuppiter Cretae excluso parente regnavit, illic obiit, illic filios habuit; adhuc antrum Jovis visitur et sepulcrum eius ostenditur, et ipsi sacris suis humanitatis arguitur*; cf. bishop CYPRIANUS (d. 258 A.D.), *De idol. van.*, 2.

⁹⁰ H. LE BONNIEC, *Arnobé, Contre les Gentils*, I, Paris, 1982 (C.U.F.), p. 7, n. 3.

⁹¹ CLEM. ALEX., *Coh. ad Graecos*, 2, 24 (Ἀκραγαντίνοϋ); ARNOB., *Adv. nat.*, 4, 29 (*Agragantinus*).

⁹² ARNOB., *ibid.*; cf. R. HIRZEL, *Die Homonymie der griech. Götter nach der Lehre antiker Theologen*, in *Berichte u. Verb. d. Königl. Sächs. Gesellsch. zu Leipzig, Phil.-Hist. Cl.*, 48 (1896), p. 281.

⁹³ ARNOB., *Adv. nat.*, 4, 14; cf. 4, 25: *apud insulam Cretam sepulturae esse mandatum Iovem nobis editum traditur*.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4, 29.

⁹⁵ J.L. CREED, *Lactantius, De mortibus persecutorum*, Oxford, 1984, p. XXV.

⁹⁶ Entitled *De falsa religione*. S. BRANDT, *L. Caeli Firmiani Lactantii, Opera omnia*, I: *Divinae institutiones et Epitome Div. inst.*, Pragae-Vindobonae-Lipsiae, 1890.

death and burial in Crete⁹⁷. The evidence from Euhemerus —whom Lactantius holds to be a trustworthy historian⁹⁸— is supplemented with verses from the forged “Sibylline Oracles”, which —as noted above— Lactantius accepts without any hesitations as authentic ancient documents. Accordingly, he arrives at the same conclusion as his forerunners (*Epitome Div. Inst.* 13): *Constat ergo ex iis quae rettuli, hominem fuisse (i.e. Jovem) in terramque regnasse.*

About a century later Aurelius Augustinus (St. Augustine) bishop of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) —presumably depending on Cicero's *De natura deorum*, Lactantius or other unidentifiable sources— refers vaguely to Euhemerus' stories and Ennius' Latin translation⁹⁹ concerning Zeus' earthly life and mortality but “eschews dwelling on this topic since a great deal has been set down thereon by those who have written before us either in Greek or Latin against such errors”¹⁰⁰.

IV. What has been discussed so far can be summed up as follows: a) a distinctive feature of a persisting worship of a vegetation divinity, that dies and is reborn annually, is the acceptance of Zeus' grave in Crete; b) as this Cretan peculiarity progressively gains wider notoriety through literature and hearsay it draws forth a hostile response —as a fraudulent artifice— from supporters of the religious establishment whereas it is variously utilized by the monotheistic creeds of Judaism and the Church. Perhaps within this context of ideological controversy, which is clearly reflected in the increasing numbers of apologetic tracts during the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., we have to register Antiochus' “Apology” in defence of the Cretans with which this paper is introduced. Yet this context has not helped to clarify the nature or the arguments used by the sophist in his declamation. On the other hand it is hazardous to seek any relevance of the biographical data to the question in hand; according to Philostratus (*Vit. Soph.* 568) Antiochus used to spend many nights in the temple of Asclepius at Aegae¹⁰¹ on account of the dreams he had there and his personal contact with the healing god —but this can only point to the sophist's excessive pietism. Moreover, his “perfect” erudition in matters of history and mythology is extolled by the decree in his honour from the Peloponnesian Argos, which he allegedly discovered to be the metropolis of his own birth town Aegae, since the latter was colonized by Perseus during his expedition

⁹⁷ Cf. *supra*, n. 16 and 75.

⁹⁸ *Div. inst.*, 1, 11, 33: *antiquus auctor... res gestas Iovis et ceterorum qui dii putantur collegit; Epitome*, 1, 1, 47: *Hoc... tradunt antiquarum rerum scriptores.*

⁹⁹ AUGUST., *De civ. Dei*, 6, 7; 7, 27; *De cons. evang.*, 1, 23, 32; *Epist.*, 17, 3.

¹⁰⁰ *De civ. Dei*, 7, 27: *quia plurima posuerunt, qui contra huius modi errores ante nos vel Graeco sermone vel Latino scripserunt, non in eo mihi placuit immorari.*

¹⁰¹ The same sanctuary was used for residence by Apollonius of Tyana: PHILOSTR., *Vita Apoll.*, 1, 8.

against the Gorgons¹⁰². More positive clues should rather be sought in dominant interpretive trends at the time.

In his *True Discourse* against the new Creed —as it is excerpted by Origen— Celsus censures the Christians for jeering at the pagans for worshipping Zeus, whose grave is shown in Crete, though themselves adore as divine τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ τάφου. The Christians, however, ignore “πῶς καὶ καθὸ Κρήτες τὸ τοιοῦτον ποιοῦσιν”. Celsus’ statement might sound enigmatic, yet Origen’s following comment on it is unambiguous: “ἐν τούτοις ἀπολογεῖται (i.e. Celsus) περὶ Κρητῶν καὶ τοῦ Διὸς καὶ τοῦ τάφου αὐτοῦ, αἰνιττόμενος τροπικὰς ὑπονοίας, καθ’ ἃς πεπλάσθαι λέγεται ὁ περὶ τοῦ Διὸς μῦθος”¹⁰³. The Christian scholar rejects such methods of overcoming the oxymoron i.e. by reading hidden or symbolic meanings into the Cretan religious practice; he in his turn summons Callimachus again from the heathen camp to bear witness to the historical fact: “Indeed, the Cyrenian poet who read through the greatest number of poems and practically the entire Greek history does not know of any allegorical sense in connexion with Zeus and his grave”¹⁰⁴. Accordingly, the poet accuses the Cretans in his hymn to Zeus” —then is cited the notorious couplet hypothetically derived from Epimenides¹⁰⁵. Celsus (“the enlightened advocate of the reformed paganism”) elsewhere¹⁰⁶ appears to defend the Egyptian cult images of animals —derided as well by the Christians— as instead intimating “eternal ideas”. The vindication of traditional beliefs and cults through allegorical interpretations is not peculiar to Celsus; it has been widely practised ever since it was initiated in the sixth cent. B.C. by the rhapsode Theagenes of Rhegium¹⁰⁷ (fl. 525 B.C.) or perhaps by his predecessor Pherecydes¹⁰⁸ of Syros in reply to the strictures from Pythagoras’ or Xenophanes’ schools against the blasphemous representation of gods in Homer and Hesiod. The term used in the classical period to indicate a deeper sense supposedly underlying the literal

¹⁰² W. VOLLGRAFF, in *BCH*, 28 (1904), p. 421-424; A. WILHELM, in *BCH*, 29 (1905), p. 576; H.J. POLLACK, in *Mnemosyne* (1906), p. 335-338; L. & J. ROBERT, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 318; L. ROBERT, in *BCH*, 101 (1977), p. 126; cf. SPAWFORTH-WALKER, in *JRS*, 126 (1986), p. 103 sq. and —more recently— A. CHANIOTIS, *Historie und Historiker in den griechischen Inschriften*, Stuttgart, 1988, p. 85 (T 20), 116, 322-324 (E 28).

¹⁰³ ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, 3, 43. Nevertheless, Celsus censures the Christians for resorting to the expediency of allegorism. This situation of blatant inconsistency and reciprocal strictures is fittingly described by J. GEFFCKEN (*Zwei griechische Apologeten*, Leipzig-Berlin, 1907, p. 82) as “ein wahres Chaos inkonsequenter Polemik”.

¹⁰⁴ ORIGEN, *ibid.*: οὐδεμίαν οἶδε τροπολογίαν ἐν τοῖς περὶ Διὸς καὶ τοῦ τάφου αὐτοῦ.

¹⁰⁵ See *supra*, n. 31, 32.

¹⁰⁶ ORIGEN, *ibid.*, 3, 19.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. SCHMID-STÄHLIN, *op. cit.* (n. 29), p. 130, 745; J.E. SANDYS, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, I, Cambridge, 1958, p. 29 sq.; R. PFEIFFER, *op. cit.* (n. 43), p. 9-10.

¹⁰⁸ J. TATE, *The Beginnings of Greek Allegory*, in *CR*, 41 (1927), p. 214-215.

or superficial one was ὑπόνοια¹⁰⁹ which was later replaced by ἀλληγορία¹¹⁰. Theagenes was credited with distinguishing two forms of allegory (physical or moral) and with regarding the divine names as suggestive of mental faculties (Athena ~ Ares; Hermes ~ Leto) or natural forces (Apollo ~ Poseidon; Hera ~ Artemis). Pherecydes —according to Celsus¹¹¹— read a cosmological meaning into the abusive words of Zeus to Hera (*Il.*, 15, 18 ff.) allegedly addressed by the god to matter, which was in a confused state. About the middle of the 5th cent. B.C. Anaxagoras' pupil Metrodorus of Lampsacus "turned everything to allegory" —to quote Tatian's¹¹² derogatory comment— maintaining that Hera, Athena and Zeus were elements of nature. He even extended his "physical" explanation to cover the heroes of the Trojan war as well.

In contrast to the sophists, Plato and Aristotle —who all rejected such aberrations— allegorism apparently influenced members of the Orphic sect in the 4th. cent. B.C. and found ardent supporters amongst leading Stoics, e.g. Zeno of Citium (364-263 B.C.), Cleanthes of Assos (331-232 B.C.) and above all Chrysippus of Soloi (c. 280-208 B.C.). Concerning the latter, Cicero¹¹³ humorously remarks that "Chrysippus wants to adjust the tales in Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer to what he has said himself about the immortal gods, so that even the most ancient poets seem to have been Stoics". In imperial times the popularity of allegorical treatment of the offensive epic passages and myths¹¹⁴ is evidenced by the circulation of books such as L. Annaeus Cornutus' *Theologiae Graecae Compendium*, Heraclitus' *Quaestiones Homericae*, Porphyry's *De antro Nympharum* etc., the adoption of similar techniques in the exposition of perplexing biblical texts by Jewish scholars and Christian apologists and the revival of allegorism in an exaggerated form by the Neoplatonists.

The Christians in general condemned the recourse to ὑπόνοια in the explanation of the ancient myths by pagan philosophers and grammarians seeking to θεραπεῦσαι τὸ πατρικὸν ἁμάρτημα¹¹⁵. One of the earliest apologists Marcianus Aristides ("the philosopher from Athens") in his *Apology* —according to Eusebius¹¹⁶ addressed to Hadrian (117-138), yet more likely to Antoninus

¹⁰⁹ XEN., *Symp.*, 3, 6; PLATO, *Rep.*, 378d.

¹¹⁰ PLUT., *De aud. poet.*, 4 (= *Mor.*, 19e); yet ἀλληγορικῶς occurs already in Cleanthes (331-231 B.C.).

¹¹¹ ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, 6, 42.

¹¹² *Adversus Graecos*, 21.

¹¹³ *De nat. deor.*, 1, 41.

¹¹⁴ Cf. [LONGIN.], *De subl.*, 9, 7: εἰ μὴ κατ' ἀλληγορίαν λαμβάνοιτο, παντάπασιν ἄθεα, etc.; PAUS., 8, 8, 3: the wise men of old spoke δι' αἰνιγμάτων καὶ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ εὐθέως.

¹¹⁵ EUSEB., *Praep. evang.*, 2, 6, 17.

¹¹⁶ *ID.*, *Eccles. Hist.*, 4, 3; cf. F. BÜCHSEL, *Apologetik*, in *RLAC*, I (1950), p. 539-540.

Pius (138-161)—concludes that if the stories about gods are mythical or “physically” allegorized, they are no more gods but myths and nothing else¹¹⁷.

Justin’s pupil Tatian appeals to the heathen¹¹⁸ “not to allegorize either their myths or their gods”; otherwise their conception of divinity is ruined not only by the Christians but by themselves. Tatian also disparages Metrodorus’ arguments about gods as totally absurd since they represent the deities as natural substances.

On a similar pattern of argumentation, but with a substantially wider learning¹¹⁹ in the mythological and literary fields, Athenagoras rejects the φυσιολογία intending to exonerate the pagan gods by means of allegories; he quotes Empedocles’ “physical” equations (Zeus = Shining, fire; Hera = life-giving, earth; Aidoneus = air; Nestis = water¹²⁰) and Stoic etymological speculations¹²¹ without ignoring the current Euhemeristic tradition¹²².

From the preceding —by no means exhaustive— survey of texts written near the times when the sophist Antiochus was active (2nd and 3rd cent A.D.) it becomes fairly clear that metaphors and allegorical speculations (“physical”, moral or etymological) are constantly resorted to when dealing with offensive myths and passages of the classical heritage. This technique of ὑπόνοια seems to appeal rather to enlightened and philosophical defenders of the accepted religion; at the same time it proves to be an admirable expedient in order to invalidate repeated attacks by atheists, skeptics, the Jews and the Christians. Perhaps we ought to reconstruct in this particular context the arguments contained in Antiochus’ apology for the Cretans and understand accordingly Philostratus’ phrase φυσιολογία τε καὶ θεολογία πάση, which characterized the sophist’s rhetorical arsenal used in the declamation.

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¹¹⁷ ARISTIDES, *Apol.*, 13, 7.

¹¹⁸ *Ad Graecos*, 21, 6. He probably broke away from the Church in 172 A.D.: J. WHITTAKER, *Tatian Oratio ad Graecos*, Oxford, 1982, p. IX.

¹¹⁹ SCHOEDEL, *op. cit.* (n. 48), p. XIX-XX.

¹²⁰ EMPEDOCLES, fr. 6 (= ATHENAG., *Legat.*, 22, 1-2).

¹²¹ ATHENAG., *Legat.*, 22, 4.

¹²² Cf. SCHOEDEL, *op. cit.* (n. 48), p. XXI.