

CLAS109.06 WISDOM & WAR

- M** Maurizio ch.6.1 HISTORY— Aeschylus of Athens *Eumenides*
synchronous
before class: skim HISTORY for context; refer to leading questions; focus on ancient texts
Active Reading **FOCUS** • Aes.*Eum.*, p.260-266
NB read for one hour, taking notes (fill in active reading worksheet)
- RAW notes & post discussion question • B4@11h00
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- W** Maurizio ch.6.3 COMPARE— *Cosmogonies from the Temple of Esna*
asynchronous
before class: skim COMPARE for context; refer to leading questions; focus on ancient text
Active Reading **FOCUS** • **CR06** *Esna* (NOT Maurizio)
SKIM • **CR06** Plato *Timaeus* 21A-23c; Herodotus *History* II.28, 59, 170-75
NB read for one hour, taking notes (fill in worksheet); finish previous as necessary
- WATCH Lecture 06.2 • B4@11h00
- RAW notes & post discussion question • B4@11h00
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- F** Maurizio ch.6.2 Theory—Structuralism: Political Athena
synchronous
before class: skim THEORY for context; refer to leading questions; summarize modern text
tl; dr • Goldhill 2004, p269-272
- tl; dr notes & post discussion responses (on each, Aeschullus & *Esna*) • B4@11h00
- Q05 • QUOTES
- FINAL notes • B4@23h59
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ATHENA & POSEIDON

How does myth represent strategic reasoning vs unrestrained violence?

How does myth represent religious ritual?

How does myth represent civic order?

How does myth structurally oppose male and female?

Cosmogonies at the Temple of Esna (Text 206)¹

Marshall Clagett

Commentary

We have already described the cosmogony assigned to Ptah and reflected in the *Berlin Hymn to Ptah* (Doc.II.7e), and so we may turn immediately to the late cosmogonic material found at the Temple of Khnum at Esna, all of these extracts dating from the time of the Roman Emperor Trajan (98-117 CE). I give these extracts as representative of the cosmogonies described on temples built in the Ptolemaic and Roman times. Similar accounts could also be constructed by examining inscriptions in the temples at Philae, Edfu, Korn Ombo, and Dendera.

It is perfectly clear that the god Khnum-Re is credited with the same creative acts as the other creator gods. Indeed, he is identified with Ptah-Tatenen as the creator of the primordial gods (Doc.II.7e [Text 394,231]. He is called the “great god who came into being at the very beginning” and the “magnificent ram, at the first time.” We hear of his lifting the earth and supporting the sky, and of his shining forth with the form of luminous brightness: “He installed the soul of the spirits in the midst of the waters (?),” “He acted the god when he began to come into being” (Text 394.25). He is “mysterious of aspect” and is called the “modeler of the modelers” (Text 394.26), an obvious reference to his creation of living things on the potter's wheel (a function sometimes also ascribed to Ptah).² He is called the “eldest of the primordial gods”. He is also the “father of the fathers” and the “mother of the mothers.” He made both superior and inferior beings, cities and countries, and the Two Lands (Egypt). He made firm the mountains (Text 394.27). He brought to life those he had modeled on his wheel and he provides continued sustenance for them: “He comes forth at the right time without cease.” His most frequent identification is as the lord or god of the potter's wheel (see Texts 319, 378 and 394). Like the other creator gods, he is unequalled and he “made that which is and that which is not,” i.e. everything (Text 378.9).³ He is the omnipotent one (Text 319,16):

You have modeled men on the potter's wheel,
You have made the gods,
You have modeled large and small cattle,
You have formed everything upon your wheel, each day,
[In] your name of Khnum the Potter.

Also like other creator gods he is described as the “mysterious one whose form no one knows” (Text 378.10). Khnum came forth from the Abyss and appeared with the form of the (solar) flame. Not only does the Nile arise from two caverns under his feet (at Elephantine) but he likewise produces the north breeze “for the nostrils of gods and men.” His right eye is the sun and his left the moon. Again we see him identified with Ptah-Tatenen (Text 378.13). He is also described (in Text 378.14) as a Heh god, i.e. a support god (no doubt symbolizing all of the eight Heh gods holding up heaven—gods whom I have mentioned earlier). Finally note that he is also identified with the eldest son of Atum, i.e. with Shu.

A great many other details concerning Khnum's activities can be milked from these extracts, but I set them aside and pass on to a rather detailed account of creation by the goddess Neith, an account also appearing in our extracts from the Temple of Esna (Doc. II.7e [Text 206]).

¹ *Ancient Egyptian Science: A Source Book*, text II.7e (Clagett 1989: 324-328, 578-581).

² At the Temple of Horus, the king “created Edfu on a potter's wheel, like Him-Who-is-South-of-the-Wall” (i.e. Ptah, cf. *The God Ptah*, Holmberg 1946: 48)

³ Sauneron translates this phrase as *que fit ce qui est et ce qui n'est pas (encore)*. This give the negative half (“that which is not [yet]”) the sense of potential existence rather than the sense of nonexistence defined as that which is in the realm of chaos (Sauneron 1962 [*Esna, V: Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna*], cf. Hornung 1956).

Like other Egyptian gods cast in the role of the demiurge, Neith is called “father of the fathers” and “mother of the mothers.” Similarly, like other such gods, she is described as having come into being from herself at the beginning of time in Nun. This was the time when the land was still in the shadows of the Abyss, i.e. when the land had not yet emerged. In the beginning Neith took more than one form. First, she gave herself the appearance of a cow in order to hide her divine form. “Then she changed herself into a lates-fish (*ḥʿ*).” Then she went forth and gave illumination with her eyes to what she saw (i.e. to say, when she looked at something she illuminated it), as is said of other creator gods and particularly of solar gods. “Then she said, let this place (where I am) become for me a platform of land in the midst of the Abyss in order that I might stand on it.” This is one of the many such commands in this account which show the device of the creative word in action. The first land to be created was Esna, which is equated here in some way with the early home of Neith in Sais.⁴ Thereafter Neith created thirty gods, again by using the technique of the creative word, i.e. by pronouncing their names. She ordered her children to stand on the primordial land, which was called “Highland” (*kʿ*). Then they asked of her what else was to be created. She answered by describing the creative process of conception and verbal command: (1) the enumeration of the four (creative) spirits (*ḥw*), (2) the giving of form to that which is in the stomach (perhaps the magical forms and concepts in the heart?), (3) the pronouncing (*šd*) of what is on the lips, (4) the recognition or knowing of the resultant beings that will arise that very day.

Thereupon they did everything which she described. Then Neith considers what she will produce next. She declares that a god will come into being who will produce light by opening his eyes and darkness by closing them. Men will be produced from the tears of this god and gods will be created from his saliva. Neith will fortify this god by means of her power, making him effective through her own efficacious spirit. She predicts that men will rebel against this god, thus recalling the account of such a rebellion in *The Book of the Divine Cow*, and further that this rebellion will be defeated. The name of this powerful god she will create will be Khepri in the morning and Atum in the evening, and he will be a god who shines forth every day forever in his name of Re. To this the gods reply “we are ignorant (*ḥm-n*).” From this reply arose their name of Eight (*ḥmnw*), from which Hermopolis takes its name. So it is clear that here we have Hermopolitan influence.

Further evidence of Hermopolitan influence is seen in the details of the sun-god's birth as described by Neith. He was born from excretions of hers which she had placed in the (primordial) egg, which egg we have already mentioned in connection with Hermopolitan doctrines. Accompanying the birth of the sun came light and the first day of the year (i.e. the solar year came into being). At this point are described the details of the creation of man from the god's tears brought on by his not seeing his mother and the creation of the gods from his saliva produced when he salivated on seeing her again. Finally, we notice a passage which states that, from seven commands which Neith pronounced, the Seven Goddesses of Methyer (a cow goddess) were created, one more reference to the Memphite type of creation by spoken command.

Text 206

(1) Father of the fathers, mother of the mothers, the divinity who began to come into being in the beginning was in the midst of the Abyss. She appeared out of herself while the land was [still] in the shadows and no land had [yet] appeared and no plant had sprouted She turned herself into a cow so that no divinity wherever he would be could recognize her. Then she changed herself into (*lit.* renewed her appearance as) a lates-fish (2) and started off. She made luminescent the glances of her eyes, and

⁴ Sauneron 1962: 249-50, 255.

light came into being. Then she said: "Let this place (where I am) become for me a platform of land in the midst of the Abyss in order that I might stand on it." And this place became a platform of land in the midst of the Abyss, just as she said. And [thus] came into being "the land of the waters" (i.e. Esna), which is also Sais...

Everything which her heart conceived came into being immediately. (3) Thus she felt happy about this emergence [of the land] and so Egypt came into being in this happiness.

She created thirty gods by pronouncing their names, one by one, and she became happy when she saw them. They said: "Hail to you, Mistress of Divinities, our mother, who has brought us into being. You have made our names before we knew them (i.e. yet had cognizance of them) ... you have made [for us] the land upon which we can stand, you have separated [for us] the night from the day How very beneficial is everything which comes from your heart, O Sole One, created in the beginning. Eternity (*nḥḥ*) and everlastingness (*ḏt*) pass before your face [(4) Then Neith establishes the gods on the emergent land, and they ask (5) what is going to be created.]

Neith then said: "I shall cause you to know what is coming into being. Let us count the four spirits (*ḥw*). Let us give form to what is in our bodies (i.e. in our hearts?) and then let us pronounce our forms. So, we shall recognize everything the same day." Everything she said took place, and the eighth hour (i.e. the culminating time) occurred in the space of a moment.

The Ahet-cow (i.e. Neith) began to think about what she was going to create. She said: "An august god will come into being today. When he opens his eyes, light will come into being; when he closes them, (6) darkness will come into being. People will come into being from the tears of his eye, gods from the spittle of his lips. I will strengthen him by my strength, I will make him effective by my efficacy, I will make him vigorous by my vigor. His children will rebel against him, but they will be beaten on his behalf and struck down on his behalf, for he is my son issued from my body, and he will be king of this land forever (*ḏt*). I will protect him with my arms (7) I am going to tell you his name: it will be Khepri in the morning and Atum in the evening; and he will be the radiating god in his rising forever, in his name of Re, every day:

Then these gods said: "we are ignorant (*ḥm-n*) of the things we have heard." So the "Eight" (*ḥmnw*) became the name of these gods (i.e. the Ogdoad) and also the name of this city (i.e. "Eighttown", i.e. Hermopolis, mod. Ashmunein).

So this god was born from the excretions that came forth from the body of Neith and which she placed in the body of this [primordial] egg (8)When it broke the shell, it was Re who was hidden in the midst of the Abyss in his name of Amun the Elder and who fashioned the gods and the goddesses with his rays in his name of Khnum.

His mother, the cow goddess, called out loudly: "Come, come, you whom I have created. Come, come, you whom I have conceived. Come, come, (9) you whom I have caused to come into being I am your mother, the cow goddess: This god then came forth, his mouth open, his arms opened toward this goddess And this day (of the sun's birth) then became the beautiful day of the beginning of the year (*tp rnpt*).

Then he cried in the Abyss when he did not see his mother, the cow goddess, and mankind came into being from the tears of his eye; and he salivated when he saw her again, and the gods came into being from the saliva of his lips.

(10) These primordial gods (now) rest in their shrines; they have been pronounced (*dm*, by creative word) just as this goddess conceived them in her heart

....

They (the ancestor gods) thrust aside (11) a wad of spittle from her mouth which she had produced in the Abyss, and it was transformed into a serpent of 120 cubits, which was named Apep (or Apophis). Its heart conceived the revolt against Re, its cohorts coming from its eyes.

Thoth emerged from his (i.e. Re's) heart in a moment of bitterness (*dhr*), which accounts for his name of Thoth (*dhwty*). He speaks with his father, who sent him against the revolt, in his name of Lord of the Word of God. And this is how Thoth, Lord of Khmun, came into being, in this place, as well as that of the Eight-Gods of the first company of gods.

.... [Then Neith goes to her city of Esna (i.e. Sais) with her son to establish his name there. She will suckle him until he is strong enough to massacre those plotting against him. Then we are told that the seven propositions that she declared in the course of creation became seven divinities] (13) And so came into being the Seven Proposition-Goddesses of Methyer

Socrates: Excellent! But come now, what was this exploit described by Critias, following Solons report, as a thing not verbally recorded, although actually performed by this city long ago?

Critias: I will tell you: it is an old tale, and I heard it from a man not young. For indeed at that time, as he said himself, [21b] Critias was already close upon ninety years of age, while I was somewhere about ten; and it chanced to be that day of the Apaturia which is called "Cureotis."¹⁴The ceremony for boys which was always customary at the feast was held also on that occasion, our fathers arranging contests in recitation. So while many poems of many poets were declaimed, since the poems of Solon were at that time new, many of us children chanted them. And one of our fellow tribesmen—whether he really thought so at the time or whether he was paying a compliment [21c] to Critias—declared that in his opinion Solon was not only the wisest of men in all else, but in poetry also he was of all poets the noblest. Whereat the old man (I remember the scene well) was highly pleased and said with a smile, "If only, Amynder, he had not taken up poetry as a by-play but had worked hard at it like others, and if he had completed the story he brought here from Egypt, instead of being forced to lay it aside owing to the seditions and all the other evils he found here on his return,— [21d] why then, I say, neither Hesiod nor Homer nor any other poet would ever have proved more famous than he." "And what was the story, Critias?" said the other. "Its subject," replied Critias, "was a very great exploit, worthy indeed to be accounted the most notable of all exploits, which was performed by this city, although the record of it has not endured until now owing to lapse of time and the destruction of those who wrought it." "Tell us from the beginning," said Amynder, "what Solon related and how, and who were the informants who vouched for its truth."

[21e] "In the Delta of Egypt," said Critias, "where, at its head, the stream of the Nile parts in two, there is a certain district called the Saïtic. The chief city in this district is Saïs (**Zau**)—the home of King Amasis—the founder of which, they say, is a goddess whose Egyptian name is **Neith**, and in Greek, as they assert, Athena. These people profess to be great lovers of Athens and in a measure akin to our people here. And Solon said that when he travelled there he was held in great esteem amongst them; moreover, when he was questioning such of their priests [22a] as were most versed in ancient lore about their early history, he discovered that neither he himself nor any other Greek knew anything at all, one might say, about such matters. And on one occasion, when he wished to draw them on to discourse on ancient history, he attempted to tell them the most ancient of our traditions, concerning Phoroneus, who was said to be the first man, and Niobe; and he went on to tell the legend about Deucalion and Pyrrha after the Flood, and how they survived it, and to give the geneology of their descendants; [22b] and by recounting the number of years occupied by the events mentioned he tried to calculate the periods of time. Whereupon one of the priests, a prodigiously old man, said, "O Solon, Solon, you Greeks are always children: there is not such a thing as an old Greek." And on hearing this he asked, "What mean you by this saying?" And the priest replied, "You are young in soul, every one of you. For therein you possess not a single belief that is ancient and derived from old tradition, nor yet one science that is hoary with age. [22c] And this is the cause thereof: There have been and there will be many and diverse destructions of mankind, of which the greatest are by fire and water, and lesser ones by countless other means. For in truth the story that is told in your country as well as ours, how once upon a time Phaethon, son of Helios (Sun), yoked his father's chariot, and, because he was unable to drive it along the course taken by his father, burnt up all that was upon the earth and himself perished by a thunderbolt,—that story, as it is told, has the fashion of a legend, but the truth of it lies in [22d] the occurrence of a shifting of the bodies in the heavens which move round the earth, and a destruction of the things on the earth by fierce fire, which recurs at long intervals. At such times all they that dwell on the mountains and in high and dry places suffer destruction more than those who dwell near to rivers or the sea; and in our case the Nile, our Savior in other ways,

saves us also at such times from this calamity by rising high. And when, on the other hand, the Gods purge the earth with a flood of waters, all the herdsmen and shepherds that are in the mountains are saved, [22e] but those in the cities of your land are swept into the sea by the streams; whereas In our country neither then nor at any other time does the water pour down over our fields from above, on the contrary it all tends naturally to well up from below. Hence it is, for these reasons, that what is here preserved is reckoned to be most ancient; the truth being that in every place where there is no excessive heat or cold to prevent it there always exists some human stock, now more, now less in number. [23a] And if any event has occurred that is noble or great or in any way conspicuous, whether it be in your country or in ours or in some other place of which we know by report, all such events are recorded from of old and preserved here in our temples; whereas your people and the others are but newly equipped, every time, with letters and all such arts as civilized States require and when, after the usual interval of years, like a plague, the flood from heaven comes sweeping down afresh upon your people, [23b] it leaves none of you but the unlettered and uncultured, so that you become young as ever, with no knowledge of all that happened in old times in this land or in your own. Certainly the genealogies which you related just now, Solon, concerning the people of your country, are little better than children's tales; for, in the first place, you remember but one deluge, though many had occurred previously; and next, you are ignorant of the fact that the noblest and most perfect race amongst men were born in the land where you now dwell, and from them both you yourself are sprung and the whole [23c] of your existing city, out of some little seed that chanced to be left over; but this has escaped your notice because for many generations the survivors died with no power to express themselves in writing. For verily at one time, Solon, before the greatest destruction by water, what is now the Athenian State was the bravest in war and supremely well organized also in all other respects. It is said that it possessed the most splendid works of art and the noblest polity of any nation under heaven of which we have heard tell.”

28₁ Let this be, then, as it is and as it was in the beginning. But as to the sources of the Nile, no one that conversed with me, Egyptian, Libyan, or Greek, professed to know them, except the recorder of the sacred treasures of Athena (**Neith**) in the Egyptian city of Saïs (**Zau**). ²I thought he was joking when he said that he had exact knowledge, but this was his story. Between the city of Syene in the Thebaid and Elephantine, there are two hills with sharp peaks, one called Crophi and the other Mophi. ³The springs of the Nile, which are bottomless, rise between these hills; half the water flows north towards Egypt, and the other half south towards Ethiopia. ⁴He said that Psammetichus king of Egypt had put to the test whether the springs are bottomless: for he had a rope of many thousand fathoms' length woven and let down into the spring, but he could not reach to the bottom. ⁵This recorder, then, if he spoke the truth, showed, I think, that there are strong eddies and an upward flow of water, such that with the stream rushing against the hills the sounding-line when let down cannot reach bottom.

59₁ The Egyptians hold solemn assemblies not once a year, but often. The principal one of these and the most enthusiastically celebrated is that in honor of Artemis (**Bastet**) at the town of Bubastis (**Per-Bastet**, mod. *Tall Baṣṭa*), and the next is that in honor of Isis at Busiris (**Djedu**; mod. *Abū Ṣīr*). ²This town is in the middle of the Egyptian Delta, and there is in it a very great temple of Isis, who is Demeter in the Greek language. ³The third greatest festival is at Saïs (**Zau**, mod. *Ṣā al-Ḥaḡar*) in honor of Athena (**Neith**); the fourth is the festival of the sun at Heliopolis (**On**, mod. *ʿAin Ṣamš*), the fifth of Leto (**Wadjyt**) at Buto (**Pe** and **Dep**, mod. *Tall al-Faraʿin*), and the sixth of Ares (**Horus**) at Papremis (**Xoīs/Khasuu**, mod. *Saḡā*).

170₁ There is also at Saïs (**Zau**) the burial-place of one whose name I think it impious to mention in speaking of such a matter; it is in the temple of Athena (**Neith**), behind and close to the length of the wall of the shrine. ²Moreover, great stone obelisks stand in the precinct; and there is a lake nearby, adorned with a stone margin and made in a complete circle; it is, as it seemed to me, the size of the lake at Delos which they call the Round Pond.

171₁ On this lake they enact by night the story of the god's sufferings, a rite which the Egyptians call the Mysteries. I could say more about this, for I know the truth, but let me preserve a discreet silence. ²Let me preserve a discreet silence, too, concerning that rite of Demeter which the Greeks call Thesmophoria, except as much of it as I am not forbidden to mention. ³The daughters of Danaus were those who brought this rite out of Egypt and taught it to the Pelasgian women; afterwards, when the people of the Peloponnese were driven out by the Dorians, it was lost, except in so far as it was preserved by the Arcadians, the Peloponnesian people which was not driven out but left in its home.

172₁ After Apries was deposed, Amasis became king; he was from a town called Siuph in the district of Saïs. ²Now at first he was scorned and held in low regard by the Egyptians on the ground that he was a common man and of no high family; but presently he won them over by being shrewd and not arrogant. ³He had among his countless treasures a golden washbowl, in which he and all those who ate with him were accustomed to clean their feet. This he broke in pieces and out of it made a god's image, which he set in a most conspicuous spot in the city; and the Egyptians came frequently to this image and held it in great reverence. ⁴When Amasis learned what the townsfolk were doing, he called the Egyptians together and told them that the image had been made out of the washbowl, in which Egyptians had once vomited and urinated and cleaned their feet, but which now they greatly revered. ⁵"Now then," he said, "I have fared like the washbowl, since if before I was a common man, still, I am your king now." And he told them to honor and show respect for him.

173₁ The following was how he scheduled his affairs: in the morning, until the the hour when the marketplace filled, he readily conducted whatever business was brought to him; the rest of the day, he drank and joked at the expense of his companions and was idle and playful. ²But this displeased

his friends, who admonished him thus: "O King, you do not conduct yourself well by indulging too much in vulgarity. You, a celebrated man, ought to conduct your business throughout the day, sitting on a celebrated throne; and thus the Egyptians would know that they are governed by a great man, and you would be better spoken of; as it is, what you do is by no means kingly." ³But he answered them like this: "Men that have bows string them when they must use them, and unstring them when they have used them; were bows kept strung forever, they would break, and so could not be used when needed. ⁴Such, too, is the nature of man. Were one to be always at serious work and not permit oneself a bit of relaxation, he would go mad or idiotic before he knew it; I am well aware of that, and give each of the two its turn." Such was his answer to his friends.

174¹ It is said that even when Amasis was a private man he was fond of drinking and joking and was not at all a sober man; and that when his drinking and pleasure-seeking cost him the bare necessities, he would go around stealing. Then when he contradicted those who said that he had their possessions, they would bring him to whatever place of divination was nearby, and sometimes the oracles declared him guilty and sometimes they acquitted him. ²When he became king, he did not take care of the shrines of the gods who had acquitted him of theft, or give them anything for maintenance, or make it his practice to sacrifice there, for he knew them to be worthless and their oracles false; but he took scrupulous care of the gods who had declared his guilt, considering them to be gods in very deed and their oracles infallible. 175¹ Amasis made a marvellous outer court for the temple of Athena (**Neith**) at Saïs (**Zau**), far surpassing all in its height and size, and in the size and quality of the stone blocks; moreover, he set up huge images and vast man-headed sphinxes, and brought enormous blocks of stone besides for the building. ²Some of these he brought from the stone quarries of Memphis (**Men-nefer**, mod. *Mit Rahina*); the largest came from the city of Elephantine (**Abu**, mod. *Gazirat Aswān*), twenty days' journey distant by river from Saïs. ³But what I admire most of his works is this: he brought from Elephantine a shrine made of one single block of stone; its transport took three years and two thousand men had the carriage of it, all of them pilots. This chamber is thirty-five feet long, twenty-three feet wide, thirteen feet high. ⁴These are the external dimensions of the chamber which is made of one block; its internal dimensions are: thirty-one feet long, twenty feet wide, eight feet high. It stands at the entrance of the temple; ⁵it was not dragged within (so they say) because while it was being drawn the chief builder complained aloud of the great expense of time and his loathing of the work, and Amasis taking this to heart would not let it be drawn further. Some also say that a man, one of those who heaved up the shrine, was crushed by it, and therefore it was not dragged within.