

Summary

WORLD-RULERS AND POLITICIANS: PLATO MEETING HESIOD

This paper examines whether it is possible to interpret the philosophical myth from Plato's *Statesman* against a background taken from Hesiod's *Theogony*. At first, the Hesiodic conception of three generations of gods is reconstructed, and the changes of the world-order related to the transfer of the world-rule from Cronus to Zeus are emphasised. The Cronus' rule is strictly centralized, absolute and does not tolerate any co-rulers. It means blessed life with all material needs immediately fulfilled for all living beings (here also the exposition of Cronus' rule from *Works and Days* is taken into account), but it is unstable and vulnerable on the level of the cosmos as a whole. Zeus wins the battle against his father thanks to his wisdom and prudence. Zeus' world rule is decentralized and depersonalized, Zeus takes other gods as his partners, entrusts to them their specific areas of concern and therefore abandons the absolute unity of the cosmic power. Plato's myth is interpreted against this background.

The cosmic phase of Cronus' rule is the phase when the cosmos as a whole is governed by one supreme divine power, but there is no political constitution in the human world – people live without families and

cities, without memory and apparently also without philosophy; their way of life is unhuman and evokes the animal life. The opposite cosmic phase characterized by Zeus' rule constitutes a world with a permanent conflict of many powers, but which is also open to autonomous and fully human activity. It is the phase of the world we live in, the phase when people have to take care of their lives and struggle for good by themselves, but still with the help of particular gods who guarantee the connection between the unified rule of Cronus and the new pluralist world order. The unity of Cronus' world phase becomes an ideal point toward which the human activity, as well as the happening of the world as a whole, strives to converge toward, and it is but in this very striving the questions of good and consequently also wisdom and philosophy become vital and essential for human life.

The political meaning of the Platonic myth is often interpreted only in the light of its first-hand verbal content, and so the Cronus' phase is in all its bearings interpreted as a transcendental ideal of pure perfection, whereas the Zeus' phase only negatively as a deficient decline from this ideal. However, the use of the comparative method enables us to show that the Platonic myth is substantively ambiguous, which corresponds with the ambiguity of the questions it refers to: the question of a good statesman and essentially the question of an optimal order of human society.

Keywords: political philosophy; cosmological myth; world-order; rule; power; Hesiod; Plato

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