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*A Curious Concoction:
Tradition and Innovation in Olympiodorus' Creation of Mankind*

Olympiodorus' recounting (*In Plat. Phaed.* I.3-6) of the Titan's dismemberment of Dionysus and the subsequent creation of humankind has served for over a century as the linchpin of the reconstructions of the supposed Orphic doctrine of original sin. From Comparetti's first statement of the idea in his 1879 discussion of the gold tablets from Thurii, Olympiodorus' brief testimony has been the only piece of evidence to pull together the threads of the Zagreus myth, linking the dismemberment of Dionysus with the creation of human beings.¹ Scholars have repeatedly argued that Olympiodorus preserves the only complete version of the story, which exists elsewhere only in incomplete fragments or allusions.² These fragments, it is argued, must be restored by supplying the missing threads from Olympiodorus' story, which, despite the late 6th century CE date and peculiar biases of the author as a pagan Neoplatonist scholar (and possibly alchemist) in a Christian era, nevertheless preserves essentially unchanged the central Orphic myth that dates from the 6th century BCE. Building on the studies of Proclus, Damascius and Olympiodorus by Brisson, I want to show first that, while Olympiodorus does indeed link the dismemberment and the anthropogony, he does not include any element of inherited guilt, either in his narration of the myth or in his interpretation.³ Moreover, his telling of the myth, which makes the anthropogony the sequel to the dismemberment of Dionysus, is an innovation made for the purposes of his own argument. Rather than preserving in fossilized form a sacred myth more than a millennium old, Olympiodorus concocts an innovative tale of his own, manipulating a variety of sources that describe the dismemberment of Dionysus, as well as other sources that recount the punishment of the Titans for their rebellion in the Titanomachy and the subsequent creation of new races from them. Olympiodorus' sources include not only poetic treatments of the subjects but also allegorical readings of the myths, especially those by his predecessors, Proclus and Damascius. Olympiodorus' narration of the dismemberment of Dionysus is not the key witness to a lost, secret tradition that prefigures the Christian doctrine of original sin, but rather a colorful example of a late antique Neoplatonic philosopher's manipulation of the Greek mythic tradition.

¹ Comparetti in Cavallari 1879. See also the discussion of the impact of Comparetti's idea in Edmonds 1999 and Graf & Johnston 2007.

² Not only Bernabé 2002a and 2003, but also, e.g., Bremmer 2004, 53, who claims that the story "started to appear in veiled form in our texts from the middle of the fifth century onwards. ... We unfortunately find this myth in its most detailed form only in the sixth-century philosopher Olympiodorus."

³ Brisson 1987, 1990, & 1992 (all reprinted in Brisson 1995).

In the Greek mythic tradition, the interpretation of the myth cannot be kept separate from the way the narrative is recounted, since the author retelling a traditional tale always adapts the details of the story to fit the ideas he is trying to convey and the audience to which he is recounting the tale.⁴ In this process of *bricolage* (to borrow the term from Levi-Strauss), the author strives to render his version authoritative for his audience by engaging with previous versions of the tale, especially the best known or most authoritative renditions. Olympiodorus adopts many of the same gambits used by earlier tellers of myth in the Greek tradition (including Plato), concealing his own innovations by starting with references to previous versions and then diverging from the earlier accounts. Olympiodorus crafts his myth to argue for a conclusion surprising for a Neoplatonist, that suicide is forbidden because the body contains divine elements. Olympiodorus' mythic innovations allow him to provide a new and startling explanation of a crux in the *Phaedo* that Damascius and Proclus had tried to explain earlier. By drawing on these previous interpretations to provide a better and more authoritative version of the myth, Olympiodorus is engaging in the same kind of agonistic myth-telling that is characteristic of the Greek mythic tradition from the earliest evidence. Olympiodorus is not pedantically preserving an ancient Orphic myth, he is rather making use of the authority of Orpheus among the Neoplatonists to support his own philosophical ideas, concocting a curious new version of the traditional tale of the dismemberment of Dionysus to explain Socrates' puzzling prohibition of suicide.

Rather than treating it as an isolated Orphic fragment, we must understand Olympiodorus' recounting and interpretation of the story in the context of the argument he is making, as well as in the context of his Neoplatonic interpretive tradition. The text comes from Olympiodorus' commentary on the *Phaedo* of Plato, in his explanation of Socrates' puzzling prohibition of suicide. In addition to his own argument against suicide (I.2), Olympiodorus claims that the text itself contains two proofs, a mythical and Orphic argument and a philosophic and dialectic one.

Καὶ ἔστι τὸ μυθικὸν ἐπιχείρημα τοιοῦτον· παρὰ τῷ Ὀρφεῖ τέσσαρες βασιλεῖαι παραδίδονται. πρώτη μὲν ἡ τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ, ἣν ὁ Κρόνος διεδέξατο ἐκτεμῶν τὰ αἰδοῖα τοῦ πατρὸς· μετὰ δὲ τὸν Κρόνον ὁ Ζεὺς ἐβασίλευσεν καταταρταρώσας τὸν πατέρα· εἶτα τὸν Δία διεδέξατο ὁ Διόνυσος, ὃν φασὶ κατ' ἐπιβουλὴν τῆς Ἥρας τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν Τιτᾶνας σπαράττειν καὶ τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτοῦ

⁴ *contra* Bernabé, who insists that, at least for the Zagreus myth, the various authors of the tale could only alter their interpretations, not any of the structural components. "Comme il arrive avec la plupart des mythes en général, les différents auteurs qui rapportent ce mythe puisent chacun à son gré dans différents éléments du paradigme, mais ils n'ajoutent jamais des éléments incompatibles avec le schéma retracé à l'intérieur de la structure narrative (ils peuvent le faire, par contre, dans l'interprétation, ce qui est tout autre chose)." (Bernabé 2002a, 423)

ἀπογεύεσθαι. καὶ τούτους ὀργισθεὶς ὁ Ζεὺς ἐκεραύνωσε, καὶ ἐκ τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν ἀτμῶν τῶν ἀναδοθέντων ἐξ αὐτῶν ὕλης γενομένης γενέσθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. οὐ δεῖ οὖν ἐξάγειν ἡμᾶς ἑαυτούς, οὐχ ὅτι, ὡς δοκεῖ λέγειν ἡ λέξις, διότι ἐν τινι δεσμῶ ἔσμεν τῷ σώματι (τοῦτο γὰρ δῆλόν ἐστι, καὶ οὐκ ἂν τοῦτο ἀπόρητον ἔλεγεν), ἀλλ' ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἐξάγειν ἡμᾶς ἑαυτούς ὡς τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν Διονυσιακοῦ ὄντος· μέρος γὰρ αὐτοῦ ἔσμεν, εἴ γε ἐκ τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν Τιτάνων συγκείμεθα γευσσάμενων τῶν σαρκῶν τούτου.

And the mythical argument is as such: four reigns are told of in the Orphic tradition. The first is that of Uranus, to which Cronus succeeds after cutting off the genitals of his father. After Cronus, Zeus becomes king, having hurled his father down into Tartarus. Then Dionysus succeeds Zeus. Through the scheme of Hera, they say, his retainers, the Titans, tear him to pieces and eat his flesh. Zeus, angered by the deed, blasts them with his thunderbolts, and from the sublimate of the vapors that rise from them comes the matter from which men are created. Therefore we must not kill ourselves, not because, as the text appears to say, we are in the body as a kind of shackle (*φρουρά*), for that is obvious, and Socrates would not call this a mystery; but we must not kill ourselves because our bodies are Dionysiac; we are, in fact, a part of him, if indeed we come about from the sublimate of the Titans who ate his flesh.

(Olympiodorus *In Phaed.* I.3 = OF 220K = 227iv+299vii+304i+313ii+318iii+320iB)⁵

As so often in Plato and Plutarch, a myth is used to provide traditional authority for a philosophical argument, and the meaning of the myth, properly interpreted, is the same as the conclusion of the dialectic. Olympiodorus insists that the allegorical meaning (ἡ τοῦ μύθου ἀλληγορία) must be uncovered in order to understand Socrates' reference to the esoteric tradition, dismissing as too obvious the possibility that the *φρουρά* is simply the shackle of the body. While Olympiodorus draws heavily on the commentaries of Damascius and Proclus,⁶ he nevertheless must make a contribution of his own to the scholarship, finding new levels of meaning in the traditional story. Of course, to find the meaning he wants, he carefully selects and manipulates the details he provides of the traditional myth.

Olympiodorus concludes the narration of the myth at the end of the quoted passage, and it is important to note that the myth he relates does not contain the narrative element of a burden of inherited guilt passed on to mankind. In Olympiodorus' story, mankind receives its material from the Titans who cannibalized Dionysus; human bodies thus include an element of the god. The story begins with the kingship in heaven passing through four cosmic reigns: Uranus, Cronus, Zeus, and Dionysus. Uranus is castrated by Cronus; Cronus is sent to Tartarus by Zeus; Zeus hands over the

⁵ References to Orphic Fragments refer to the edition of Kern 1922 (OFK) or Bernabé 2004b (OFB). Translations from Olympiodorus and Damascius are my adaptations of Westerink. Other translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

⁶ See Westerink 1976 on Olympiodorus' dependence on Damascius, as well as Damascius' connection with Proclus' lost commentary. cp. Brisson 1990.

throne to Dionysus. Hera is angry and incites the Titans to murder and cannibalism. Zeus blasts the Titans with lightning and humans are created from the particles that precipitate out of the smoke (ἐκ τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν ἀτμῶν) that rises from the blasted Titans. The idea that human beings inherited a burden of guilt, be it *péché antécédent* or original sin, from these Titans is not part of the story as Olympiodorus tells it, but has been read into his story by commentators since Comparetti.⁷

Nor does original sin enter into Olympiodorus' interpretation of the myth's meaning. Each narrative element of the myth's vehicle corresponds with an element of meaning in its tenor. The four reigns in the succession of the kingship of heaven correspond to the degrees of virtue a soul can practice. The myth may divide them up in a temporal sequence, but the contemplative, purificatory, civic and ethical virtues co-exist, and the myth's temporal sequence represents the hierarchy of their value.⁸ The dismemberment of Dionysus signifies that the ethical and physical virtues are not necessarily consistent with one another. The Titans represent division and particularity, and their chewing of Dionysus is the ultimate degree of breaking down the unity into little particles. Hera provides the motivation for this process of division: “κατ' ἐπιβουλήν δὲ τῆς Ἥρας, διότι κινήσεως ἔφορος ἢ θεὸς καὶ προόδου· διὸ καὶ συνεχῶς ἐν τῇ Ἰλιάδι ἐξάνιστησιν αὐτὴ καὶ διεγείρει τὸν Δία εἰς πρόνοιαν τῶν δευτέρων – it is by the plan of Hera, since she is the patron deity of motion and procession; hence it is she who, in the *Iliad*, is continually stirring up Zeus and stimulating him to providential care of secondary existents.”⁹ The lightning of Zeus signifies the reversion of the divided pieces back to the whole, since fire has an upwards motion. Dionysus is the patron of genesis, of the movement into life as well as back out of it, and so this divine process should not be undone by human will in suicide. The god oversees the processes of coming into and out of life, and humans have no right to take control away from the god. Thus, the mythic argument produces the same conclusion as the dialectic: "εἰ θεοὶ ἡμῶν εἰσιν ἐπιμεληταὶ καὶ κτήματα

⁷ As Linforth 1941, 350, notes, "It is a curious thing that nowhere else, early or late, is it said or even expressly implied that guilt descended to men in consequence of the outrage committed upon Dionysus. Even Olympiodorus does not say so." Using the concept of *peché antécédent* from Bianchi 1978, Bernabé 2002a extrapolates this episode from the conclusion drawn by the pessimist in Dio Chrys. xxx.10, that the gods would automatically bear humans a grudge because of their relation to the Titans who fought against them in the Titanomachy. To be sure, such a combination of elements by *bricolage* would have been possible for Olympiodorus or some other author, but none of the extant texts actually have it.

⁸ Olympiodorus *In Phaed.* I.4-5 οὕτως καὶ παρὰ τῷ Ὀρφεῖ αἱ τέσσαρες βασιλείαι αὐταὶ οὐ ποτὲ μὲν εἰσι, ποτὲ δὲ οὐ, ἀλλ' αἰετὸν μὲν εἰσι, αἰνίττονται δὲ τοὺς διαφόρους βαθμοὺς τῶν ἀρετῶν καθ' ἃς ἡ ἡμετέρα ψυχὴ ἐνεργεῖ σύμβολα ἔχουσα πασῶν τῶν ἀρετῶν, τῶν τε θεωρητικῶν καὶ καθαρικῶν καὶ πολιτικῶν καὶ ἡθικῶν. So, too, these four reigns of Orpheus are not sometimes existent, sometimes non-existent, but they are always there are they represent in mystical language the several degrees of virtues that our soul can practice, having in herself the tokens of all the virtues, contemplative, purificatory, civic, and ethical.

⁹ Olympiodorus *In Phaed.* I.5.

ἐκείνων ἐσμέν, οὐ δεῖ ἐξάγειν ἑαυτούς, ἀλλ' ἐπιτρέπειν ἐκείνοις - if it is the gods who are our guardians and whose possessions we are, we should not put an end to our own lives, but leave it to them."¹⁰

Although it is of course possible to *invent* an argument against suicide on the basis of human beings suffering the punishment of the 'Titans' crime and doomed to suffer even worse punishment by evading life in the prison of the body, Olympiodorus does not, in fact, ever make such an argument. Neither the myth as he tells it nor the interpretation he provides of the details includes an idea of human beings inheriting the guilt of the 'Titans' murder of Dionysus. While some scholars admit that Olympiodorus himself never brings up the idea, they nevertheless see him as providing evidence for another text that does include original sin as its central theme, Olympiodorus' source in the *Orphic Rhapsodies*.¹¹ By a circular argument, the element of original sin not found in Olympiodorus is supplied from an earlier text, even though that earlier text is reconstructed from Olympiodorus.

For example, Bernabé whose recent edition of the Orphic fragments is a welcome replacement for Kern's 1922 edition, argues that Olympiodorus faithfully reproduces a passage from the *Orphic Rhapsodies*, since some of the details he includes in the narrative correspond with details known from other sources to be in the Orphic poems.¹² The succession of rulers in heaven appears in a number of Orphic works, and the dismemberment story was also certainly treated in at least one Orphic poem. Such correspondences do not, of course, necessarily mean that Olympiodorus did not innovate in his telling of the story, since *bricolage*, the creative manipulation of traditional elements is, after all, the standard operation of the transmission of myth in the Greek mythic tradition. Bernabé assumes that Olympiodorus simply summarized a section of the *Orphic Rhapsodies* without presuming to alter the sacred text in any way – except of course to leave out the essential

¹⁰ Olympiodorus *In Phaed.* I.7 Καὶ τοῦτο μὲν τὸ μυθικὸν ἐπιχείρημα. τὸ δὲ διαλεκτικὸν καὶ φιλόσοφον τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν, ὅτι εἰ θεοὶ ἡμῶν εἰσιν ἐπιμεληταὶ καὶ κτήματα ἐκείνων ἐσμέν, οὐ δεῖ ἐξάγειν ἑαυτούς, ἀλλ' ἐπιτρέπειν ἐκείνοις. εἰ μὲν γὰρ θάτερον ἦν τούτων, καὶ ἡ κτήματα ἡμεῖν τῶν θεῶν οὐ μὴν ἐπεμελοῦντο ἡμῶν, ἢ ἀνάπαλιν, χώραν ὅπως οὖν εἶχεν εὐλογον τὸ ἐξάγειν ἡμᾶς ἑαυτούς· νῦν δὲ δι' ἄμφω οὐ δεῖ λύειν τὸν δεσμόν. This is the mythical argument. The dialectical and philosophical is as follows: if it is the gods who are our guardians and whose possessions we are, we should not want to put an end to our own lives, but leave it to them. If only one of the two were true, and either we were possessions of the gods, but they did not take care of us, or conversely, there would be at least a reasonable ground for suicide; as it is, both reasons together forbid us to cast off the shackle.

¹¹ cp. West 1983, 166. "Although Olympiodorus' interpretation of the Orphic myth is to be rejected, there is no denying that the poet may have drawn some conclusion from it about man's nature; ... any such conclusion is likely to have concerned the burdens of our inheritance." The hypothetical nature of the element of inherited guilt in the narrative is revealed by the verb – "may have drawn".

¹² "Le résumé de ce qui était narré dans le poème orphique semble être assez fidèle. En effet, en ce qui concerne les autres détails du paragraphe, que l'on peut relever aussi dans d'autres sources, Olympiodore concorde avec d'autres citations, directes même, rapportées aux *Rhapsodies*. Il n'y a donc pas de raison valable de douter que la dernière affirmation soit aussi fidèle à la source que les autres." Bernabé 2003. p. 28.

point at the end in which the guilt of the Titans descends upon mankind. Such an omission is taken as unproblematic, since it is the only logical conclusion to be drawn from the story. On this interpretation, Olympiodorus replaces this natural conclusion with his Neoplatonic allegorizing, which can be disregarded by modern scholars as inauthentic and thus without any influence on the narrative of the myth itself.

I argue, to the contrary, that we cannot neglect the interrelation of Olympiodorus' interpretation and his telling of the story, since the meaning he finds in the story directly affects the elements he chooses to include. The assumption that Olympiodorus' source is a single text which he summarizes without alteration is likewise unfounded; Olympiodorus refers to a whole mythic tradition associated with Orpheus rather than a single text, and some of his most important sources are the commentaries of his Academic predecessors, Proclus and Damascius, rather than the particular texts attributed to Orpheus. Olympiodorus indeed shows himself willing to adapt the Orphic materials to his philosophic points, especially when those points have a precedent in the commentaries of his predecessors.

Olympiodorus begins his narration with a reference to the Orphic (παρὰ τῶ Ὀρφεῖ ... παραδίδονται), not with a quotation from an Orphic text. The imprecision of his reference is reinforced by his use of φασι, they say, to continue his narrative. The indeterminate third person plural indicates that Olympiodorus is not citing or even summarizing a single text, but rather referring to the way the story is traditionally told. Olympiodorus situates his own retelling of the story within the mythic tradition, providing his account with the authority of that tradition.¹³ However, his reference to four reigns in the succession of the kingship of heaven actually contradicts the accounts surviving elsewhere of six reigns, which seem to have been characteristic of Orphic theogonies.¹⁴ As Westerink notes, Olympiodorus is drawing on the commentaries of Damascius and Proclus, but his identification of each of the reigns with a class of virtues shapes his telling.¹⁵ Olympiodorus is clearly making use of Damascius' discussion of the virtues in his Phaedo commentary (I.138-151), although Damascius includes more classes of virtues, separating the ethical from the physical virtues and putting the paradigmatic and hieratic virtues above the contemplative.

¹³ Cp. Aristotle's advice for the orator to use mythic exempla to support his point, "For because they are common, they seem to be correct, since everyone agrees upon them." διὰ γὰρ τὸ εἶναι κοινὰ, ὡς ὁμολογούντων πάντων, ὀρθῶς ἔχειν δοκοῦσιν. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.21.11)

¹⁴ Plato provides the earliest reference to the six reigns in the *Philebus* 66c8-9=OF14=25B. Plutarch quotes the same lines (*de E ap. Delphi* 391d), as does Proclus *in Remp.* II 100.23 and Damascius in *De Princ.* 53 (I 107.23), *in Parm.* 199 (II 80.15), 253 (II 123.5), 278 (II 150.6), cp. also 381 (II 231.26). The idea may also be found in the testimonies collected in OF 107, esp. Proclus *in Tim* III. 168.15-169.9; Proclus *in Crat.* pp. 54.12-55.22=§105.

¹⁵ Westerink 1976, 40-41.

Westerink plausibly suggests that Olympiodorus is following Ammonius in eliminating the paradigmatic and hieratic virtues as a way of devaluing theurgic practice in relation to philosophic contemplation, since these virtues could have been identified with the Orphic reigns of Phanes and Night if Olympiodorus had been concerned to stay as close as possible to the text of Orpheus.¹⁶ However, only four reigns are needed to make Olympiodorus' point, so he has no compunction about jettisoning the first two from his narration (see chart below).

Damascius' Virtues (<i>In Phaed.</i> I.138-151)	Orpheus' Reigns (cp., Plato, <i>Philebus</i> 66c8-9)	Olympiodorus' Virtues (<i>In Phaed.</i> I.5)
hieratic	Phanes	-
paradigmatic	Night	-
contemplative	Uranus	contemplative
purificatory	Cronus	purificatory
civic	Zeus	civic
ethical	Dionysus	ethical

Olympiodorus takes fewer liberties with the next section of his narrative, although he still makes significant choices of what traditional elements to exclude from his retelling of the dismemberment. He mentions only the Titans, Dionysus, and Hera, leaving out Apollo, the Curetes, and Athena. These other deities often play a role in the dismemberment narrative, for example in Clement's version, but Olympiodorus has no place for them in his interpretation, so he omits them.¹⁷ Each of the elements he chooses to include not only has precedent in the traditional mythic narratives but also meaning within the preceding interpretive tradition.

The most obvious are the figures of the Titans and Dionysus, which have a long history of interpretation in terms of the Many and the One.¹⁸ The Titans represent the forces of division that make many particulars out of the original one. Damascius suggests, in his commentary on this same section of the *Phaedo*, that the connection of the Many and the One with the Titans and Dionysus goes back to Xenokrates in the early Academy, since Xenokrates explained the $\psi\rho\rho\rho\rho\alpha$ mentioned in

¹⁶ Westerink 1976, 41. He cites Ammonius *De Interpretatione* 135.19-32 and Philoponus *In Categorias* 141.25-142.3 for testimonies to Ammonius' scale of virtues. Saffrey & Segonds 2001, lxix-c, provide a history of the ideas of degrees of virtues in the Neoplatonic tradition in the introduction to their edition of Marinus.

¹⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 2.17.2-18.2. Olympiodorus' choices stand in contrast to, e.g., Proclus (*In Tim.* 35a II.145.18ff=OF210=314iB), who includes Athena in the story as the one who preserves the heart of the dismembered Dionysus, signifying the divine providence ($\pi\rho\rho\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$) that oversees the restoration of unity in the process of division. Athena's Delphic epithet of Pronaia was frequently allegorized to make Athena, goddess of wisdom, the representative of divine providence, Pronoia. cp. Brisson 1987, 68, 80, 84. Athena appears as Minerva in Firmicus Maternus' euhemerizing version (*De Err.* 6.3=214OF=314ivB).

¹⁸ cp. Plutarch, *De Ei* 9, 388e.

the *Phaedo* as being Titanic and culminating in Dionysus.¹⁹ The sojourn in the body, whether it be understood simply as imprisonment, or more positively as garrison duty in the dangerous frontier of the material world, or even as protective custody by provident and benevolent gods, is in any case a period in which the individual is separated from the whole, the unity of divine perfection.²⁰

Olympiodorus thus follows the precedent of Proclus and Damascius when he etymologizes the name of the Titans from the indefinite pronoun *τι* to emphasize their connection with the particular. "καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Τιτάνων σπαράττεται, τοῦ "τι" μερικὸν δηλοῦντος, σπαράττεται δὲ τὸ καθόλου εἶδος ἐν τῇ γενέσει· - And he is torn apart by the Titans, of whom the something (*τι*) denotes the particular, for the universal form is broken up in genesis."²¹ Likewise, Olympiodorus' designation of Dionysus as the overseer of the world of genesis is in keeping with the place of Dionysus in Proclus and Damascius as the monad of a demiourgic manifold.²²

It is worth noting the absence of Apollo from the narrative at this point, since Apollo is often mentioned in connection with Dionysus as the one responsible for gathering his scattered limbs, reintegrating his divided self.²³ While the connection between Dionysus and Apollo in Delphic ritual may have some part in the transmission of Apollo's role in the story, Apollo is generally included when the narrator of the story wants to emphasize the reintegration process and left out when only the process of division is important for the point.²⁴

¹⁹ "We are in some kind of custody" ἐν τινι φρουρᾷ ἔσμεν (*Phaedo* 62b): "Using these principles, we shall easily prove that 'the custody' is not the Good, as some say, nor pleasure, as Noumenios would have it, nor the Demiurge, as Paterios says, but rather, as Xenokrates has it, that it is Titanic and culminates in Dionysus." "Ὅτι τούτοις χρώμενοι τοῖς κανόσι ῥαδίως διελέγξομεν, ὡς οὔτε τὰγαθὸν ἔστιν ἢ φρουρά, ὡς τινες, οὔτε ἡ ἡδονή, ὡς Νουμήνιος, οὔτε ὁ δημιουργός, ὡς Πατέριος, ἀλλ', ὡς Ξενοκράτης, Τιτανική ἔστιν καὶ εἰς Διόνυσον ἀποκορυφῶται. (Xenokrates fr. 20 = Damascius *In Phaed.* I. 2) This passage, like the allusion in Dio 30, shows that other ways of interpreting the φρουρά were current, aside from the dismemberment story. Rather than taking it as an anthropogony, as some scholars have assumed, Xenokrates must have related the dismemberment story in terms of the One and the Many, since Damascius nearly always uses ἀποκορυφῶται (and κορυφή) to refer to the process of making (or returning to) a single, undivided one out of many (cp. Damascius *in Parm.* 94.26 and 95.9; *de princip.* 1.2.19, 1.5.1, 1.6.17, and many others).

²⁰ cp. Boyancé 1948, as well as Westerink 1977, 28. Iamblichus (in Stobaeus 1.49.40.22-27) provides an overview of various reasons for the soul's descent into the body, which span the range from harsh imprisonment in the body for past crimes to altruistic concern for other souls.

²¹ I.5. Westerink 1976, p. 44 compares Proclus *In Crat.* 56.13-19=106.20-30, *in Remp.* I. 90.9-13), and Damascius *de Princ.* 57.20-23.

²² cp. Brisson 1987, 84, and 1990, 186-188.

²³ Cp. Damascius *In Phaed.* I.129 = OF 209K = 309iiB = 322iiB ὅτι τὰ ὅμοια μυθεύεται καὶ ἐν τῷ παραδείγματι. ὁ γὰρ Διόνυσος, ὅτε τὸ εἶδωλον ἐνέθηκε τῷ ἐσόπτρω, τούτῳ ἐφέσπετο καὶ οὕτως εἰς τὸ πᾶν ἐμερίσθη. ὁ δὲ Ἀπόλλων συναγείρει τε αὐτὸν καὶ ἀνάγει καθαρτικὸς ὢν θεὸς καὶ τοῦ Διόνυσου σωτὴρ ὡς ἀληθῶς, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο Διονυσσοδότης ἀνυμνεῖται. The myth describes the same events as taking place in the prototype of the soul. When Dionysus had projected his reflection into the mirror, he followed it and was thus scattered over the universe. Apollo gathers him and brings him back to heaven, for he is the purifying god and truly the savior of Dionysus, and therefore he is celebrated as the 'Dionysus-Giver'.

²⁴ See West 1983, 150-2, for a discussion of the possible role of Delphic cult. Olympiodorus himself mentions Apollo when it suits his purpose later in the commentary, when he refers to the well-known Orphic myth that concludes with Apollo making Dionysus back into a unity. πῶς δὲ ἔρα οὐ τὰ Ὀρφικὰ ἐκεῖνα παρωδεῖ νῦν ὁ Πλάτων, ὅτι ὁ Διόνυσος

Hera, on the other hand, is not always mentioned in the retelling of the dismemberment of Dionysus, but Olympiodorus includes her because of her meaning within the Neoplatonic interpretive tradition. Despite his explicit claim, Hera is not "in the *Iliad*, continually stirring up Zeus and stimulating him to providential care of secondary existents."²⁵ On the contrary, she is continually trying to prevent Zeus from intervening in the war and from exercising some sort of providential care over the particular secondary existents, the Trojans, whom she wants destroyed. However, as Westerink points out, Olympiodorus' claim refers not to the well-known text of the *Iliad*, but rather to Proclus' allegorical interpretation of one scene, Hera's seduction of Zeus on Mt. Ida.²⁶ In his allegorical interpretation of the infamously scandalous story of lust among the gods, Proclus read the scene as the creative union of the One and the Secondary Principle, in which the Secondary Principle gets the One to begin the process that creates all things. Olympiodorus, therefore, like Proclus and other Neoplatonic interpreters, and indeed like other myth retellers and interpreters in the Greek mythic tradition, shows no compunction about altering the details or meaning even of a text as well-known as the *Iliad* in the service of his argument. For these transmitters of the mythic tradition, the essence of the myth lies in its meaning, its tenor, rather than the details of any textual vehicle, however prestigious.

Olympiodorus' focus on the meaning rather than the narrative of the traditional tale helps explain his innovations in the final parts of the myth, since his selection of details stems from the point he is trying to make with his mythic argument. Olympiodorus recounts that Zeus blasted the Titans with lightning and then created the human race from the remains. The lightning of Zeus is, after all, his standard weapon of punishment, and several versions of the dismemberment story do in fact include the blasting of the Titans by lightning.²⁷

σπαράττεται μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν Τιτάνων, ἐνοῦται δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος; Is it not evident, further, that Plato is adapting elements from the well-known Orphic myth? The myth tells how Dionysus was torn to pieces by the Titans and is made whole by Apollo. Olympiodorus *In Phaed.* VII.10 = OF322iiiB.

²⁵ κατ' ἐπιβουλὴν δὲ τῆς Ἥρας, διότι κινήσεως ἔφορος ἢ θεὸς καὶ προόδου· διὸ καὶ συνεχῶς ἐν τῇ Ἰλιάδι ἐξανίστησιν αὕτη καὶ διεγείρει τὸν Δία εἰς πρόνοιαν τῶν δευτέρων. And the plot is Hera's, because she is the patron deity of motion and procession; hence it is she who, in the *Iliad*, is continually stirring up Zeus and stimulating him to providential care of secondary existents. Olympiodorus *In Phaed.* I.5.

²⁶ Westerink 1976, 45-6. Proclus *In Remp.* I 132.13-136.14; cp., 134.11-16: τὴν πρωτίστην σύζευξιν Διὸς καὶ Ἥρας παραδεδώκασιν τοῦ μὲν Διὸς τὴν πατρικὴν ἀξίαν λαχόντος, τῆς δὲ Ἥρας μητρὸς οὖσης τῶν πάντων ὧν ὁ Ζεὺς πατήρ, καὶ τοῦ μὲν ἐν μονάδος τάξει τὰ ἅλα παράγοντος, τῆς δὲ κατὰ τὴν γόνιμον δυάδα τῷ Διὶ τὰ δευτέρα συνυφιστάσης, καὶ τοῦ μὲν πρὸς τὸ πέρας τὸ νοητόν, τῆς δὲ πρὸς τὴν ἀπειρίαν ἀφομοιουμένων. They have passed down in the tradition of the first union of Zeus and Hera, in which Zeus takes the paternal role and Hera is the mother of all those things of which Zeus is the father, and he brings into existence the universe at the level of the monad, while she helps Zeus create the secondary existents through the fecundating dyad, so too he resembles the intelligible Limit, while she resembles the Unlimited.

²⁷ e.g., Plutarch *de Esu Carn.* 996c; Clement *Protr.* 2.18; Arnobius *Adv. Nat.* 5.19.

However, as Damascius notes, there are three punishments recounted in the tradition for the Titans for their various crimes: lightning, shackles, and Tartarosis.²⁸ Different tellings of the myths of the Titans' crimes (be it the revolt against the gods in the Titanomachy or the dismemberment of Dionysus or even Prometheus' theft of fire) made use of different punishments or combinations of punishments. Although some scholars have assumed that the blasting of the Titans after their cannibalism must have been the final event in the career of the Titans, this presumption, though specious, is not borne out by the evidence. In a number of other versions, Titans survived the episode, being cast down into Tartarus and then later released. In one reference to the dismemberment story as told by the theologians (i.e., the Orphic versions), Proclus refers to the various lots of punishment that the other Titans received when Atlas was stationed to hold up the heavens on his back.²⁹ Arnobius' version of the Titans' punishment for the dismemberment includes not only lightning but also Tartarosis: "Iuppiter suavitate odoris inlectus, invocatus advolarit ad prandium compertaque re gravi grassatores obruerit fulmine atque in imas Tartari praecipitaverit sedes. - Jupiter, drawn in by the sweetness of the smells, rushed unbidden to the feast, and, discovering what had been done, overwhelmed the feasters with his terrible thunder and hurled them down to the lowest places of Tartarus."³⁰ In Nonnus, Zeus imprisons the Titans in Tartarus and then blasts the Earth with lightning, creating an *ekpyrosis* followed by a deluge.³¹

²⁸ Damascius *In Phaed.* I.7. ὅτι τριτταὶ παραδέδονται τῶν Τιτάνων κολάσεις: κεραυνώσεις, δεσμοί, ἄλλων ἀλλαχοῦ πρόοδοι πρὸς τὸ κοιλότερον. αὕτη μὲν οὖν ὄϊον τιμωρίας ἐπέχει τάξιν, ἐπιτρίβουσα αὐτῶν τὸ διαιρετικὸν καὶ ἀποχρωμένη τῷ κερματισμῷ αὐτῶν εἰς σύστασιν τῶν ἀτόμων ἄλλων τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων· ἡ δὲ μέση κολαστική, τὰς διαιρετικὰς ἐπέχουσα δυνάμεις· ἡ δὲ πρώτη καθαρική, ὀλιζουσα αὐτοὺς κατὰ μέθεξιν. δεῖ δὲ περὶ ἕκαστον τὰς τρεῖς θεωρεῖν, εἰ καὶ ὁ μῦθος μερίζει· Three punishments of the Titans are handed down in the tradition – lightning, shackles, descents into various lower regions. This last one is thus in the nature of a retribution, exacerbating their divisive nature and making use of their shattered remains for the constitution of individual entities, particularly humans. The middle one is coercive, holding back their divisive powers. The first is purificatory, bringing them to unity through participation. It is necessary, however, to regard all three as imposed upon each, even if the myth divides them up.

²⁹ καὶ γὰρ οἱ θεολόγοι μετὰ τὸν τοῦ Διονύσου διασπασμόν, ὃς δηλοῖ τὴν ἐκ τῆς ἀμερίστου δημιουργίας μεριστὴν πρόοδον εἰς τὸ πᾶν ὑπὸ τοῦ Διός, τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους Τιτᾶνας ἄλλας λήξεις διακεκληρωσθῆναι φασί, τὸν δὲ Ἄτλαντα ἐν τοῖς πρὸς ἐσπέραν τόποις ἰδρῶσθαι ἀνέχοντα τὸν οὐρανόν· Ἄτλας δ' οὐρανὸν εὐρὸν ἔχει κρατερῆς ὑπ' ἀνάγκης, πείρασιν ἐν γαίῃ. And the theologians recount that, after the dismemberment of Dionysus, which signifies the progression of division from the undivided creator to the entirety by the will of Zeus, they say that various of the Titans were allotted various punishments, and Atlas was set to hold up the sky in the western regions. (Proclus *In Tim.* I.173 = OF 215=319iB) Simplicius *in Aristot. Cael.* 375.12 (319iiB) also links the punishment of Atlas and the other Titans with the dismemberment of Dionysus.

³⁰ Arnobius *Adv. Nat.* 5.19.

³¹ Nonnos VI. 205-210. Ζεὺς δὲ πατήρ, προτέροιο δαΐζομένου Διονύσου γινώσκων σκιδόντα τύπον δολιόιο κατόπτρου, μητέρα Τιτῆνων ἐλάσας ποιμήτορι πυρσῷ Ζαγρέος εὐκεράοιο κατεκλήισε φονῆας Ταρταρίῳ πυλεῶν· After the first Dionysus had been slaughtered, Father Zeus learnt the trick of the mirror with its reflected image. He attacked the mother of the Titans with avenging brand, and shut up the murderers of horned Zagreus within the gate of Tartarus. In XLVIII.1-89, Nonnus also has the Gigantomachy, which he casts as an explicit attempt to redo the death of Zagreus (XLVIII.25-29) Note that Dionysus in this episode uses a torch to incinerate the Giants as a parallel for his father's lightning.

The same punishments of lightning, binding, and Tartarosis appear in versions of the Titanomachy, from Hesiod to the Neoplatonic citations of the Orphica. Scholars have tried to sort out the varying references into a consistent storyline, assigning the Tartarosis to the Titanomachy and the lightning to the dismemberment and putting the Titanomachy before the dismemberment, but such solutions presume not only that the Neoplatonists citing the Orphic accounts were summarizing the Rhapsodic version without altering any details but also that the *Orphic Rhapsodies* themselves presented a single consistent version. But, West's elegant reconstruction notwithstanding, we have no evidence that the *Rhapsodies* presented a single, coherent and internally consistent version rather than a collection of different Orphic works that may have alluded to or narrated the episode in a variety of ways.³²

Olympiodorus chooses lightning as the punishment for the Titans in his story, rather than following the version Proclus cites, and he adds an anthropogony to the story of the dismemberment. The generation of human beings from the remains of the gods' enemies after their battle against the gods (whether Titanomachy or Gigantomachy) is a familiar theme in the mythic tradition, best known, perhaps in Ovid, but going back to Mesopotamian antecedents.³³ However, despite all these other versions in which the Titanomachy ends in anthropogony, no other extant source explicitly connects the dismemberment crime of the Titans with the anthropogony, so Olympiodorus must either be following some version no longer extant or he must be innovating, combining mythic elements in a way that they have not been combined in the extant references. Given the gaps in our sources, the missing text hypothesis is always possible, but there are good reasons why Olympiodorus might innovate by combining the elements of dismemberment and anthropogony, blending the stories of the Titans' two great crimes and their aftermaths.

³² Even Damascius' claim (*De Princ.* 159.17=OF60=90B=96B) that the *Rhapsodies* present the familiar Orphic theology (ἡ συνήθης Ὀρφικῆ θεολογία) does not presume a single consistent version or exclude references elsewhere in the *Rhapsodies* to versions that differ in details. West 1983 assumes consistency in the *Rhapsodies* at various points in his argument, but never argues for this hypothesis. I explore the construction of the *Rhapsodies* and the parallel with the Sibylline Oracles in my forthcoming study, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*.

³³ Ovid *Met.* I.157-62. "obruta mole sua cum corpora dira iacerent, | perfusam multo natorum sanguine Terram | immaduisse ferunt calidumque animasse cruorem | et, ne nulla suae stirpis monimenta manerent, | in faciem vertisse hominum; sed et illa propago | contemptrix superum saevaeque avidissima caedis | et violenta fuit: scires e sanguine natos.- And while these dreadful bodies lay overwhelmed | in their tremendous bulk, (so fame reports) | the Earth was reeking with the copious blood | of her gigantic sons; and thus replete | with moisture she infused the steaming gore | with life renewed. So that a monument | of such ferocious stock should be retained, | she made that offspring in the shape of man; | but this new race alike despised the Gods, | and by the greed of savage slaughter proved | a sanguinary birth." The idea may go back to Mesopotamian tales, cp., *Atrahasis* I.212-217 and *Enuma elis* VI.1. cp. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* XXX, 10-11 = OF 320viiB and the scholiast to Oppian *Halientica* V.1-10.

First of all, Olympiodorus can mix the two stories because they both, in the Neoplatonic interpretive tradition, have the same meaning. The Titans stand always for the forces of division, separating the elements of the cosmos and promoting the process of genesis. Whether they are waging open battle or committing secret murder, they are in these myths opposing the gods, who represent the divine perfection of unity. Proclus provides precisely this interpretation of the myths in a passage in his commentary on the *Republic* in which he links the two myths.

ὅθεν οἴμαι καὶ τοὺς Τιτᾶνας τῷ Διονύσῳ καὶ Διὶ τοὺς Γίγαντας ἀνταγωνίζεσθαι φασιν· τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ὡς πρὸ τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργοῖς ἢ τε ἔνωσις προσήκει καὶ ἡ ἀμέριστος ποίησις καὶ ἡ πρὸ τῶν μερῶν ὁλότης, οἱ δὲ εἰς πλῆθος προάγουσιν τὰς δημιουργικὰς δυνάμεις καὶ μεμερισμένως διοικοῦσιν τὰ ἐν τῷ παντὶ καὶ προσεχεῖς εἰσιν πατέρες τῶν ἐνύλων πραγμάτων.

Whence, I think, they say both that the Titans struggle against Dionysus and that the Giants struggle against Zeus. For to the gods, as craftsmen as it were of the cosmos, pertains the unification and the undivided creation and the wholeness before the division, but the latter propel into multiplicity the creative powers and they manage in a divided fashion the things in the universe and they are moreover the fathers of material things.
(Proclus *in Remp.* I.90.7-13)

For Proclus and those in his interpretive tradition, the Gigantomachy/Titanomachy myth really signifies this process of division and creation that is bounded by the unifying power of the gods, just as the story of the dismemberment of Dionysus is really another way of expressing the same idea.³⁴ Whereas Proclus equates two distinct stories, the Gigantomachy and the dismemberment, Damascius simply lumps together all the stories of the Titans related in the mythic tradition. He notes that three punishments are traditionally recounted for the Titans, lightning, shackles, and descents into lower regions, although he only associates the anthropogony with the last, the descent into lower regions, i.e. Tartarosis.

ὅτι τριπταὶ παραδέδονται τῶν Τιτάνων κολάσεις· κεραυνώσεις, δεσμοί, ἄλλων ἀλλαχοῦ πρόοδοι πρὸς τὸ κοιλότερον. αὕτη μὲν οὖν οἷον τιμωρίας ἐπέχει τάξιν, ἐπιτρίβουσα αὐτῶν τὸ διαιρετικὸν καὶ ἀποχρωμένη τῷ κερματισμῷ αὐτῶν εἰς σύστασιν τῶν ἀτόμων ἄλλων τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων· ἡ δὲ μέση κολαστική, τὰς διαιρετικὰς ἐπέχουσα δυνάμεις· ἡ δὲ πρώτη καθαρτική, ὀλίζουσα αὐτοὺς κατὰ μέθεξιν. δεῖ δὲ περὶ ἕκαστον τὰς τρεῖς θεωρεῖν, εἰ καὶ ὁ μῦθος μερίζει·

Three punishments of the Titans are handed down in the tradition – lightning, shackles, descents into various lower regions. This last one is thus in the nature of a retribution, exacerbating their divisive nature and making use of their shattered remains for the constitution of individual entities, particularly humans. The middle one is coercive, holding

³⁴cp., Alexander Theol. *Tractatus de placitis Manichaeorum* v. 10-14. τὴν θεῖαν δύναμιν μερίζεσθαι εἰς τὴν ὕλην· ἐκ δὲ τῶν ποιητῶν τῆς Γιγαντομαχίας, ὅτι μηδὲ αὐτοὶ ἠγνόσαν τὴν τῆς ὕλης κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνταρσιν.

back their divisive powers. The first is purificatory, bringing them to unity through participation. It is necessary, however, to regard all three as imposed upon each, even if the myth divides them up. (Damascius *In Phaed.* I.7.)

Again, like Olympiodorus, Damascius is not quoting from a particular Orphic text, he is providing an overview of the mythic tradition and arguing that all the stories about the punishment of the Titans have the same meaning. Elsewhere in his argument, Damascius does make direct quotations of Orphic poems, specifically at the beginning and the end (I.4 and I.11). These two quotations, however, are designed to illustrate specific points while at the same time lending the authority of Orpheus to the whole of the argument, a common tactic in the Greek mythic tradition. Plato's quotation of Homer in his descriptions of the underworld in his myths in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedo* provide particularly apt parallels for Damascius here. In each case, Plato brings in a single line of Homer to suggest that his description of the underworld is as familiar (and thus authoritative) as Homer's, while nevertheless making radical innovations. Moreover, the descriptions of Minos giving judgements among the dead in the *Gorgias* (523e) or of Tartarus as a deep pit in the *Phaedo* (112ad) do not actually have the same meaning in Plato's myths as they did in Homer – Plato makes Minos the judge of newly arriving souls instead of the arbiter of disputes among the dead and his vision of Tartarus as a swirling, breathing whirlpool is far from the empty pit of Homer.³⁵ Damascius likewise makes use of an idea from an authoritative poet without either keeping to the limits of the original text or necessarily preserving the poet's meaning.

Although scholars have cited this section of Damascius as evidence for an Orphic myth that contained the dismemberment, the anthropogony, and the idea of punishment for Titanic guilt, we can neither construct a narrative sequence in which these punishments occurred nor identify a particular narrative as the source of all these mythic elements. The myth may divide up these punishments into different stories, as retributions at different times or for different crimes, but they are all complementary, providing the same meaning for the myth.

There can be no doubt, however, that Damascius associates, not lightning, but the descent into Tartarus with the creation of human beings. In the above passage, Damascius lists the three punishments – lightning, shackles, and Tartarosis – and then discusses them in reverse order – Tartarosis, shackles, and lightning. Descent into the lower regions is equivalent to creation from fragments, shackles to coercive restraint, and lightning to purification. He expands his discussion of

³⁵ For Plato's use of Homer (and other sources), cp. Edmonds 2004, 171-220.

the punishments in the next few paragraphs, following this reversed order – Tartarosis in I.8-9, shackles in I.10, and purification in I.11.³⁶ In the context of this procedure, he explains the creation of human beings from the fragments of the Titans as the ultimate in the process of division (εἰς ἔσχατον μερισμόν), since these entities are the lowest of the creative powers, the bottom link in the chain that connects the created materials with the divine creator. The details of the myth, that humans are created from the most divided particles of the dead bodies of the Titans, merely serve to emphasize the extreme of the process of division which the myth indicates, transferring the divided nature of human life to the extremely divided condition of the Titans.³⁷ To live a Titanic life, therefore, is to behave in such a manner that exacerbates the divided condition of life.

As Damascius asserts, "the Titanic mode of life is the irrational mode, by which rational life is torn asunder."³⁸ For Damascius, therefore, the meaning of the myth is that leading the irrational life breaks up the natural continuity of our being (τὸ ὁμοφυῆς εἶδος) and the partnership with the superior and inferior (οἶον κοινωνικὸν πρὸς τὰ κρείττω καὶ ἥττω), i.e., the links that bind the unity together. Acting like Titans is irrational and divisive to the self; acting in a unifying manner is to be like Dionysus. Damascius continues the allegory when he claims that "while in this condition [i.e., irrational and divided], we are Titans; but when we recover that lost unity, we become Dionysoi,

³⁶ Bernabé's abbreviation of Damascius (Bernabé 2002a, 406-408, T2) is particularly misleading in this case, since he retains only the elements (dismemberment, punishment of the Titans, and anthropogony) that he sees as the crucial sequence, without regard for their context or relation to one another. *cp.*, Bernabé 2003, 28.

³⁷ Πῶς ἐκ Τιτανικῶν θρυμμάτων οἱ ἄνθρωποι γίνονται; Ἡ ἐκ μὲν τῶν θρυμμάτων, ὡς ἀπεστενωμένοι τὴν ζωὴν εἰς ἔσχατον μερισμόν· ἐκ δὲ τῶν Τιτανικῶν, ὡς ἐσχάτων δημιουργῶν καὶ τοῖς δημιουργήμασι προσεχεστάτων. ὁ μὲν γὰρ Ζεὺς "πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν καὶ θεῶν", οἱ δὲ ἀνθρώπων μόνων ἀλλ' οὐχὶ καὶ θεῶν, καὶ οὐκέτι πατέρες ἀλλὰ αὐτοί, οὐδὲ αὐτοὶ ἀπλῶς ἀλλὰ τεθνεώτες, καὶ οὐδὲ τοῦτο μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ συντεθρυμμένοι· ὁ γὰρ τοιοῦτος τρόπος τῆς ὑποστάσεως εἰς τοὺς αἰτίους ἀναπέμπεται. In what sense are men created from the fragments of the Titans? From the fragments, because their life is reduced to the utmost limit of differentiation; of the Titans, because they are the lowest of Creators and in immediate contact with their creation. For Zeus is the 'Father of men and gods,' the Titans of men only, not of Gods, and they cannot even be called fathers, but have become men themselves, and not simply themselves, but their dead bodies, and even of these only the fragments, the fragmentary condition of our existence being thus transferred to those who are its causes. Damascius *In Phaed.* I.8. Contra Bernabé, the identification of the Titans as not the fathers of human beings, but they themselves (οὐκέτι πατέρες ἀλλὰ αὐτοί) should not be taken to imply the reincarnation of Titans into human forms, as the next phrase shows. It is the material of the dead bodies that provides the identification, not the reincarnation of the soul.

³⁸ Damascius *In Phaed.* I.9 "Ὅτι ἡ Τιτανικὴ ζωὴ ἀλογὸς ἐστίν, ὑφ' ἧς ἡ λογικὴ σπαράττεται. Κάλλιον δὲ πανταχοῦ ποιεῖν αὐτὴν, ἀπὸ θεῶν γε ἀρχομένην τῶν Τιτάνων· καὶ τοίνυν τῆς λογικῆς τὸ δοκοῦν αὐτεξούσιον καὶ οἶον ἑαυτοῦ βουλόμενον εἶναι μόνου, οὔτε δὲ τῶν κρείττων ὄντων οὔτε τῶν χειρόνων, τοῦτο ἡμῖν οἱ Τιτάνες ἐμποιοῦσιν, καθ' ὃ καὶ τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν Διόνυσον διασπῶμεν, παραθραύοντες ἡμῶν τὸ ὁμοφυῆς εἶδος καὶ οἶον κοινωνικὸν πρὸς τὰ κρείττω καὶ ἥττω. οὕτω δὲ ἔχοντες Τιτάνες ἐσμεν· ὅταν δὲ εἰς ἐκεῖνο συμβῶμεν, Διόνυσοι γινόμεθα τετελειωμένοι ἀτεχνῶς. The Titanic mode of life is the irrational mode, by which rational life is torn asunder. It is better to acknowledge its existence everywhere, since in any case at its source are gods, the Titans; then also on the plane of rational life, this apparent self-determination, which seems to aim at belonging to itself alone and neither to the superior nor to the inferior, is wrought in us by the Titans; through it we tear asunder the Dionysus in ourselves, breaking up the natural continuity of our being and partnership, so to speak, with the superior and inferior. While in this condition, we are Titans; but when we recover that lost unity, we become Dionysuses and we attain what can truly be called completeness.

having become thoroughly perfected." Nowhere in this exegesis is there a doctrine of a Titanic element and a Dionysiac element mixed into human nature by the creation of humankind from the Titans' remains. Rather, Damascius applies the general principle of division, which, as he points out is everywhere (*πανταχοῦ*), to human life and behavior.³⁹

Olympiodorus takes the process of blending the stories Proclus identifies as having the same meaning one step further than Damascius; instead of just talking about all of the tales of the Titans' punishment as one idea, Olympiodorus actually recounts a version that blends the crime of the dismemberment with the anthropogony that sometimes follows on the crime of the revolt against the gods and then provides the exegesis of his myth. Olympiodorus, like Damascius, provides both an individual, ethical meaning for the myth and a theological, cosmological meaning, but Olympiodorus needs to provide a different angle on the problem than his predecessors, so he comes up with interpretations that are rather strange even among Neoplatonic allegorical exegeses.

The idea that bodies are simply a *φρουρά* for souls, a shackle or prison for individuals separated from the divine unity, is too obvious for Olympiodorus; the true meaning must be something more difficult to understand in order for Socrates to refer to it as an inexpressible mystery, *ἀπόρητον*. Olympiodorus constructs an argument that makes suicide forbidden, not because of the nature of the soul and its punishment, but because of the nature of the body itself. If the Titans from whom the human body is created consumed Dionysus, then the human body itself must partake of the divine. As Linforth comments, "It is an audacious conjecture, because nothing could be more extraordinary than that a Platonist or Neoplatonist should locate the divine element which is in man anywhere but in the soul."⁴⁰

Olympiodorus' audacity may simply be due to his desire to provide something new in a long tradition of Platonic commentary on the *φρουρά*, but he may also have more complicated reasons for his argument about the composition of humans. As Brisson has argued, Olympiodorus may be making an alchemical allegory in his recounting of the myth, in addition to the ethical and cosmological allegories.⁴¹ The descriptions of the fire of Zeus' lightning blasting the Titans and of the particles produced out of the smoke that become the material for the creation of mankind, Brisson suggests, lend themselves to interpretation in alchemical terms. If fire (lightning) is applied to lime (*ἄσβεστος*), then a sublimate (*αἰθάλη*) appears as solid particles falling from the smoke

³⁹ cp. Brisson 1990, 189-193, on Damascius' reading of Dionysus.

⁴⁰ Linforth 1941, 330.

⁴¹ Brisson 1992, 493-4.

(ἀτμός). This sublimate (αἰθάλη) may be identified with the ever-fresh (ἀειθαλής) spirit (πνεῦμα) that animates a human being. Lime is identified etymologically with the Titans and symbolically with Dionysus, so the application of fire to the combination (the Titans stuffed with morsels of Dionysus) alchemically produces the human being. Bernabé points out that αἰθάλη usually has the simple meaning of soot or ash, rather than the technical meaning of the solid particles that fall as a sublimate from the fumes released by the process of burning.⁴² Soot, however, is merely the most common, general form of such a sublimate, and the fact that the word has a general meaning in no way precludes it from being used in a technical sense. Indeed, for an interpreter like Olympiodorus, taking a common word in a technical and esoteric sense is precisely the way to discern the hidden, allegorical meaning.⁴³

Of course, without further evidence, it is impossible to prove that Olympiodorus is making such an alchemical allegory, but it is equally impossible to disprove, and the hypothesis serves to explain the peculiar innovation that Olympiodorus makes in arguing for the divinity of the body. So too, even if αἰθάλη is a common word, it seems unnecessarily circuitous to refer to the soot from the smoke, ἐκ τῆς αἰθαλῆς τῶν ἀτμῶν, rather than simply refer to the ashes of the corpses. The alchemical hypothesis also serves to explain why Olympiodorus is the only evidence for an anthropogony from the ashes of the enemies of the gods instead of the blood. Bernabé himself admits that Olympiodorus' evidence produces uncertainty whether the *Orphic Rhapsodies* narrated the generation of humans from the blood or the ashes of the Titans, an unresolvable dilemma if it is presumed that Olympiodorus could not be innovating this detail for purposes of his own.⁴⁴

Even if the alchemical allegory were to be rejected as too bizarre even for Olympiodorus, the version of the dismemberment story that Olympiodorus relates nevertheless seems to be the product of careful and deliberate manipulation of the mythic tradition, rather than the mindless preservation of a single text. Olympiodorus repeatedly demonstrates his willingness to alter the details and meanings of previous tellings in order to construct his arguments, and his combination of the dismemberment of Dionysus and the creation of human beings from the remains of the Titans is without precedent in the evidence. Olympiodorus' peculiar recounting of the myth of the

⁴² Bernabé 2003, 27-8.

⁴³ The debate over whether Olympiodorus the 6th century CE commentator on the *Phaedo* was the same as the 6th century CE alchemical author does not really help resolve the issue, except insofar as the fact that it was plausible to attribute the alchemical works to the philosopher suggests that our commentator might have had familiarity with the terminology, whether or not he wrote the extant treatises.

⁴⁴ "incertum utrum in Rhapsodiis homines a Titanum cineribus (ut enarravit Olympiodor.) an ab eorum sanguine (ut Dion, Iulian, Ti. Perinth.) orti sint; probabiliter ab ambobus." Bernabé 2004b, 264. cp. the attempts of Linforth 1941, 328-331, and West 1983, 164-6, to resolve the dilemma.

dismemberment cannot be taken as evidence for a canonical Orphic tale of the generation of human beings from the ashes of the Titans. Not only is Olympiodorus' tale clearly not a precise reproduction of a single, standard Orphic text, but even if it were, the myth still does not include the dual Titanic and Dionysiac elements of human nature or any burden of guilt passed to humans, a stain of that original sin they all share. The innovative conclusion of Olympiodorus' tale, the anthropogony from the soot of the Titans, should not be read back into other tellings of the dismemberment story, since Olympiodorus chose to connect the dismemberment and the anthropogony for specific reasons, to make particular points within his argument. Such an innovation was made possible by the interpretations of the dismemberment, the Titanomachy, and the punishment of the Titans within the context of the Neoplatonic interpretive tradition, developing from Proclus to Damascius to Olympiodorus.

Olympiodorus' mythic argument against suicide is a fascinating filament within the wild and often gaudy tapestry of Neoplatonic myths. Careful analysis of the way Olympiodorus makes use of previous tellings of the myth of dismemberment as well as of the allegorical readings of the dismemberment and other myths provides insight into the relation of late antique thinkers to the Greek mythic tradition, suggesting that even a 6th century pagan living in an increasingly Christian world could engage in the same kind of serious play with the mythic tradition as Plato had a millennium earlier, brewing up a curious concoction of his own from the familiar materials to suit his arguments.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ An earlier version of this argument has appeared, in the context of my larger critique of the Zagreus myth, in my monograph *Recycling Laertes' Shroud*, published through the Center for Hellenic Studies (<http://chs.harvard.edu/chs/redmonds>). I thank the readers at AJP for their helpful comments and critiques, although I need scarcely add that any infelicities, obscurities, or outright errors are wholly the products of my own ignorance, carelessness, or obstinacy.

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