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ISIS Aretalogies**



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## THE SOPHISTS AND HELLENISTIC RELIGION: PRODICUS AS THE SPIRITUAL FATHER OF THE ISIS ARETALOGIES

ALBERT HENRICHS

THE early sophists and Hellenistic religion are two well-known entities as long as one looks at them separately.<sup>1</sup> Classicists are familiar with the flamboyant personalities and idiosyncratic lifestyles of the major fifth-century sophists and with their contributions to intellectual history. They realize, for instance, that the leading sophists were not from Athens but were attracted to Athens like bears to honey and that for all their influence in their own day the sophists as a group of professionals did not survive the decline of Athens and the rise to prominence of the so-called Socratics, let alone the more momentous events of the second half of the fourth century, which vastly expanded the frontiers of the earth and the horizons of men. As the classical period came to an end and the Hellenistic period began to take shape, new religious forces and conventions emerged that changed the conception and worship of the gods: gods traditionally recognized as saviors and wonder workers increased their beneficial activities;<sup>2</sup> powerful new gods arrived from the east, most prominently from Egypt;<sup>3</sup> politics and religion both profited from the Hellenistic passion for the ultimate hero and from the worship of

<sup>1</sup>An earlier version of this article will appear in the Proceedings of the VIIIth Congress of the International Federation of Classical Studies (FIEC), which convened in Budapest in September 1979.

<sup>2</sup>This is especially true for Demeter, Dionysus, and Asclepius. Even Apollo and Athena became more active as miracle workers. Compare Apollo's miraculous defense of Delphi against the Persians in 480 B.C. (Herodotus 8.36–39) with his more visible role during the Celtic raid in 279/78 B.C. (*Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 398.6 [Coan decree of spring 278]; Callim. *Hymnus in Delum* 171–187; Diod. 22.9, Justinus 24.7–8, Paus. 10.23; full discussion in G. Nachtergaele, *Les Galates en Grèce et les Sôtéria de Delphes*, Brussels 1977). For Athena's *aretai*, see her epiphany as recorded in the *Anagraphe* of Lindos, compiled by Timachidas of Rhodes in 99 B.C. (*FGrHist* 532 F 1 D). Another saving act of Athena is recorded in *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 4326 = *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 1151, an inscription from the Athenian Acropolis of c. 350 B.C.: "Meneia made this dedication to Athena after having seen a vision, the powerful action of the goddess" (ὄψιν ἰδοῦσα ἀρετῆν τῆς θεοῦ). In other words, Athena manifested her power (*arete*) in a vision which Meneia saw (ὄψιν ἰδοῦσα is formulaic, see *HSCP* 82 [1978] 209 n. 23).

<sup>3</sup>L. Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis bei den Griechen und Römern*. RGVV 29 (Berlin 1970) 10–47.

supermen, which was channeled into ruler cult;<sup>4</sup> mystery cults and private congregations proliferated, setting new standards of personal piety and proclaiming a new morality based on intimate rapport between the god and his worshipers;<sup>5</sup> in a more general way, traditional distinctions between local or national cults gradually faded away or were swept under the all-embracing carpet of religious syncretism.

### I. PRODICUS' CONCEPT OF DEIFICATION

The sophists and Hellenistic religion clearly belong to two different worlds, separated by a wide gulf of far-reaching changes that took place in the course of the fourth century B.C. To the casual observer, it would seem inconceivable that the two could have anything in common, especially if the point of comparison has to do with religion and the gods. Any Western religion, Hellenistic or otherwise, implies by definition a conviction that gods exist and a firm belief in them. By contrast, the sophists are notorious for their agnosticism or explicit atheism, Protagoras and Prodicus in particular. Protagoras suspended judgment in the matter of whether or not the gods exist and how they look.<sup>6</sup> Prodicus, his younger contemporary, flatly denied their existence or, rather, their divinity. On a scrap of papyrus from Herculaneum, Prodicus maintains "that the traditional gods do not exist, and that they lack knowledge."<sup>7</sup> I have discussed the ambiguities and

<sup>4</sup>Ch. Habicht, *Gottmenschentum und griechische Städte. Zetemata 14* (2nd ed., Munich 1970), esp. 165–171, 223, and 230–236. Habicht identifies the "konkrete Leistung" performed *hic et nunc* on behalf of a particular *polis* in a situation of crisis as the basic root for ruler cult. Prodicus too postulated specific inventions or other accomplishments that improved the living conditions of early men as the prerequisite for deification. There can be no doubt that Prodicus' theory anticipated and encouraged patterns of deification which became common practice in the early Hellenistic period.

<sup>5</sup>See H. W. Pleket, "Religious History as the History of Mentality: The 'Believer' as Servant of the Deity in the Greek World," in H. S. Versnel, ed., *Faith, Hope and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World* (Leiden 1981) 152–192.

<sup>6</sup>*VS* 80 B 4. C. W. Müller, "Protagoras über die Götter," *Hermes* 95 (1967) 140–159 = C. J. Classen, ed., *Sophistik. Wege der Forschung* 187 (Darmstadt 1976) 312–340.

<sup>7</sup>*PHerc.* 1428 fr. 19 (ed. Henrichs, *HSCP* 79 [1975] 107). See J. Bremmer, "Literacy and the Origins and Limitations of Greek Atheism," in J. den Boeft and A. H. M. Kessels, eds., *Actus: Studies in Honour of H. L. W. Nelson* (Utrecht 1982) 43–55, esp. 50f.

implications of this statement elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> For our present purposes it is sufficient to remember that eternal existence and infinite knowledge are among the principal qualities of Greek gods, in the popular as well as in the philosophical view. By denying them both, Prodicus effectively stripped the gods of their divinity. If Prodicus should properly rank as a radical atheist, he could claim no place in the history of Greek religion, save perhaps that of devil's advocate.

Prodicus' atheism was not so simple, and his interest in the traditional gods went much deeper than his avowal of their nonexistence would lead us to believe. While denying their existence *qua* gods, Prodicus invested at least some of the traditional Olympians with a new human identity designed to explain the origins of man's belief in them. According to Prodicus, the gods were originally mortals who in the distant past "discovered foods, shelter and the other practical skills" and were deified by their admiring contemporaries, presumably after their death rather than in their lifetime.<sup>9</sup> In the extant fragments, only two gods are mentioned by name, Demeter and Dionysus, two kindred spirits and a familiar pair in Greek cult. As we shall see later on, their inclusion by Prodicus was of considerable consequence for Greco-Egyptian cultural theory and religious propaganda in the fourth and the early third centuries B.C. The belief that gods were deified men is the main component of Prodicus' doctrine, but there is another part that turned out to be almost equally influential. In an earlier stage of cultural evolution, primitive man deified those aspects of nature that were conspicuously useful to his survival, including the sun and moon, rivers, springs, and lakes as well as meadows and the fruits of the earth.<sup>10</sup> Prodicus thus envisaged the origins of religious beliefs as man's progress from a primitive to a more advanced stage of deification, or from material to personal gods. The whole thrust of his argument was evidently directed not so much toward an understanding of the gods proper as of man and his original environment. In other words, Prodicus' theory was essentially anthropological, not theological, and its orientation was cultural rather than religious. For this reason, no intellectual conflict existed between his atheism and his interest in the origins of religion. His anthropology was doubtless embedded in a more comprehensive study of human culture and its

<sup>8</sup>*Cronache Ercolanesi* 6 (1976) 15-21.

<sup>9</sup>*PHerc.* 1428 col. iii 8-13 (Philodemus, *De Pietate* p. 76 Gomperz) = *VS* 84 B 5; for a full discussion, see *HSCP* 79 (1975) 116ff.

<sup>10</sup>*PHerc.* 1428 col. iii 2-8 and the additional testimonia collected under *VS* 84 B 5.

origins. Cultural theory, or *Kulturentstehungslehre*, was a favorite preserve of the sophists that Protagoras had staked out in a lost treatise entitled *On the Original State of Man*.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from Prodicus' view of the gods, next to nothing is known about the title, content, or scope of the work in which he expounded his vision of early man. All one can do is guess, and the best guess is Wilhelm Nestle's who suggested some fifty years ago in a remarkably intuitive article that the work we are looking for was Prodicus' *Horai*, or seasons personified.<sup>12</sup> The title sounds right for a study of *cultura* in both senses of the word, but it is hard to see how the moral fable of the choice of Heracles that Xenophon read in the *Horai* fitted into a work of this nature. A major portion of the *Horai* very likely dealt with the crucial transition from the wild habits of early hunters and nomads to the more civilized and stable living conditions of agrarian societies.<sup>13</sup> Greek cultural theories of all periods made much of this change from cannibalism to a diet of nuts, acorns, or berries and eventually to Demeter's gift of grain, or from the raw to the cooked, as Claude Lévi-Strauss would call it.<sup>14</sup> In Greek terminology, the *θηριώδης βίος* of savage tribes in the end gave way to the *ἡμερος τροφή* of higher cultures. We cannot be sure that Prodicus used exactly these terms, but they recur in later Hellenistic authors ultimately influenced by Prodicus' theory.<sup>15</sup> Prodicus included unspecified

<sup>11</sup>Diogenes Laertius 10.55 = VS 80 A 1, B 8b, C 1.

<sup>12</sup>*Hermes* 71 (1936) 151–170 = *Griechische Studien* (Stuttgart 1948, rep. 1968) 403–429 = *Sophistik* (above, n. 6) 425–451.

<sup>13</sup>T. Cole, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology* (1967) is fundamental on this subject.

<sup>14</sup>C. Segal, "The Raw and the Cooked in Greek Literature," *Classical Journal* 69 (1974) 289–308, esp. 296f. On the transition from grass to grain, see H. Herter, *Maia* 15 (1963) 475ff. = *Kleine Schriften* (1975) 167ff. Particularly relevant are the cultural theories of Theophrastus and Dicaearchus, who both assumed that man's eating habits developed in three successive stages from grass to the fruits and leaves of trees and finally to the fruits of the earth. Theophrastus ap. Porphyry *De abst.* 2.12 (= Theophrastus *Piet. Exz.* 3 Bernays; fr. 7 Pötscher) followed Prodicus when he identified the cultivated crops as the greatest gift of the gods and as the source of man's worship of them.

<sup>15</sup>Ephorus *FGrHist* 70 F 31b *ἡμεροι καρποί*; Sextus Empiricus *Adv. math.* 9.17 = Euhemerus *FGrHist* 63 T 4c *ὄτ' ἦν ἄτακτος ἀνθρώπων βίος, οἱ περιγενόμενοι τῶν ἄλλων ἰσχύι τε καὶ συνέσει . . .*, a passage that echoes Critias (Euripides according to A. Dihle, *Hermes* 105 [1977] 28–41) ap. Sext. Emp. *Adv. math.* 9.54 = *TrGF* 43 F 19.1f. Snell *ἦν χρόνος ὄτ' ἦν ἄτακτος ἀνθρώπων βίος / καὶ θηριώδης ἰσχύος θ' ὑπέρτης*; Dionysius Scytobrachion *FGrHist* 32 F 7 *θηριώδης βίος* and *ἡμεροι καρποί*. See W. Spoerri, *Späthellenistische Berichte über Welt, Kultur und Götter* (Basel 1959) 154f.

καρποί in his first stage of deification and reserved Demeter for the second.<sup>16</sup> This shows at least that he assumed a development from wild fruits and grasses to cultivated crops. Another technical locution used by Prodicus and many other cultural theorists in this connection was τὰ χρήσιμα πρὸς τὸν βίον, a phrase generally understood to include such essential items of human life as food and clothing.<sup>17</sup>

Demeter and Dionysus, the providers of bread and wine, occupy a prominent place in Prodicus' theory because he advocated a close connection between religion and agriculture. This emphasis is borne out by Themistius, a late but well-read source, who observes that Prodicus "derived all religious practices, mysteries and initiations from the benefits of agriculture, believing that the very notion of the gods came to men from this source and making it the guarantee of piety."<sup>18</sup> The last part of τῆς quotation is corrupt, but what precedes is unambiguous and confirms that Prodicus placed the beginnings of religion in an ambience that was not merely cultural but agricultural. To regard agriculture as one of the foundations of religion and the mystery cults is, of course, more than a purely theoretical construct. Agrarian cults are an established fact of Greek religion as actually practiced. Prodicus backed up his cultural theory with empirical data drawn from Greek fertility cults and from comparative ethnography. He adduced the Nile and its worship by the Egyptians as an illustration of the

<sup>16</sup>Sextus Empiricus *Adv. math.* 9.18 = *VS* 84 B 5. This passage has been misunderstood, as if Prodicus had used metonymy and equated the goddess (Demeter) with her gift (bread); see *HSCP* 79 (1975) 110 n. 64 and 114 n. 77.

<sup>17</sup>*PHerc.* 1428 fr. 19.16ff. (above, n. 7) τοὺς δὲ καρποὺς καὶ πάνθ' ὄλων τὰ χρήσιμα πρὸς τὸν βίον, in a close paraphrase of Prodicus' own words; cf. Minucius Felix *Oct.* 21.2 *Prodicus adsumptos in deos loquitur qui errando inventis novis frugibus utilitati hominum profuerunt.* The Jewish author of the *Letter of Aristeeas*, who lived in Alexandria in the second or first century B.C., must have had Prodicus in mind when he wrote that it was silly for the adherents of polytheism to worship statues τῶν ἐξευρόντων τι πρὸς τὸ ζῆν αὐτοῖς χρησίμων and that those who fabricated such myths were considered τῶν Ἑλλήνων οἱ σοφώτατοι (134–137 p. 39.4ff. Wendland). Dionysus the inventor of viticulture is described as πρὸς πᾶν τὸ χρήσιμον εὐρετικός by Dionysius Scytobrachion, who goes on to mention his deification (Diodorus 3.70.7 = *FGHist* 32 F 8 p. 242.22ff. = J. S. Rusten, *Dionysius Scytobrachion.* Papyrologica Coloniensia 10 [Opladen 1982] 138 fr. 10). Dionysius' use of Euhemerus gave him direct access to Prodician concepts and terminology (see below, nn. 39 and 45).

<sup>18</sup>Themistius *Or.* 30 p. 422 Dindorf = *VS* 84 B 5, on which see W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* III (Cambridge 1969) 239 = *The Sophists* (1971) 239 (whose translation I quote).

deification of natural objects.<sup>19</sup> For the worship of sun, moon, earth, fire, water, and winds he could have referred to Persian custom, as Herodotus did.<sup>20</sup> The mysteries discussed by Prodicus were doubtless the Eleusinian mysteries and perhaps other local cults of Demeter such as the Thesmophoria, which initiated women into the mystery of the natural life cycle. We can speculate further. There can be no doubt that Prodicus gave a quasi-historical interpretation to the so-called myths of arrival, which portray Demeter and Dionysus as itinerant benefactors of mankind who distribute their respective gifts of grain and wine to local farmers.<sup>21</sup> Myths of this type are particularly well attested for Attica, the only part of the Greek mainland within easy reach of Prodicus' native island.<sup>22</sup> By emphasizing the travels and benefactions of Demeter and Dionysus, such myths explicitly attributed human features and pursuits to them and added weight to Prodicus' view that gods who follow this description were deified human beings. In addition, they anticipated two cardinal virtues of Hellenistic savior gods, viz., their global mobility and their beneficent activity in the service of mankind, qualities that had become a hallmark of divinity by the early Hellenistic period.

Prodicus is the only sophist who deified human inventors and culture heroes. In the common Greek view, Demeter and Dionysus did what they did because they were gods; their divinity is unconditional and the source of their gifts, which are renewed annually. Prodicus reversed this traditional concept. For him, the one-time achievements of the mortals Demeter and Dionysus were the prerequisite for their divinity. In Greek religion, the dividing line between established gods and mortals could always be crossed, but it was considered a one-way street: Greek gods were never reincarnated as mortals, but mortal

<sup>19</sup>Sextus Empiricus *Adv. math.* 9.18 = VS 84 B 5. The abrupt transition from direct to indirect speech immediately after the phrase *καθάπερ οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι τὸν Νεῖλον* shows that this comparison is still part of the literal quotation from Prodicus.

<sup>20</sup>Herodotus 1.131.2. Cf. Plato *Crat.* 397, and the *Pseudepicharmeion* quoted by Menander fr. 614 Körte (= Epicharmus VS 23 B 8), which reads like a paraphrase of Prodicus (note *χρησίμους εἶναι θεοὺς* in line 3).

<sup>21</sup>Henrichs, *Cronache Ercolanesi* 6 (1976) 21; W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Stuttgart 1977) 464.

<sup>22</sup>The advent of Demeter and Dionysus in Attica and their respective gifts to Celeus and Icarius are mentioned in close conjunction by Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibl.* 3 (191) 14.7 and schol. Aristoph. *Knights* 700. The author of *Bibl.* followed an Attidographic source which was noticeably influenced by Prodicus' theory.

heroes could move upward and become gods.<sup>23</sup> When Prodicus treated Demeter and Dionysus as mortals who acquired their divinity as a reward for beneficent actions, he gave the impression of putting them in the same category as Heracles or Asclepius. Comparison with cultic heroes, though doubtless relevant, obscures the audacity of Prodicus' innovation, which was twofold. Against the tenets of Greek religion, he ascribed to Demeter and Dionysus human origins and status and not merely human characteristics. In addition, he defined their deification as an advanced stage of cultural evolution, thus placing it within the conceptual framework of anthropology and outside the realm of traditional mythology and religion. His bold construct added a quasi-historical dimension to Greek myth and erased the fundamental distinction between Olympian gods and mortal men. By demoting two of the highest gods in order to promote mankind, Prodicus opened the door to a drastic reinterpretation of deity, one that is often referred to as Euhemerism, an unfortunate misnomer to which we shall return.

## II. FOLLOWERS OF PRODICUS

Prodicus' theory was an instant success. It was parodied in Aristophanes' *Birds* in 414, and echoed by the Euripidean Tiresias in the *Bacchae*, where Demeter and Dionysus are hailed as the respective inventors of bread and wine.<sup>24</sup> The tragedian Moschion in the following century paired the invention of "tame food" (*καρπὸς ἡμέρου τροφῆς*) with that of wine in a description of the early stages of mankind that seems to combine the theories of Protagoras and Prodicus.<sup>25</sup> The Attidographers followed Prodicus to the letter and turned myth into history by treating Demeter and Dionysus as quasi-historical figures whose visits to Attica were given exact dates in the reigns of early Attic kings.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup>For a more detailed discussion, see A. D. Nock, *Gnomon* 33 (1961) 585ff. = Zeph Stewart, ed., *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (Oxford 1972) 933ff.

<sup>24</sup>On *Birds* 685ff. and Prodicus see W. Nestle, *Hermes* 71 (1936) 162f. = *Griech. Studien* (above, n. 12) 418, and *Vom Mythos zum Logos* (2nd ed., Stuttgart 1942) 355; for Euripides, see E. R. Dodds on *Bacchae* 274–285, as modified by Henrichs, *HSCP* 79 (1975) 110 n. 64.

<sup>25</sup>Moschion *TrGF* 97 F 6.23–25 Snell.

<sup>26</sup>Philochorus *FGrHist* 328 F 5; Pausanias 1.2.5; *Marmor Parium FGrHist* 239 A 12–13; Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibl.* 3 (191) 14.7 (above, n. 22).



Ephorus showed even greater zeal in his adaptation of Prodicus. In the fourth book of his *Histories*, he offered bold rationalistic reinterpretations of several well-known Greek myths. Of particular interest to us is his account of the origins of the Delphic oracle, which was excerpted by Strabo.<sup>27</sup> In this tantalizing fragment, two mythical figures connected with Delphi are given quasi-human identities and a place in history. Both Tityos, the assailant of Leto, and Python, the Delphic dragon, are portrayed by Ephorus as human arch-villains whom Apollo had eliminated in the distant past. Apollo himself is cast in the role of a culture hero with distinct Prodician features, whose motivation for founding the oracle was “to benefit the human race” by establishing moral standards based on the concepts of civilization (*ἡμερότης*) and self-control. What is more, Ephorus locates the occasion for Apollo’s visit to Delphi in a nebulous historical time when the god “traversed the earth in order to civilize (*ἡμεροῦν*) mankind.” Unfortunately, Ephorus’ text as preserved by Strabo is corrupt at this point, but the key phrase “civilized food” (*ἡμεροὶ καρποὶ*) survives intact and suggests unambiguously that Apollo first taught early men how to abandon their uncivilized diet before he could teach them right conduct. Ephorus’ Apollo is a curious hybrid who embodies two radically different identities. There is the traditional Delphic conception of Apollo as the distant oracular power that teaches man to understand the nature and limits of human existence. Grafted onto this stock image of the Delphic Apollo is the almost opposite notion of a manlike god who makes a reputation by propagating new eating habits to inaugurate a more civilized lifestyle. The Apollo who acts like an itinerant culture hero is unattested elsewhere and clearly follows in the footsteps of Prodicus’ Demeter and Dionysus, who traveled far and wide in order to improve the living conditions of mankind in its infancy.

The use of Prodicus on the part of Euripides, Moschion, the Attidographers, and Ephorus is, of course, not explicitly attested but follows from the Prodician views which they espouse. The case is different with Persaeus, the pupil of Zeno the Stoic and an active political figure before and around the middle of the third century B.C.<sup>28</sup> Persaeus is on record as endorsing both stages of Prodicus’ cultural theory.<sup>29</sup> He is typical of a whole generation of early Hellenistic men

<sup>27</sup>Strabo 9.3.11–12 = Ephorus *FGrHist* 70 F 31b.

<sup>28</sup>On Persaeus, see Henrichs, *HSCP* 79 (1975) 120–123.

<sup>29</sup>*PHerc.* 1428 cols. ii 28–iv 12 (ed. Henrichs, *loc. cit.*, 116 and 120f.), part of which is accessible as *SVF* I 448. The influence of Prodicus on Persaeus has

of letters who relied on the patronage of Hellenistic monarchs and readily spread the Prodician view that outstanding benefactors of the human race had earned deification. They doubtless did so in the hope of flattering their royal patrons. In the process of Hellenistic adaptation, the Prodician gods not only changed names but were revamped in accordance with the idea of Hellenistic kingship.<sup>30</sup> The inventors and cultural heroes who figured so prominently in the second stage of Prodicus' theory were depicted as kings and royal benefactors, and the impersonal first stage was often deemphasized or dropped altogether.

In the generation before Persaeus two men whose names are closely connected with Alexandria and the early Ptolemies produced ingenious adaptations of Prodicus' theory. Their names are Hecataeus of Abdera and Euhemerus. Their own versions of the way in which human benefactors were deified enjoyed such a wide circulation that they effectively obscured the role of Prodicus in this whole process. Even modern scholars have been repeatedly deceived because they have seen only part of the picture presented here.

Hecataeus of Abdera wrote *Aigyptiaka* under the first Ptolemy in the last quarter of the fourth century.<sup>31</sup> Diodorus quotes him extensively in his book on Egypt.<sup>32</sup> In his discussion of the origins of civilization in Egypt, Hecataeus is mainly concerned with the origin of religion and the idea of kingship. His whole outlook bears the stamp of Prodicus. According to Hecataeus, the earliest Egyptians had "two

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often been minimized by scholars who exaggerated Persaeus' own contribution to cultural theory (see Henrichs, *loc. cit.*, 118f.). Aristophanes, Xenophon, Plato, and Aristotle all mention Prodicus but make no reference to his atheistic theory. (The fact that Prodicus is the champion of the Clouds, the progressive new gods in the play of that name, makes it virtually certain that Aristophanes and his audience had Prodicus' "atheism" very much in mind.) Was it Persaeus who saved Prodicus' "theology" from oblivion?

<sup>30</sup>O. Murray, *JEA* 56 (1970) 151 said it well: "It was Hecataeus, not Euhemerus . . . who first systematically worked out the theory that the gods are divinized kings, and so, by bringing together heaven and earth, facilitated that most characteristic feature of Hellenistic kingship—the development of the founder cult into a systematic worship of kings." Prodicus had, of course, brought together heaven and earth long before Hecataeus (see above, n. 4).

<sup>31</sup>On dating Hecataeus, see O. Murray, *JEA* 56 (1970) 143f., *Class. Quart.* 22 (1972) 207f., *JEA* 59 (1973) 163ff.

<sup>32</sup>Although the exact extent of Diodorus' debt to Hecataeus remains controversial, most scholars assume that Hecataeus was essentially the source for Diodorus 1.11–13, where the two types of gods are introduced. A. Burton, *Diodorus Siculus, Book I*, EPRO 29 (Leiden 1972) 56 misrepresents Prodicus' theory by omitting its second stage and reaches a wrong conclusion: "Clearly Diodorus' attitude can in no way be compared with that of Prodicus."

conceptions" (δισσαὶ ἔννοιαι) concerning the gods: they believed in "celestial" and "terrestrial" gods (θεοὶ οὐράνιοι and ἐπίγειοι).<sup>33</sup> This is vintage Prodicus, with a slight twist. Unlike Prodicus, Hecataeus limited the first type of gods to deified heavenly bodies, or astral gods.<sup>34</sup> More important to him was the second type, which provided the essential link with the idea of kingship. In Hecataeus, "the terrestrial gods are mortals who achieved deification because of their intelligence and their public services (κοινὴ εὐεργεσία) for mankind."<sup>35</sup> He adds that some of them were Egyptian rulers, especially Isis and Osiris, whom he equates with Demeter and Dionysus, the two gods most prominent in Prodicus' theory. Hecataeus had an enormous influence, for instance on Megasthenes, Euhemerus, the Isis aretalogies, and Diodorus. Before we return to Isis, let us take a moment to look at Euhemerus.

For no good reason, Euhemerus was destined to rank in the eyes of posterity as one of the most notorious writers of atheistic literature in antiquity. He owes this reputation less to his own genius or to an unusual gift for blasphemy than to the fact that Ennius took the time to translate him into Latin. Euhemerus wrote his *Sacred Record*—the "evil books" as Callimachus denounced them—within the first quarter of the third century in Alexandria.<sup>36</sup> His so-called theology may be charitably described as an intellectual diversion that turned the Hesiodic succession of Uranus, Cronus, and Zeus into a dynasty of mortal kings inhabiting a fictitious island called Panchaea. Uranus was a good and beneficial (εὐεργετικός) king and a capable astronomer, a skill reflected in his name.<sup>37</sup> Further details about this Uranus can be gleaned from a passage in Dionysius Scytobrachion, who wrote mythological fiction in the third century B.C., possibly also in Alexandria.<sup>38</sup> His accounts of the Argonauts and of the Libyan Amazons, the

<sup>33</sup>Diodorus 1.11–13 = Hecataeus *FGrHist* 264 F 25 pp. 23–24; also Diodorus 1.90.2–3 = Hecataeus F 25 p. 59.25ff., and Diodorus 6.1.2 = Euhemerus *FGrHist* 63 F 2.

<sup>34</sup>See M. P. Nilsson, "The Origin of Belief among the Greeks in the Divinity of the Heavenly Bodies," *HTHR* 33 (1940) 1ff. = *Opuscula Selecta* III (1960) 31ff.

<sup>35</sup>Diodorus 1.13.1.

<sup>36</sup>R. Pfeiffer on Callim. fr. 191.10; P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford 1972) I 292f., II 453 n. 824.

<sup>37</sup>Diodorus 6.1.8 ap. Eus. *Praep. ev.* 2.2 = *FGrHist* 63 F 2.

<sup>38</sup>The traditional date for Dionysius Scytobrachion is the latter half of the second century B.C. That this date is wrong and that Dionysius wrote between approximately 270 and 220 B.C. has been shown by Rusten (above, n. 17).

Atlantioi, and Dionysus are characterized by an extremely rationalistic approach to mythology and show the influence of Euhemerus, whom Dionysius must have known first hand. Dionysius made Uranus the first king of the Atlantioi, and the qualities with which he endowed him are doubtless taken from Euhemerus. According to Dionysius, Uranus was not only an astronomer who introduced the basic time units of year, month, and season but a culture hero of much more universal talent:<sup>39</sup> he abolished the lawless and animal-like living conditions of his subjects through the foundation of cities, the invention of civilized food (*ἡμεροι καρπού*), and many other useful habits (*τὰ χρήσιμα*). After his death, he was accorded divine honors because of his many services to mankind (*εὐεργεσίαι*). Euhemerus' conception of Uranus shows close affinities with the Delphic Apollo of Ephorus, with Isis as portrayed in the aretalogies, and ultimately with Prodicus' theology. Uranus' son Cronus must have also distinguished himself as king, but we do not know how. Euhemerus claimed to have read a record of Cronus' accomplishments (*πράξεις*), which were written down together with the deeds of both Uranus and Zeus in Egyptian hieroglyphics on a golden stele placed in the Panchaeon temple of Zeus.<sup>40</sup> We are much better informed about the Zeus of Euhemerus. He surpassed his two ancestors, became ruler of the whole inhabited world, befriended lesser kings, and received divine honors during his lifetime.<sup>41</sup> For a more detailed description of the Euhemeristic Zeus, we have to turn to the *Sacred History* of Ennius, a Latin adaptation of Euhemerus. According to Ennius,<sup>42</sup> "Jupiter traversed the earth five times. He assigned positions of power to all his friends and relatives, bestowed on mankind laws and customs, ended cannibalism and provided cereal food, and did many other good works. Consequently he attained immortal fame and left behind eternal monuments of himself."

<sup>39</sup>Diodorus 3.56.3-5 = Dionysius Scytobrachion *FGrHist* 32 F 7. For Euhemerus as the source of Dionysius in this instance, see W. Spoerri, *Späthellenistische Berichte* (above, n. 15) 192. At *HSCP* 79 (1975) 100 n. 65 I was wrong in suggesting that Hecataeus may have been Dionysius' source.

<sup>40</sup>Diodorus 6.1.7 = *FGrHist* 63 F 2; Diodorus 5.46.8 = 63 F 3 omits the *πράξεις* of Cronus.

<sup>41</sup>Diodorus 6.1.9 = *FGrHist* 63 F 2; 5.46.3 = 63 F 3.

<sup>42</sup>Ennius ap. Lactantius *Div. inst.* 1.11.45 = Euhemerus *FGrHist* 63 F 24: *deinde Juppiter postquam quinque terras circumit omnibusque amicis atque cognatis suis imperia divisit reliquitque hominibus leges mores frumentaue paravit multaue alia bona fecit, immortalis gloria memoriaque adfectus sempiterna monumenta sui reliquit.* For the addition of cannibalism, see 63 F 22.

Scholars have often claimed that some form of Euhemerism existed before Euhemerus.<sup>43</sup> They are right, of course. Although Prodicus' name is rarely mentioned in this connection, Euhemerus' debt to Prodicus is obvious.<sup>44</sup> Like Prodicus, he reduced the gods to the status of mortal benefactors of mankind who promoted inventions that improved the living conditions of early men. The Zeus of Euhemerus takes a great interest in "inventors who had discovered new things that promised to be useful for the lives of men."<sup>45</sup> This description is remarkably close to the way in which Prodicus pictured Demeter and Dionysus. Furthermore, in both Prodicus and Euhemerus deification is the ultimate reward for good service.<sup>46</sup> Other connections exist between the two authors, but they are perhaps more tenuous. Some writers who paraphrase Euhemerus use technical terms such as "animal-like life" (*θηριώδης βίος*) and "civilized food" (*ἤμεροι καρποί*), which can be traced back to the cultural theories of the sophists and conceivably reflect Prodician influence on Euhemerus.<sup>47</sup> In later doxographers, Euhemerus and Prodicus are both included in catalogs of atheists who claimed that the gods did not exist (*μὴ εἶναι*

<sup>43</sup>T. S. Brown, *HThR* 39 (1946) 258 may serve as an example: "The elements of Euhemerus' theory were present before he wrote." Cf. W. Nestle, *Vom Mythos zum Logos* (above, n. 24) 354 (of Prodicus' theory): "... ein Euhemerismus vor Euhemerus."

<sup>44</sup>For tentative suggestions by various scholars to connect Prodicus with Euhemerus see Henrichs, *HSCP* 79 (1975) 111 n. 65.

<sup>45</sup>Ennius ap. Lactantius *Div. inst.* 1.11.35 = Euhemerus *FGrHist* 63 F 20: *item si quis quid novi invenerat quod ad vitam humanam utile esset* (see above, n. 17, on τὰ χρήσιμα πρὸς τὸν βίον), *eo veniebant atque Jovi ostendebant*. Cf. Quintilian *Inst.* 3.7.7-8 *in deis . . . venerabimur . . . proprie vim cuiusque et inventa quae utile aliquid hominibus attulerint*.

<sup>46</sup>Latin authors associate Euhemerus with the doctrine of *postmortem* deification of human benefactors (Cic. *Nat. deor.* 1.42.119, with Pease's commentary; Minucius Felix *Oct.* 20.5-21.2; Lactantius *De ira dei* 11.7-9; cf. Leo of Pella *FGrHist* 659 F 6; Pease on Cic. *Nat. deor.* 1.15.38). This confusion stems from an inconsistency on the part of Euhemerus himself. According to Euhemerus, Uranus received divine honors *after* his death (*FGrHist* 63 F 21), whereas Zeus was treated like a god during his lifetime, like so many Hellenistic kings (*FGrHist* 63 T 4c; F 2 p. 303.27; F 23). I suspect that the human benefactors of Prodicus' second stage were deified *after* rather than *before* they died, but the two principal texts are not explicit on this point (*PHerc* 1428 cols. ii 28ff. [Philodemus *De Piet.* pp. 75f. Gomperz] = H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci* p. 544 = Prodicus *VS* 84 B 5 = Persaeus *SVFI* 448; Minucius Felix *Oct.* 21.2).

<sup>47</sup>See above, n. 15.

θεός), a phrase that occurs in Prodicus' own declaration of atheism.<sup>48</sup> Finally, Sextus Empiricus ascribes to Euhemerus the view that "the traditional gods were important mortals and therefore deified by their contemporaries and considered gods."<sup>49</sup> This is the exact position of Prodicus, and the expression "the traditional gods" (οἱ νομιζόμενοι θεοί) was also used by Prodicus himself.<sup>50</sup> It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the essential features of Euhemerism are in fact the property of Prodicus. It is unlikely, however, that Euhemerus had direct access to Prodicus. Prodician theology was presumably transmitted to Euhemerus by way of Hecataeus of Abdera, a resident of Egypt like Euhemerus and his older contemporary.<sup>51</sup> Hecataeus condensed Prodicus' two-stage theory into the catchy cliché of the celestial and terrestrial gods that Euhemerus inherited. Euhemerus was almost exclusively interested in the terrestrial gods and emphasized their presence on earth and their worldwide travels. For all his preoccupation with the terrestrial gods, he did not omit the celestial gods altogether but explained how their worship originated.<sup>52</sup> According to Euhemerus, Zeus named the sky after his grandfather, Uranus the astronomer, and instituted the worship of Sky on the very mountain top from which Uranus used to observe the sky and the movements of the stars.<sup>53</sup> Prodicus had included the sun and the moon among the

<sup>48</sup>Euhemerus *FGrHist* 63 T 4a and 4b; Prodicus as quoted in *PHerc* 1428 fr. 19 (above, n. 7).

<sup>49</sup>Sextus Empiricus *Adv. math.* 9.51 = Euhemerus *FGrHist* 63 T 4b.

<sup>50</sup>Henrichs, *HSCP* 79 (1975) 107 n. 57. According to Lactantius *Div. inst.* 1.11.33 = Euhemerus *FGrHist* 63 T 3 "Euhemerus res gestas Jovis et ceterorum qui dii putantur collegit." Plutarch *De Is.* 23 = Euhemerus T 4a also mentions τοὺς νομιζομένους θεούς in connection with Euhemerus.

<sup>51</sup>Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I 293, II 454 n. 828; O. Murray, *JEA* 56 (1970) 151 n. 4; above, nn. 30–32.

<sup>52</sup>Whereas Diodorus adopted the formal classification of the gods as "celestial" and "terrestrial" from Hecataeus, Euhemerus did not. For a summary of the prolonged scholarly discussion over this issue, see Spoerri, *Späthellenistische Berichte* (above, n. 15) 190–193; Cole, *Democritus* (above, n. 13) 156f. n. 29; Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* II 450f. n. 815. It is wrong to say (as many scholars have done) that Euhemerus "did not include them [the celestial gods] in his pantheon" (Cole) or "did not refer to the Uranian gods" (Fraser). Nilsson, *Gesch. d. griech. Religion* II (2nd ed., 1961) 287 observes accurately: "Die Göttlichkeit der Himmelskörper wird also von Euhemerus wie von Hekataios anerkannt."

<sup>53</sup>Diodorus 5.44.6 = Euhemerus *FGrHist* 63 F 3 p. 306.22–24; Ennius ap. Lactantius *Div. inst.* 1.11.63 = Euhemerus *FGrHist* 63 F 21, on which see Cole, *Democritus* (above, n. 13) 202–205. It is difficult to reconcile Diod. 6.1.6 = Euhemerus F 2 (where Uranus is the first man to sacrifice to the celestial gods)

natural objects deified by early men because of their usefulness.<sup>54</sup> In making Uranus the first king to be deified, Euhemerus clearly adopted a major aspect of the celestial gods and of the first stage of Prodicus' theory.

### III. PRODICUS AND THE SO-CALLED EUHEMERISM OF THE ISIS ARETALOGIES

Euhemerus shows affinities not only with Prodicus but also with the Isis aretalogies.<sup>55</sup> Like Demeter and Isis, the Zeus of Euhemerus is both a law-giver and a provider of the fruits of the earth. Isis and Zeus are both monarchs who inscribed their deeds on stone in the fashion of oriental and Hellenistic kings.<sup>56</sup> The extant Isis aretalogies are such epigraphical records, and one of them claims to be a copy of an *Urtext* found on a stele that stood in Memphis.<sup>57</sup> Euhemerus likewise claimed to have derived his account of Uranus, Cronus, and Zeus from an inscribed stele.<sup>58</sup> It is possible that Euhemerus modeled

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with the more authentic fragment F 21 (where Zeus institutes the first sacrifice to Sky).

<sup>54</sup>VS 84 B 5.

<sup>55</sup>Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I 292 lists the deeds of Euhemerus' Zeus and adds: "like Isis in the Aretalogies." A. J. Festugière, *HThR* 42 (1949) 220 = *Études de religion grecque et hellénistique* (1972) 149 observes that Hecataeus, Euhemerus, and the Isis aretalogies all continue the ancient tradition of the "dieux *évéra*l." If I am right, the connections between Euhemerus and the Isis aretalogies go beyond superficial similarities: they share a common ancestor, viz., Prodicus.

<sup>56</sup>If Zeus recorded his *praxeis* himself, he will have done so in the first person singular. It follows that the self-proclamations of Isis in the "I"-style are more authentic and older than the ones in the "thou"-style or "she"-style.

<sup>57</sup>Aretalogy from Kyme (first or second century A.D.) line 2: "This was copied from the stele in Memphis which stands near the Hephaestus temple." Y. Grandjean, *Une nouvelle arétalogie d'Isis à Maronée*, EPRO 49 (Leiden 1975) gives a full bibliography on the Kyme inscription on pp. 8f., and reprints the entire text on pp. 122–124. The same fictitious stele at Memphis is quoted in the introduction to the hexametrical Isis aretalogy from Andros, dated to the first century B.C. (W. Peek, *Der Isishymnus von Andros und verwandte Texte* [Berlin 1930] 15 lines 3–6). Fictitious stelae as alleged sources of sacred texts were a common form of religious propaganda in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Found in various religious milieus (pagan, Jewish, and Gnostic), they usually occur in contexts that show Alexandrian or Egyptian influence.

<sup>58</sup>Lactantius *Div. inst.* 1.11.33 = Euhemerus *FGrHist* 63 T 3: *res gestas Jovis et ceterorum qui dii putantur* (above, n. 50) *collegit historiamque contexuit ex titulis*

the fictitious stele in the Panchaeon shrine of Zeus directly on the stones that recorded the deeds of Isis in her sanctuaries.<sup>59</sup> If so, Euhemerus' indirect testimony would be invaluable in any attempt to determine the original date of the Isis aretalogies, which have left no detectable trace before the late second or the first century B.C. Euhemerus was evidently interested in Isis. In a lost portion of his work, he mentioned Isis of Pharos alongside Eleusinian Demeter, Cretan Zeus, and Delphic Apollo as examples of deified benefactors whose tombs could still be seen in various parts of the Greek world.<sup>60</sup> The tomb of Isis is explicitly linked with the Isis aretalogies by Diodorus, who gives a partial translation of self-proclamations of Isis in the standard format that were allegedly written in hieroglyphics on a stele marking the burial place of Isis in Arabia.<sup>61</sup>

Between 1842 and 1975, five Greek inscriptions were published that portray Isis as inventress of the arts of civilization and as universal benefactress of mankind.<sup>62</sup> They are known to scholars as aretalogies of Isis or "Praises of Isis."<sup>63</sup> The stones preserving the Isis aretalogies

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*et inscriptionibus sacris quae in antiquissimis templis habebantur.* Cf. 63 F 2 p. 303.11ff., p. 308.6f., 19ff.

<sup>59</sup>The priests of Triphylian Zeus who sing litanies in praise of the deeds (*praxeis*) and services (*euergesiai*) of their gods according to Euhemerus (Diodorus 5.46.2 = *FGrHist* 63 F 3) are evidently modeled on the priests of Egypt or, more specifically, on the *aretalogoí* in the cults of Isis and Serapis.

<sup>60</sup>Minucius Felix *Oct.* 21.1 = Euhemerus *FGrHist* 63 T 4f. Of particular interest in connection with Prodicus is the inclusion of the Delphic Apollo, which may be due to the influence of Ephorus, who recast the god of Delphi in accordance with the Prodician model (see above).

<sup>61</sup>Diodorus 1.27.3–4, from an unknown source. Diodorus had also heard of a tomb of Isis in the *temenos* of Hephaestus at Memphis (1.22.2), a tradition echoed in the Isis aretalogies from Andros and Kyme.

<sup>62</sup>For a complete catalog and bibliography, see Grandjean, *Une nouvelle arétalogie* (above, n. 57) 8–9.

<sup>63</sup>A. D. Nock coined the felicitous phrase "Praises of Isis" in 1949 (below, n. 66); its appropriateness has been confirmed by the Maroneia inscription (Henrichs, *HSCP* 83 [1978] 206f.). For more than four decades, however, "aretalogies" has been the preferred scholarly name for the self-predications of Isis, and its continued use has been well defended by Grandjean (above, n. 57) 1–8 against the criticism of V. Longo. The application of the term "aretalogies" to "Praises" can be traced back to German classicists in the 1920s. W. Peek, the last doctoral student of Wilamowitz (F. Solmsen, *GRBS* 20 [1979] 92), was promoted in 1929 with a dissertation entitled *Hymnus in Isim Andrius*, published in 1930 under the title *Der Isishymnus von Andros* (above, n. 57). Peek, *Isishymnus* 25 (cf. pp. 84 and 87) describes the source of the Andros text as a "Prosaaretalogie," a term that has a Wilamowitzian ring. (On Wilamowitz' use of *Aretalogie* and *Aretalogie*, see Henrichs, *Bulletin of the American*



were not found at tombs of Isis, as Diodorus would have it, but in her sanctuaries on various Greek islands, in northern Greece, and on the coast of Asia Minor.<sup>64</sup> In striking contrast to the cultural theories we have discussed so far, "Praises" are cultic texts that express the actual beliefs of ordinary worshipers of Isis. The aretalogies on stone and the similar excerpt in Diodorus have so much in common that they must ultimately derive from a single source. The date, author, and language of that original version are unknown. Richard Harder in 1944 and Jan Bergman in 1968 argued for Egyptian origin and later translation of the Egyptian text into Greek.<sup>65</sup> But A. J. Festugière, A. D. Nock, and Dieter Müller insisted rightly that the original version was written in Greek and that the very notion of Isis as inventress and benefactress is essentially Greek and the result of her equation with Demeter.<sup>66</sup>

For my present purpose, I concentrate on those sections of "Praises" that are unmistakably Greek in conception. In the aretalogy from Kyme, which is the most complete text, Isis advertises her

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*Society of Papyrologists* 16 [1979] 90f.; add Wilamowitz, *Glaube der Hellenen* II [1932] 356.) Also in 1929, A. Kiefer included "Praises" in his *Aretalogische Studien* (diss. Freiburg 1928, published Leipzig 1929). By 1938, the year which saw the publication of the third volume of O. Kern's *Die Religion der Griechen* (with a discussion of the Isis aretalogies on pp. 139ff.), *Aretalogien* had become the established name. Finally, the term was anglicized by American New Testament scholarship. (F. C. Grant, *Hellenistic Religions* [1953] 131 calls the Kyme inscription both "Praises of Isis" and "a copy of an Isis aretalogy".)

<sup>64</sup>The five inscriptions, severally from Andros, Ios, Aeolian Kyme, Thessalonica, and Maroneia, were first published, respectively, in 1842, 1877, 1927, 1934, and 1975. The specimens from Maroneia and Andros were copied in the late Hellenistic period, the others date from the imperial period. The Andrian inscription is a versified adaptation of the same prose aretalogy from which the four prose versions derive.

<sup>65</sup>R. Harder, *Karpokrates von Chalkis und die memphitische Isispropaganda*, Abh. Preuss. Akademie 1943.15 (Berlin 1944); J. Bergman, *Ich bin Isis. Studien zum memphitischen Hintergrund der griechischen Isisaretalogien*, Acta Univ. Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum 3 (Uppsala 1968). Harder, who was W. Jaeger's first student in Kiel and Berlin during the 1920s, had no training whatsoever in Egyptology. Bergman, a historian of religions from the Widengren school who learned Egyptian in order to study the Isis aretalogies, tends to exaggerate the Egyptian background of "Praises" and underestimates its Greek component.

<sup>66</sup>A. J. Festugière, "A propos des arétalogies d'Isis," *HTHR* 42 (1949) 209-234 = *Études* (above, n. 55) 138-163; A. D. Nock's review of Harder (above, n. 65) in *Gnomon* 21 (1949) 221-228 = *Essays* (above, n. 23) II 703-711; D. Müller, *Ägypten und die griechischen Isis-Aretalogien*, Abh. Sächs. Akad. d. Wiss. Leipzig 53.1 (Berlin 1961).

cultural claims in fifty-six statements, most of which are introduced by the first-person pronoun ἐγώ.<sup>67</sup> Fewer than a dozen of her self-proclamations have clear Egyptian references.<sup>68</sup> The vast majority of the remaining ones either allow both a Greek and an Egyptian interpretation<sup>69</sup> or are demonstrably inspired by Greek cultural theory.<sup>70</sup> In her cultural claims Isis is explicitly identified as the inventress of writing, cultivated crops, navigation, and marriage contracts.<sup>71</sup> As Isis Thesmophoros she gave laws, abolished cannibalism and murder, founded cities, and established initiations and other cult practices.<sup>72</sup> In general, she enforces ethical principles such as τὸ καλόν and τὸ δίκαιον and protects social institutions such as marriage and the family.<sup>73</sup> Her realm includes not only human affairs but also the forces of nature. She has control over sun and moon, stars and lightning, rivers, winds and sea and is an expert in astronomy and nautical skills.<sup>74</sup> What is more, she introduces herself at the beginning of her catalog not as a goddess but as “the absolute ruler (τύραννος) of every land.”<sup>75</sup> By adopting a title that in earlier literature was more often applied to rulers on earth than gods in heaven, Isis couched her claim to universal sovereignty in language that was both political and religious.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>67</sup>The full text of the aretology from Kyme (K), originally published by A. Salač in *BCH* 51 (1927) 378ff., can be found (with an identical division into paragraphs, after which I quote) in Peek (above, n. 57), Harder (above, n.65) and Grandjean (above, n. 57), as well as in *IG XII Suppl.* pp. 98–99 (Hiller v. Gaertringen).

<sup>68</sup>Especially K 3b, 5–6, 8–9, 11, 12, and 44–45.

<sup>69</sup>For instance, K 16 (*maat*, or “justice”), K 23–24 (temple cult), K 30 (marriage contracts), and K 31 (separate languages for Greeks and barbarians).

<sup>70</sup>Especially K 7 (agriculture), K 15 and 49 (seafaring), K 17–20 (family life), K 21–22 (abolition of cannibalism and foundation of mystery cults, Demeter’s “double gift” [Isocr. *Paneg.* 28], on which see Festugière [above, n. 55] 216–220 = 145–149), and K 25–29 (ethical concepts).

<sup>71</sup>K 3c, 7, 15, and 30.

<sup>72</sup>K 52, 4, 21, 26, and 22–24.

<sup>73</sup>K 16, 17–20, 27–29, and 32–38.

<sup>74</sup>K 13–14, 39, 42, and 49.

<sup>75</sup>K 3a (see next note).

<sup>76</sup>When applied to gods, the word τύραννος was invariably positive and equivalent to βασιλεύς or βασιλεία/βασιλίσσα, in tragic and comic diction as well as in the language of Hellenistic cult. On K 3a (Εἰσὶς ἐγὼ εἰμι ἢ τύραννος πάσης χώρας) and K 25 (ἐγὼ τυράννων ἀρχὰς κατέλυσα), two seemingly contradictory statements, see most recently H. S. Versnel, “De tyrannie verdrijven? Een les in historische ambiguïteit,” inaugural lecture, Leiden University Press (1978). In connection with K 3a, Versnel reminds us (on pp. 10–12)

I suggest that this self-portrayal of Isis is an outgrowth of Prodicus' two-stage theory. The Isis of "Praises" is thoroughly Prodician in that her status as a deity is predicated upon her role as cultural heroine and former queen of Egypt. Even her power over natural phenomena is a distant reminder of the first stage in Prodicus' scheme. One wonders why Prodicus' name has never occurred to scholars who devoted whole books and articles to "Praises." Festugière connected the cultural emphasis of the Isis aretologies with the *Prometheus Bound* and with early Hellenistic authors such as Hecataeus and Euhemerus but paid no serious attention to the cultural theories of the sophists.<sup>77</sup> The Prodicus that lurks behind "Praises" is, of course, adulterated with Hellenistic admixtures.<sup>78</sup> The source through which Prodician concepts reached the Greco-Egyptian circles in Alexandria or Memphis, where "Praises" originated, could have been Hecataeus.<sup>79</sup> As we have seen, echoes of Prodicus ring loud and clear in Hellenistic and especially Alexandrian authors who wrote in the late fourth or early third century B.C. Most plausibly, therefore, the archetype of "Praises" should be dated to the earliest period of

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that *tyrannos*, though usually a political term with negative connotations, was not only used as a divine epithet in fifth-century literature but had become a cult title by the third century B.C. On K 25 he points out (pp. 8–10) that the paradox of Isis exercising absolute power over men and at the same time being a liberator from tyranny is typically Hellenistic and modeled on the precedent of Alexander the Great and other Hellenistic kings who promised freedom although their rule was virtually an autocracy. For an earlier discussion of K 3a and 25, see Festugière (above, n. 55) 215 = 144 and 222 = 151 n. 41.

<sup>77</sup>Festugière (above n. 55) 216–220 = 145–149, and 229 = 158. Sophistic influence (presumably that of Protagoras or Prodicus) on the author of the *Prometheus Bound* has been fully discussed by M. Griffith, *The Authenticity of Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge 1977) 217–221. Not enough is known of Protagoras' cultural theory to assess Prodicus' debt to him.

<sup>78</sup>A late Hermetic adaptation of "Praises" seems to preserve a very distinct trace of the Prodician theory. Compare *Corpus Hermeticum* 23.65 Nock-Festugière νόμους οὔτοι (Isis and Osiris) καὶ τροφὰς θνητοῖς καὶ σκέπην ἐχαρίσαντο with Prodicus as summarized in *PHerc.* 1428 col. iii 9–13 (above, n. 9) τοὺς εὐρλόνας ἢ τροφὰς ἢ [σ]κέπας ἢ τὰς ἄλλας τέχνας, ὡς Δήμητρα καὶ Διόνυσον]. Euripides *Suppl.* 201–218 lists both food and shelter as inventions of some god.

<sup>79</sup>According to Harder (above, n. 65) 31 and 48–50, both "Praises" and Hecataeus reflect a common source of inspiration, "the political theory of Egyptian priests." Harder's source is an artificial construct (ultimately going back to Herodotus) and begs the question of how Harder's theoretically minded Egyptian priests acquired their Hellenic thought patterns.

Ptolemaic rule.<sup>80</sup> That all surviving copies of the Isis aretalogies are of late Hellenistic or Roman date is merely a historical accident. Epigraphical records of Egyptian cult in Greek lands are rare in the early Ptolemaic period, and the cultic function of “Praises” as public declarations of allegiance to Isis and expressions of gratitude for her saving powers explain why no such text survived on papyrus, a material ill suited for recording a *κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί*.

Prodicus was an atheist of sorts, but he left the door open for a new way of looking at the gods. He became an influence on actual cult almost *malgré lui* and perhaps even during his lifetime. Fritz Graf has argued plausibly that the Prodician image of Demeter influenced Eleusinian cult literature at the turn of the fifth to the fourth century.<sup>81</sup> He suggested further that the emphasis on cultural gifts in “Praises” is a conscious adaptation, via Hecataeus of Abdera and ultimately Prodicus, of Attic propaganda in the Eleusinian cult of Demeter. Connections between Eleusis and Alexandria existed under the first Ptolemy.<sup>82</sup> Unexpected confirmation of Eleusinian influence on the Isis aretalogies can be found in the fascinating new aretalogy from Maroneia published after the appearance of Graf’s book.<sup>83</sup> The importance of this new text lies in its rather early date (perhaps as early as the late second century B.C.), in the way in which it connects “Praises” in the second and third person singular with a healing miracle performed by Isis, and finally in its unprecedented Eleusinian bias, which culminates in a formal praise of Athens: “Of Greece you [Isis] gave special distinction to Athens; for there you first made the earth produce food. Triptolemus with his snake-drawn chariot distributed seed to all Greece. It is for this reason that in Greece we are eager to visit Athens and in Athens Eleusis, and that we consider the city the ornament of Europe, and the sanctuary the ornament of Athens.”<sup>84</sup> Athens is similarly celebrated as the cradle of civilization in the Amphictyonic decree of 125 B.C., which uses language reminiscent of

<sup>80</sup>A date in the early Hellenistic period is favored by Hiller v. Gaertringen at *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 1267 (a reprint of the aretalogy from Ios), and by Festugière (above, n. 55) 233 = 162.

<sup>81</sup>F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit*, RGVV 33 (Berlin 1974) 36–39.

<sup>82</sup>On the role of the Eumolpid Timotheos, see Fraser (above, n. 36) I 200; W. Fauth in H. Heubner’s commentary on Tac. *Hist.* 4.83.2 (Heidelberg 1976).

<sup>83</sup>On the new aretalogy, edited by Y. Grandjean (above, n. 57), see F. Solmsen, *Isis Among the Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, Mass. 1979) 45.

<sup>84</sup>In F. Solmsen’s translation (adapted).

Isocrates' *Panegyricus*<sup>85</sup> and which is perhaps contemporary with the aretalogy found at Maroneia. The new aretalogy contains additional Isocratean references<sup>86</sup> and reinforces the connection between the Hellenistic "Praises of Isis" and fourth-century Attic-Eleusinian propaganda. In other words, the Maroneia inscription reactivates and elaborates an Eleusinian heritage which characterized the Greco-Egyptian assimilation of Isis to Demeter from the start and which is an important link between "Praises" and Prodicus, their spiritual father.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1134.16ff. and *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 704 E, two copies of the same decree, echo Isocr. *Paneg.* 28–29; see Graf (above, n. 81) 38, Grandjean (n. 57) 97.

<sup>86</sup>Grandjean (above, n. 57) 96–98. Add lines 13–15 of the Maroneia inscription, which are a literal reminiscence of Isocr. 10.16 (*Praise of Helen*). According to Isocr. *Paneg.* 28, Demeter's two gifts to Athens were the art of agriculture and the mysteries. In the extant portion of the new aretalogy, no mention is made of Isis as the initiator of new rites (cf. K 22 ἐγὼ μνήσεις ἀνθρώποις ἐπέδειξα). The terminology used in line 36, τοὺς καρποὺς ἐξέφηνας, has Eleusinian connotations: ἐκφήναι and synonyms such as (κατα)δείξαι were used to describe the revelation or institution of religious rites (N. J. Richardson on *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 474–476; Graf [above, n. 81] 31–33; Henrichs, *ZPE* 4 [1969] 227 n. 11, 229 n. 21).

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