Nyx (Night) and Erebus (Darkness) gave birth to a variety of beings that beautify the night sky or that torment humans. The Three Fates were so powerful that not even the gods could avoid their decisions. Clotho wove the cloth of life, then Lachesis measured its length, and Atropos cut the thread of life when it was time for mortals to die. Collectively, they are called the Moira or the Parcae. An alternative genealogy has them born from a union of Zeus with Themis.

When Chronos overthrew and murdered his father, Uranus, he feared that his own children would treat him in the same way. To prevent his children from ever doing so, he ordered his wife Rhea to swallow her children whole as soon as they were born. She smuggled one son, Zeus, to safety. He later grew up and overthrew Chronos, at which point Rhea vomited up the other godlings she had swallowed.

Out of the spinning chaos before time began three forces or beings emerged: One was Erebus, or darkness. The next was Gaia, the Earth-Mother. The third was Eros, or irrational desire. In some myths, Eros is equated with Cupid, and he is instead considered the son of Venus.

The three cyclopes (singular cyclops), one-eyed giant monsters, were among Gaia’s first children. Their names, Brontes (“thunderer”), Steropes (“flasher”), and Arges (“brightener”), show that they were associated with storms. They later aided Zeus by helping Hephaestus forge lightning bolts for Zeus to use as javelins against the titans. These monsters willing served Zeus in exchange for their freedom from imprisonment in Tartarus. Those cyclopes descend from Poseidon’s line.

The three Hecatoncheires, each possessing one hundred arms and limbs, were among Gaea’s first children. Their names, Ceto, Phorcys, and Tethys, show that they were related to the cyclopes that plague Odysseus in The Odyssey. These monsters descend from Poseidon’s line.

As the ages passed, the feminine force Gaia (Earth) either split in half or gave birth to Uranus, the sky. The Earth and the Sky became lovers, and they spawned a series of children. In some versions, Pontus, the primeval sea, is another lover of Gaea. Between the three of them, Earth, Sky, and Sea manage to give birth to both marvels and monstrosities.

Unlike most of the Titans, who fought against the Greek gods and were punished by the victorious deities, wise Prometheus (forethought) saw the eventual outcome, and he talked his dumb brother Epimetheus (hindsight) into joining the winning side. Atlas missed the boat, however, and the deities punished him by having him the task of holding up the sky for all eternity. He did have time to sire a half-human daughter, Maia, who would later give birth to Mercury after being seduced by Zeus. For a time, Prometheus was a favorite of the gods. But later, he took pity on cold, shivering mortals and stole fire from the gods to give to them. Zeus was so angry with Prometheus for breaking up the divine monopoly on fire that he ordered him chained to a mountain where birds of prey tear out and eat Prometheus’ liver for all eternity. The divine titan, being an immortal, cannot die, and his liver regenerates each night to be eaten anew.

Copyright Kip Wheeler 2003