THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN AND GREEK CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL ORDER

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This article is concerned with the concept of cosmic or universal order as it is represented in the pantheistic systems of the Ancient Near East and of Greece. The concept is here shown to have been fundamental to the world-view of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece. We shall observe that the concept becomes personified in its Egyptian and Greek, though not in its Mesopotamian, versions. We are, however, from the foregoing statement, unable to conclude with any degree of assurance that the notion of universal order made its appearance in Mesopotamia before occurring in Egypt or Greece. In considering the question of temporal priority it should be noted that the literary evidence for the Sumerian version takes us back into the later third millennium BC, but the Egyptian version, in its personified form, seems to go back at least to the early third millennium. If the concept antedates the personification, then the Egyptian concept must belong to the fourth millennium at least. Pending literary or inscriptive discoveries from early pre-dynastic Sumer we must leave unanswered the question of whether the concept of universal order emerged in Mesopotamia before it occurred in Egypt.

Our present inability to answer the historical question just raised does not, however, in any way affect the point which for us is crucial, namely, that whether in their personified or purely conceptual forms the Sumerian, Egyptian and Greek versions of the concept of universal order are clearly the same at the conceptual level. There is no question here of mere similarity or parallelism. We deal here with one common base, that of a fixed world order, a fixed regimen, to which gods and men are beholden and upon which depends the very survival of divine and human roles in the cosmos. This fact raises a large question which we shall briefly consider at the end of this paper, namely, whether it is possible to identify a bridge between the Near East and Greece that enabled the two cultural areas to have the same concept of cosmic order.

The present writers have already worked on the Egyptian concept of cosmic order, Maat ($\text{M}\beta^\text{n}$),\(^1\) in its relation to the Logos philosophy of Philo of Alexandria (first century AD), and that study will be published elsewhere. In that study it is shown that the Hellenistic writer, working in terms of established Hellenic philosophical terminology, sets out the age-old Egyptian notion of

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1. The exact pronunciation of this word is unknown, since ancient Egyptian writing did not include vowel signs, but judging from later Coptic spellings it is possible that $\text{m}\beta^\text{t}$ was Me'at or Ma'at (the conventional spelling), masc. Me'a or Ma'a, which reminds one of Sumerian Me. The verb $\text{m}\beta$ means 'be in proper order, real, true, right, behave properly'. The Sumerian verb $\text{m}e$ means 'be'. There is at least a possible connection between the two.
universal order in terms of Indo-European concepts and methods of rationalization. The cosmic-order concept lasted throughout the political changes and religious developments (including periods of rationalization) of Egyptian history until the Roman period, a full three millennia. Philo's work, which will be briefly summarized below, is entirely moulded in the manner of Hellenic philosophy, but it retains all the essential characteristics and features of the Egyptian concept of Maat. Here, then, we have one form of Helleno-Semitic (Hamito-Semitic) interrelationship, namely the conceptual, expressible both mythologically and philosophically. We cannot determine whether Aegean peoples (or their ancestors) inherited the Egyptian concept of cosmic order, or whether both developed the same idea independently, but it is worth noting at this early stage in Helleno-Semitica studies that there are other factors to be borne in mind than long-distance transmission of conceptual developments. These factors will be considered below. We are concerned here to demonstrate that the Sumerian Me, Egyptian Maat and Greek Themis may be regarded as three versions of one concept, at least in terms of the principle involved. The Sumerian name for this is Me (to be compared perhaps with Akkadian Kittum), which may be equated with Egyptian Maa, whose feminine form gives the personification or abstraction of Maat. We shall show first the nature of Sumerian Me and the Egyptian Maat and then examine the role and function of Themis, thereafter summarizing Philo's Logos.

Sumerian Me has been defined by various scholars as follows: S.N. Kramer: 'It is Enlil who is given credit for the me which are a set of "universal laws" governing all existence . . .', and 'For the Mesopotamians, the me were a response to their yearning for reassurance in a troubled world. They needed to believe that the universe and all its parts, once created, would continue to operate in an orderly and effective manner, not subject to disintegration or deterioration. The me devised by Enlil governed everyone and everything in the universe; and mortal men could take comfort in the knowledge that the blue sky, the teeming earth, the dark nether-world, the wild sea, were all acting in accordance with the rules of the gods'.

Another description is that of T. Jacobsen: 'The Sumerian word me . . . means approximately "set, normative pattern (of behaviour), norm". Etymologically it may be regarded as the noun "being, i.e. manner of being" which corresponds to the verb me: to be. It is used characteristically of the totality of functions.

2. The terminology involved survived into Christian times in Coptic, where the meaning is mainly restricted to justice in the human sphere.
3. This is the Akkadian equivalent of Sumerian Me, judging from a number of texts which imply the same basic principle, and carries the same cosmic implications of 'fixed order'. The root of Kittum is kwn 'be established'.
4. The leading active deity of the Mesopotamian pantheon for at least two and a half millennia.
pertaining to an office or profession'.6 On this last statement we may point out that the apparent multiplication of me into a plurality refers only to the divinely established activities of civilization. The plurality is a manifold manifestation of Me: it is what men see around them, what governs their life, that which is laid down for every aspect of living.

Elsewhere S.N. Kramer defines Me as: 'the divine rules and regulations that keep the universe operating as planned'.7 Here, as in the other two systems under discussion, 'universe' includes human society. Just as, at the cosmic level, Me operates as the bond of the universe, so at the level of humanity it is the invisible cohesive force linking all human activities. Thus we have many insights into, or views of, Me as we look around the arena of the human drama. Kramer: 'There were more than a hundred me, one for each of the aspects of the world and its civilization. There were special me for deities and men, lands and cities, palaces and temples, music and art, cult and ritual, as well as for the crafts and professions. Enlil granted these me to guide the gods, spelling out their rights, duties and privileges, bounds and controls, authority and restraint'.8

The post-Sumerian Mesopotamian version of Me was known as Kittum and the definition of this has more distinctively human application. As E.A. Speiser puts it: 'The cosmos was founded on certain eternal truths, which the laws strove to safeguard. These truths applied to the ruler no less than to his subjects. The king, more than anyone else, must be ever watchful to maintain them.9 The sum of such cosmic and immutable truths was called kittum. A king must seek to establish the kittum just as he was bound to institute mēšarum. Yet the final source of kittum was divine, not human. Shamash, the sun-god,10 was the prime heavenly authority in the matter, the bel kitti(m) u mēšari(m).11 The mortal ruler could at best claim that he merited the title of šarru(m)-kēn "The king is legitimate",12 if his office was in conformance with divine norms'.13

It is apparent, therefore, from the Mesopotamian evidence (from the mid-third millennium until the end of native Semitic rule of the Near East in 539BC) that the long-held concept of Me/Kittum was all-embracing, comprehensive in effect and by nature as ordained by the supreme god from the beginning. It was the cosmic bond of the universe which united all its parts, maintained eternal harmonization and harmony, governed and directed the movements of the celestial bodies, and in the form of absolute justice gave meaning and coherence to society on earth.

8. The Cradle of Civilization, p.103.
10. J.M.: Maat was the daughter of the Egyptian sun-god Re.
11. J.M.: Meaning 'Lord of the Cosmic Order and Right Behaviour'.
12. J.M.: Throne name of Sargon the Great (2371-2316 BC), for example.
We turn now to that nearer neighbour of the Aegean, Egypt, whose cosmic Maat was a concept created to make comprehensible the same *modus operandi* of universal order for which Me/Kittum also was created. S. Sauneron described Maat as follows: 'The term Maāt describes truth and justice, but more than these. When the god\(^1\) created the universe he gave shape to a world fixed in its appearance and functions; the act of creation certainly had to be repeated, for the voracity of the forces of chaos continued to menace the very existence of the created world, but inside the world everything was perfect, and in conformity with the pre-arranged divine plan. No improvement needed to be made at a later stage. *For the equilibrium of the whole universe, the harmonious co-existence of its elements, and the essential cohesion, indispensable for maintaining the created forms, was called by the Egyptians Maāt* (our italics). It was this interaction of the forces which ensured the universal order, from its essential constituent parts (e.g. celestial movements, the regularity of seasonal phenomena, the sequence of time and the rising each morning of a new sun)\(^1\) down to the humblest of these manifestations, human society itself, the amicable relations between the living, religious observance and respect on earth for the ways of things ordained by the gods, from which came justice in social dealings and truth in moral life. Maāt was thus both universal order and ethics which consisted in acting in all circumstances in accordance with the view one held of this universal order'.\(^{16}\)

According to C.J. Bleeker: 'The ancient structure of this religion is most clearly shown in the conception of the goddess Ma-a-t. It can be said without any exaggeration that Ma-a-t constitutes the fundamental idea of ancient Egyptian religion. For Ma-a-t expresses the typical ancient view whereby the various fields of nature and culture — cosmic life, state policy, the cult, science, art, ethics and the private life of the individual — still form a unity'.\(^{17}\)

Referring to the level of cosmic society and government Bleeker further states: 'In his (sc. pharaoh’s) government policy he follows the example of the sun-god who established Ma-a-t at the time of the creation. Thus the structure of the polity is not a product of the human brain but a reflection of the cosmic order. As a goddess Ma-a-t personifies the order which governs the life of the

14. J.M.: Either Re or Ptah, depending on the theological system, whether of Heliopolis or Memphis.
15. J.M.: There may be a clue in this to the origin of the concept, in that life in the Near East was so dominated by the sun and so dependent upon it for its fertility that everything else could be seen to exist as an outcome of its regular behaviour (more regular even than the Nile). Both Mesopotamia and Egypt related their concept of world-order to the sun-god in the cult.
sun-god Re. She also manifests herself in those natural phenomena the lord of which is Osiris,\footnote{Osiris was Lord of Eternal Life (originally god of vegetation) and responsible for the world of the deceased at Western Thebes.} viz. vegetation and, consequently, also water and death. The order of divine life periodically conquers death'.\footnote{Op.cit., 7.} He continues: ‘For man is considered capable of living in harmony with the divine order... man can partake of the essence of the godhead, particularly by his death... At the judgment of the dead, man is vindicated, if the quality of his life is in harmony with Ma-a-t... the ancient Egyptian lived in the unshakable faith that Ma-a-t, the order instituted by the sun-god in prehistoric times, was, despite periods of chaos, injustice and immorality, absolute and eternal’\footnote{Op.cit., 7f.}

We cannot enter here into the question of why the sun-god in both great Near Eastern polytheistic religions was singled out as the creator and maintainer of universal order, but it is striking that it should have been so, given that there were otherwise considerable differences between the two cultures though their concept of cosmic order was the same. We may note too that in the Egyptian milieu the original Maa gave way to a goddess Maat, who was in fact worshipped in conjunction with other gods who (despite their original primitive connection with natural phenomena) were connected with, amongst other things, law, wisdom and learning. Not only so, but Maati goddesses (daughters) came to play a vital supporting role with Maat in the post-mortem cult.

To conclude this section of our paper, we would point to the most basic functions, as well as the original nature, of Me/Kittum and Maat as evidence for the thesis that they were, granted some regional differences, the same. We shall now consider the nature and function of Themis of Greece. Here, however, we have to make allowances for even greater regional differences, and not only that, for there is a lengthy time-span between our earliest Sumero-Egyptian sources and the earliest literary evidence for Themis — something in the region of two thousand years. No implication of antecedence of origin, however, is carried by this remark, since we do not know even very approximately the date of origin of any of the three. The fact that the earliest evidence for Themis comes from Homer and Hesiod is not itself evidence that Themis appeared comparatively late on the scene. The origin of Themis herself is lost in the deepest mists of antiquity. We therefore draw the reader’s attention to the nature and function rather than the source and longevity of the concept.

The view, therefore, that we wish to defend here is that if Me/Maat has a Helleno-Semitic significance this is to be found in her/its relationship with the Greek goddess Themis. For Themis, more than any other Aegean deity, fits the account of Me/Maat presented in the foregoing pages.
A broad point concerning Themis, which has already been noted in the case of Maat, is that the word *themis* (θέμις) refers to a concept, or range of concepts, as well as to a goddess. This point, though in one respect obvious, should however be handled with care, since the above bald statement may reveal a lack of proper historical perspective. The distinction between the concept of X and a goddess of X is perhaps sufficiently uncontroversial to us. But the matter may not have been as clear cut to those for whom the goddess of X was indeed a goddess. We are not perhaps as clear as we should be on the large question of how the classical Greeks perceived, or conceived, their deities, and until we are we move in uncertain territory in speaking about the difference between Greek concepts and Greek gods. This caveat has immediate implications for any attempt to establish an order of historical priority for certain concepts and their associated deities. Whether the concepts were recognised first and the associated gods next is a matter that cannot easily be settled if we are unclear about the distinction thus invoked.

Bearing these points in mind we shall turn first to a consideration of the semantic scope of the feminine noun *θέμις*, and shall then turn to a consideration of the goddess of the same name.

The relevant entry in Liddell and Scott reveals that the semantic scope of *θέμις* is quite wide. Bearing unmistakable signs of the semantic significance of its root ΘΕ (of τιθημι) its meaning is, first, that which is laid down or established, law (not as fixed by statute, but) as established by custom, hence the phrase θέμις ἐστι — ‘tis meet and right.21 Secondly, it bears the meaning of justice, right, and penalty. Its plural form *θέμιοι* denotes decrees of the gods, oracles, customary laws, ordinances, judgments, decisions given by the kings or judges.23

Turning now from the common noun to the proper name, we see that the goddess Themis is associated with precisely the kinds of qualities we would expect given the semantic range of the noun. In this respect Themis and Maat bear a striking resemblance. For Maat, no less than Themis, bears a name whose root bespeaks her actual function. The associations of the goddess with the semantic range of *θέμις* can perhaps best be brought out by reference to the relevant passages in the classical texts. The most important is by Hesiod:24

Next he (Zeus) married the bright Themis who bare the Horai (hours) and Eunomia (Order) Dike (Justice), and the blooming Eirene (Peace), who mind the works of mortal men, and the Moirai (Fates) to whom Zeus gave the greatest honour, Clotho, and Lachesis, and Atropos who give mortal men evil and good to have.

21. Cf. Egyptian *m maat* ‘it is true, truly so’.
22. The Egyptian noun *maat* means ‘justice’ and ‘right’, though hardly ‘penalty’.
23. The variety of expressions here is typical of Sumerian *me* and Egyptian *Maat*, all the expressions listed being paralleled in the relevant literatures.
All the 'offspring' of Themis here listed relate to the noun θέμις. Eunomia\(^{25}\) (as the condition in which good laws are observed),\(^{26}\) Diké,\(^{27}\) and Eirene (as the condition which prevails when Eunomia and Diké structure society),\(^{28}\) relate to it in an obvious way.

Granted the intimate connection between θέμις and the ideas of order and orderliness so also do the Horai. For the Horai, the seasons, especially those marking the development of natural things,\(^{29}\) are essentially orderly in their development, from birth and growth to fruition and decay.\(^{30}\)

The Moirai clearly relate to the Horai. As the Horai govern what may be termed the destiny of nature, so the Moirai govern the destiny of men. They apportion to men their due.\(^{31}\) In this respect the Moirai must be seen as associated with θέμις understood as a divine decree or as an oracle.

At this point we reach a role in which Themis is portrayed by a number of writers, namely, as a bearer of the oracle at Delphi. Aeschylus, for example, opens his \textit{Eumenides} with the words:

First, in this my prayer, I give the place of chiepest honour among the gods to the first prophet, Earth (\textit{Gaia}); and after her to Themis; for she, as is told, took second this oracular seat of her mother. And third in succession, with Themis' consent and by constraint of none, another Titan, Phoebe, child of Earth took her seat.

And in \textit{Prometheus Bound} Aeschylus represents Prometheus as declaring:

Full oft my mother Themis, or Earth (one form she hath but many names), had foretold to me the way in which the future was fated to come to pass — how that it was not by brute strength and not through violence, but by guile that those who should gain the upper hand were destined to prevail.\(^{32}\)

In view of what we have now learned about the nature of Themis, the distinctive features of the iconographic representations of her by the Greek artists need come as no surprise. She is customarily portrayed as holding in one hand a pair of scales. In the other she often bears a sword, an obvious reference to her role in the dispensing of justice. Sometimes, instead of the sword she

25. This sense, 'good order', is basic to the concept of the noun \textit{maat}.
27. The noun δίκη admits a semantic range similar to that of \textit{maat}, viz. order, proper custom, satisfactory (proper) verdict in a lawsuit.
28. This describes \textit{maat} as the state of good order, hence of tranquillity which prevails in human society when \textit{maat} is in full operation.
29. Their cultic names are Thallo and Carpo; see Pausanias 9.35.2, and West, \textit{op.cit.}, 406. We are reminded here of the determinative function of Maat (and Me) in ordering all natural phenomena.
30. In the Sumerian and Egyptian milieux Me/Maat governs the cycle of all nature's phenomena. Each phenomenon is controlled by \textit{nature} at each of its stages of development.
31. See further the discussion below on the Daughters of Maat/Hathor and the Moirai.
32. Lines 211 ff; cf. 874-5 (Loeb trans.).
holds a cornucopia, a clear reference to her relation to the Horai — the progression of the seasons.

A consideration of the Homeric epics suggests that as well as the aforementioned roles, Themis was seen as having two others, which seem at first sight far removed from those hitherto considered. First, she is represented as the initiator of the feast. Thus we read that when Hera arrived at the house of Zeus where the immortal gods were gathered:

She on her part let be the others, but took the cup from Themis, of the fair cheeks, for Themis ran first to meet her.

Themis here may be regarded as setting in motion a fixed and regular procedure. Hera then tells her:

Nay, do thou begin for the gods the equal feast in the halls.\(^{33}\)

Secondly, Themis is portrayed as gathering, and closing, assemblies of men and gods. Telemachus declares:

I pray you by Olympian Zeus, and by Themis who looses and gathers the assemblies of men. . . .\(^{34}\)

and elsewhere we are told:

But Zeus bade Themis summon the gods to the place of gathering from the brow of many-ridged Olympus; and she sped everywhither, and bade them come to the house of Zeus.\(^{35}\)

Themis here plays her role as the one responsible for the regular conduct of the heavenly councils and the councils of men.

In Homer, then, Themis is portrayed as organizing assemblies and as initiating a fundamental and, for the Greeks, a characteristically social activity, namely, eating. But in so far as she is an orderer of men into social groups, societies, and therefore is responsible for a necessary condition for the establishment and maintenance of justice, the role allotted by Homer to Themis accords fully with her role as goddess of law and order. In Homer her role is a special aspect of her role as a goddess whose function has cosmic significance. She is the goddess responsible for the order of nature. Natural law, whether that governing the order and arrangement of what we would regard as dead matter, or whether that governing men, who are also part of nature, falls within her jurisdiction.

From this point of view she can be seen as playing a fundamental role among the Greek divinities. Yet though there were shrines to her at Athens, Delphi, Thebes, and elsewhere, her significance as a cult object and as a literary figure is, all the same, far less than seems to have been warranted. It is as though her personality was insufficiently strong to match the concept of which she was the personified form. But this explanation merely prompts the question as to why such a disparity should exist.

33. *Il.* XV 87 ff. (Loeb).
34. *Od.* II 68-69 (Loeb).
35. *Il.* XX 4-6 (Loeb).
Equally uncertain is the origin of Themis as a goddess. She was, as a daughter of Uranus and Ge, one of the Titans, and shares her uncertainty of origin with her siblings. H.J. Rose remarks that:

the Titans are very ancient figures, little worshipped anywhere in historical Greece, and belonging to a past so remote that the earliest Greeks of whose opinions we have any certain knowledge saw them surrounded with a haze of extreme antiquity.36

In the context of this paper, in which we have been concerned to establish the close similarity between Me/Maat and Themis, the obscurity of the origin of Themis raises an obvious question, namely, whether Themis was imported into Greece from the Near East, perhaps even from Egypt.

A further striking similarity between Maat and Themis remains to be mentioned, namely, the personification of aspects of their functions. We turn now to a consideration of this topic.

An important development took place both in Egypt and in Greece which reflects a principle of particularization of the goddess of cosmic order. Such a development was not inaugurated in Mesopotamia, however, where, on the contrary, the Sumerians spoke of Me, the concept of cosmic order, as manifesting in a hundred mes. Thus in Mesopotamia the principle of particularization applied to the concept rather than to a personification of it. The principle in question may be seen in, for example, the myth known as ‘Inanna and Enki’ (two primary deities) where the ‘established order’ is seen to be divisible into some hundred or more civilizational aspects or bases. Me itself, the overriding concept or principle, maintained these civilizational bases in their ever-intended, divinely purposed order and status.37

On the one hand, then, the Sumerians seem not to have personified either Me or its aspects — and this despite their well established practice of ascribing to cosmic forces and phenomena the characteristics of humans. On the other hand, in the case of Egypt the principle of personifying the aspects of the goddess’ function was operated from very early times. There is some difficulty in isolating these personified aspects because of the nature of the Mortuary Texts from which most of our information is derived. As far as Maat herself is concerned there are a pair of Maati-goddesses whose role is confined to the post-mortem experiences of the deceased as he seeks to survive the harrowing experience of achieving the freedom of his soul from the destructive forces which would have power over him were he to fail to be vindicated in terms of Maat (as a principle of justice). At one point in the deceased’s long nightmare journey, fixed and fated and obligatory for all deceased, he must demonstrate his pre-knowledge of the secrets of the divine sphere of judgment by demonstrating his knowledge of

37. Cf. S.N. Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago, 1963), 116, for the list of these bases.
the way to Maat. There is a Hall of the two Maati which he must enter, where his fate will be determined in accordance with his lifelong response to the principle of maat (justice). We have no real specification of the role of the two Maati, a fact which may suggest that the Egyptian view of Maat as a concept was so fixed — as early as Dynasty 2 — that extensive particularization was not credible in reference to a concept of cosmic order. To that extent Egypt, like Sumer, did not experience any need to spawn a veritable army of scions.

However, the supreme goddess Hathor (sky-goddess and goddess of a number of human passions, as well as goddess of the dead) was seen to be closely associated with Maat in the cosmic order and therefore with fate. She was given seven daughters, presumably because the Mortuary Cult became increasingly elaborate with the passing of the centuries and the need was felt to give more detailed treatment of her place in the post-mortem ritual. These daughters of Hathor became part of the doctrine of destiny and expressed particular aspects of the concept as it was brought to bear in the realm of eschatological decisions.

Corresponding in Greek mythology to the daughters of Maat and Hathor are the Moirai, the three daughters (according to Hesiod's *Theogonia* 901 ff) of Themis. We are by no means the first to see in the daughters of Hathor the same fundamental particularizations as found in the Moirai, though by providing evidence of the common conceptual base we have displayed more clearly the Helleno-Semitic significance of that similarity. Essentially both sets of daughters play a decisive role in the decreed fate of men, though the evidence suggests that the Greeks developed more specializations in their personifications of fate than did the Egyptians.

However, it should be noted that the Moirai are not always represented by the Greeks as a group of three. Homer refers in general to just one moira, who spins the thread of each man's life and, in accordance with divine requirement, determines the outcome of all human activities. Hesiod, having (unlike Homer) named the parents of the Moirai, assigns to the Moirai names which bespeak their roles: Clotho (the spinner), who spins the thread of life of each of us, Lachesis (assigner of lots), who determines the length of the thread, and Atropos (the unavoidable) who cuts the thread (and accordingly is often represented in Greek art as bearing shears). Their power, it may be noted, was not conceived as entirely restricted to the human sphere. Though some writers appear to have seen the Moirai as subordinate to the will of Zeus, even Zeus is portrayed, by Aeschylus, as bound by their decree.38

One further role of the Moirai must here be mentioned. They acted as prophetesses. Thus, for example, we are told that one week after the birth of Meleager they appeared to his mother Althaea and declared to her that as soon as a certain firebrand then aflame on her fire burned out Meleager would die.39

38. *Prometheus Bound*, 515-8 (Loeb ed.).
Hence we can see that the Moirai had a role to play at a person's birth as much as at his death. They were in a sense, precisely as goddesses of fate, also goddesses of birth and death. It is for this reason that the Moirai could also be conceived of as two goddesses, one of birth and one of death, and it is in consequence of this conception of them that the fates at Delphi were, in its earliest history, taken to be two in number. The occurrence in Greek mythology of the Moirai considered as a *pair* of goddesses, rather than as three, does not, however, in any way serve to diminish the similarity we have been pointing to between the Egyptian and the Greek mythologies. Indeed, the fact that the Egyptians believed, as we mentioned above, in a pair of Maati goddesses, whose role is confined to the post-mortem experience of men, ensures the existence of a close parallel between that aspect of Egyptian mythology and the Greek belief in a pair of fate goddesses who determine at our birth the moment of our death.

We have been arguing here for the thesis that the Sumerian, Egyptian and Greek versions of the concept of universal order are fundamentally the same, and that this fundamental identity is further to be found in the personified versions of that concept which are represented in Egyptian and Greek, though not in Mesopotamian, mythology. To the three names, Me/Kittum, Maat and Themis, whose employment has so far concerned us, we would like to add one more, Logos. For Logos, as described by Philo of Alexandria, can be seen as the terminus of the ancient concept of world order which has been the subject of this paper.

Logos, in its association with the cosmos, stands to it, according to Philo, in two sorts of relationship. It serves as a model or pattern, a *παράδειγμα* for the cosmos, and as a power, a *δύναμις* within it. In one work Philo describes God creating the world with the aid of a pattern, the Logos, much as an architect builds a house with the aid of a blueprint. As Philo tells us:

> For God, being God, assumed that a beautiful copy would never be produced apart from a beautiful pattern, and that no object of perception would be faultless which was not made in the likeness of an original discerned only by the intellect. So when he willed to create this visible world he first fully formed the intelligible world, in order that he might have the use of a pattern wholly Godlike and incorporeal in producing the material world.40

Elsewhere Philo speaks about the act of creation as the divine act of impressing the Logos as a seal upon unformed substance, thereby giving everything shape and significance. Thus, for example, with the Logos in mind, Philo writes of:

> the seal of the universe, the archetypal idea, by which all things, when without form and quality, were made significant and stamped.41

But in Philo's view Logos is more than merely a model or ideal pattern of the

40. *De Opificio Mundi*, 4 (Loeb trans.).
cosmos, for if it were only that, the existence of the cosmos subsequent to the creation would not depend upon the continued existence of Logos. But it does depend on it, and the reason for this is that Logos, conceived as a power, or a set of powers, is regarded by Philo as the bond (δεσμός) of the cosmos, holding the cosmos together in its unitary state. For example, Philo affirms that God:

has made his powers extend through earth and water, air and heaven, and left no part of the universe destitute, and uniting all with all has bound them fast with invisible bonds, that they should never be loosed.\textsuperscript{42}

Elsewhere Philo describes Logos as:

a glue and bond, filling all things with his being.\textsuperscript{43}

The bonds thus maintaining the cosmos permanently in existence are constituted by a principle of equality. It is with this in mind that Philo tells us:

the divine Logos stations itself between the elements, like a vocal between the voiceless elements of speech, so that the universe may send forth a harmony like that of a masterpiece of literature, for it mediates between the opponents amid their threatenings and reconciles them by winning ways to peace and concord.\textsuperscript{44}

The relationship between Logos, as thus conceived by Philo, and the Sumerian, Egyptian and Greek concepts discussed earlier is too manifest to need spelling out. And a more detailed exposition of Philo's Logos would serve only to deepen the conviction that the Philonic Logos is in precisely the same conceptual area as Me/Kittum and the other concepts we have been considering. It may be added that it should not perhaps come as a surprise that the teaching of Philo, a Greek-speaking Jew living in Egypt, should turn out to be relevant to research in the field of Helleno-Semitica.

In conclusion we wish to turn, though briefly, to the critical question of whether it is possible to identify a bridge between Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece that enabled these cultural areas to have the same concept of cosmic order.

Certainly, the possibility of identifying the bridge has been enhanced by the discoveries made during the recent period of increased interest in Near-Eastern—Hellenic studies (so-called Helleno-Semitica).\textsuperscript{45} But it is perhaps too early in the

\textsuperscript{42.} De Confusione Linguarum, 27 (Loeb trans.).
\textsuperscript{43.} Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres, 38 (Loeb trans.).
\textsuperscript{44.} De Plantatione, 2 (Loeb trans.).
\textsuperscript{45.} For example, M. Astour, Helleno-Semitica (Leiden, 1967) with its subtitle An Ethnic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenean Greece. This is a prime example of the trend. The foreword to this book is by C.H. Gordon who has been a pioneer in the field; e.g. his Ugarit and Minoan Crete (New York, 1967), subtitled The bearing of their texts on the origins of Western Culture. The latter work contains comparative study of Hebrew and Greek culture, in which connection see also his The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations (New York, 1962, 1965), as well as his Homer and Bible. The origin and character of East Mediterranean Culture (New York, 1955). We would regard these works as pioneering and not to be treated as in any way definitive.
history of the subject to attempt a precise evaluation of progress to date. The contributions up till the present have been concerned mainly with what may be termed the middle and late periods, i.e. the Levantine — Minoan/Mycenaean and the Near Eastern — Hellenistic. Little has been achieved as yet for the early period, i.e. early Near Eastern — East Mediterranean. For the Helleno-Semitic field to be set on a firm foundation it is of the essence that, where relevant, the attempt be made to relate Sumer and early dynastic Egypt to the East Mediterranean. In terms of the early period, however, stimulus has been provided by recent archaeological discoveries in two areas close to the East Mediterranean coast in Syria.

Perhaps the most remarkable, and unexpected, development concerns the finding of Sumerian architecture and artifacts at Tell Habuba Kabira on the great bend of the Euphrates in the Tabqa Dam area. That Sumerian civilization of the earliest period (second half of the fourth millennium) should be present so far west of the Sumerian homeland was astonishing enough. Now we have not only confirmation in literary terms, but evidence on site of the Sumerian presence, impliciter, still farther west at a distance of about 78km from the Mediterranean at Tell Mardikh, which lies north-north-east of the ancient city port of Ugarit where Mycenaeans and, much later, Greeks were to mingle with traders of other ethnic and national groups during most of the second millennium.

Though there is no way of tracing the concept of universal order in the pantheistic systems of the ancient Near East and Greece to an earlier time than that vouched for by the literary evidence, there remains the possibility at least that ideas spread throughout the world of the Fertile Crescent, Egypt and the Mediterranean by means of extremely ancient trade routes, both by land and sea. Geographical factors determined these routes. The most recent archaeological discoveries prove that Sumer and Egypt were not poles apart, nor was Mesopotamian civilization many hundreds of kilometres from the Mediterranean. Habuba Kabira and Tell Mardikh are on the very trade routes which brought ancient civilizations close together. We now have to consider a much

47. On this see the early paragraphs of J. Macdonald, 'Egyptian interests in Western Asia to the end of the Middle Kingdom: an Evaluation' in Festschrift in Honour of Colin MacLaurin (The Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology, II, 1), 1972, 72-98.
49. Only the preliminary announcement has been issued, by courtesy of Newsletter for Ugaritic Studies, no. 9 (Calgary, 1976). Other literary material includes legal and political texts, administrative and commercial documents, literary and religious texts, dictionaries and text books.
more comprehensive system of trade routes stretching, at the very least, from the Persian Gulf (and almost certainly the island of Bahrain, *i.e.* ancient Dilmun of the Sumerian Paradise story) to Anatolia and Egypt, to the East Mediterranean ports and the islands of Cyprus (Alashiya) and Crete. One distinguished scholar has argued that Sargon the Great (twenty-fourth century BC) actually landed on mainland Greece. Further study is needed to clarify this conjecture, and confirm or reject it. However, the newly discovered Sumerian presence at Tell Mardikh, so close to the Mediterranean, involves documentary finds (estimated at between 13,000 and 15,000 tablets) which comprise, amongst other material, international treaties, military dispatches and lexical works.

It is not yet, however, possible to say with complete assurance that there was a bridge between the great cultural centres which would explain the existence in Sumer, Egypt and Greece of a common concept of universal order. Other intercultural studies may provide us with at least a working hypothesis regarding cultural bridges in the early period of Near Eastern – East Mediterranean interrelationships. It is, nevertheless, clear at least that such studies must deal, among other matters, with the possibilities of shared concepts as well as with the frequently attested fact of the appearance in one centre of cultural objects which belong to another, far distant, centre. Should we find the kind of cultural bridge to which we have been referring, our understanding of the earliest history of civilization will be greatly enriched.


52. What is significant here is that Tell Mardikh, like Tell Habuba Kabira, is situated on the north-western end of the trade route from the Persian Gulf which followed the Euphrates upstream and then divided in North Syria, one route to the Mediterranean and Egypt, and the other to Anatolia, with its related southern ports.