

# Hesiod's Attitude toward Labor

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EVEN MORE than Homer, one is advised to approach Hesiod with caution. This is a paradox, because of Hesiod, the man, we seem to know much. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* tell us nothing directly of Homer's name or experiences, but the *Theogony* (v.22) states that Hesiod—naming him—had been taught song by the Muses while tending his flocks on Mt. Helicon; and this seems to be a trustworthy fact, whether you think it means that Hesiod wrote the *Works* and not the *Theogony* (in view of the citation in the third person) or accept that he was the author of both.<sup>1</sup> Since ancient poets were not apt to name contemporaries or rivals, the latter may be the safer choice, and so we have the name, real or symbolic, the association with Helicon, and the profession of a shepherd. Sheep represented wealth, and were often tended by young men of good family, handsome and attractive to goddesses. Such boys might well fashion for themselves flutes and learn to play them. There wasn't much else to do while the sheep grazed, after all; but Hesiod became an *aidos*, a singer of tales, and this was a profession in itself. The bard was a teacher of the people, rich in learning, whether this had been acquired by divine inspiration or otherwise. Shepherds in antiquity often went on to greater things. Some of them became kings.<sup>2</sup> It was not an ignoble start in life.

It must be confessed, however, that the picture of the bard in the *Works* is less glamorous. The association with Helicon remains, and

<sup>1</sup> The local traditions are described by Paus. 9.31.4. Modern opinion tends to accept more and more a unitarian attitude, partly because separatism did not prove very useful, partly because of the new concept of traditional, oral poetry. Of the many expressions of this point of view I may cite E. K. Rand, *AJA* 32 (1911) 131–65; W. Schmid / O. Stählin, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* I.1 (München 1929) 278; J. Kerschensteiner, *Hermes* 79 (1944) 150; W. J. Verdenius, *Hésiode et son influence* (Entretiens Hardt VII, 1960) 112.

<sup>2</sup> This is an old Oriental tradition, represented notably by Sargon of Akkad and Cyrus the Great; cf. A. Alföldi, *SchwArch Volkskunde* 47 (1951) 13; R. N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (Cleveland 1963). Professor Frye informs me that every new Persian dynasty is still popularly believed to start with a shepherd.

the rôle of *aidos*, in fact and by implication if not in specific claim. But Hesiod's father was poor, at least when he removed from Aeolian Cyme, and his new home in the miserable village of Ascra will hardly have improved his fortunes (vv.635–40). He was granted an allotment or *klēros* and on his death, this was divided between Hesiod and a brother Perses (v.37). Land, while heritable in the family, was presumably inalienable in early Greece, with title resting with the community.<sup>3</sup> The "greater portion" which Perses is charged with carrying off, and the possessions of others which he is reproached for coveting, would have been movables, furniture and implements or metals, since at that time there was no money.<sup>4</sup> Even with this more, Perses is not presented as rich; not rich enough for the market-place and the society of nobles.<sup>5</sup> For him, Hesiod sees only one possibility: a life of hard labor. It is ostensibly for his benefit that Hesiod, the *aidos*, has accumulated the store of homely adages which occupy the most of the poem. For himself, we may suppose, Hesiod found a smug satisfaction in the life of a bard, honored, heeded and well rewarded, who was welcome both in the market-place and in the halls of the nobles and certainly never had to turn his hand to physical toil.<sup>6</sup> We may imagine him feeling like the Egyptian legionary whom we know from a papyrus and who had found the security of a desk-job while his fellows were on their knees in the Arabian sun, cracking rocks for roads. This happy warrior walked about in the cool of the day with a clip-board, taking attendance and black-marketing.<sup>7</sup> So Hesiod must have stopped in at his brother's onion patch from time to time to offer advice and sympathy and to collect any new adage which had turned up at the smithy so that it might be incorporated into the next edition of the *Works*; for even bards, as Hesiod was quick to point out, lived a competitive existence,<sup>8</sup> and a farm almanac must be kept abreast of the times. His little amanuensis would take

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the thorough discussion by J. V. A. Fine, *Horoi* (*Hesperia* Suppl. IX, 1951) 167–208.

<sup>4</sup> The text of v.37 is not entirely satisfactory, for τὰ πολλά, "the most things," is an emendation for τε πολλά. The most ingenious recent discussion of the passage is that of B. A. van Groningen, *MedNedAkWet.* 20,6 (1957) 156.

<sup>5</sup> vv. 30–32. Perses is involved only by implication. Hesiod says merely, "He only can afford these activities who is rich."

<sup>6</sup> van Groningen, *op.cit.* 158, points to the freedom with which Hesiod addresses the kings.

<sup>7</sup> *PMich.* 465 and 466, of A.D. 107. On the career of this Julius Apollinarius cf. my comments in *AJA* 57 (1953) 303.

<sup>8</sup> v.26: καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῶ φθονέει καὶ αἰδοῦς αἰδοῦ.

it down on his tablets and retire to the shade to put it into meter,<sup>9</sup> while Hesiod bade his brother farewell and a good crop.

So we know a good deal about Hesiod, or may think that we do; but is any of this of any importance, even if true? Is it important that Hesiod once took his life in his hands and voyaged from Aulis to Chalcis across the Euripus (vv.635–8), a good hundred yards? Would it be important if, as some of the ancients thought, he there engaged in a poetic contest with Homer, and won? Or if he competed at Delphi and met a violent end because of an unjust suspicion? Or that his body, flung into the sea, was rescued by a dolphin and occupied in succession two tombs?<sup>10</sup> It is certainly of no consequence to us which of the seven cities really saw the birth of Homer. Homer exists for us as a personality behind the two great epics, and it does not matter even if there were two Homers, or more. The poems are what count, and these present an intelligible and compelling front with which we can deal as a unity. In contrast, the *Theogony* and the *Works* have offered little support to those who wished to maintain their unity, and unlimited ammunition to those who would dispute it. If we are now for the most part unitarians, it is rather from exhaustion than from conviction.<sup>11</sup> Since nothing is really gained by cutting them up, why

<sup>9</sup> We are intitled to view Hesiod with a touch of humor, perhaps, since Hesiod himself is not without humor (Schmid/Stählin, *op.cit.* 279). Even oral poetry may admit of note-taking. The background of Hesiod in popular maxims has always been recognized; cf. e.g. M. P. Nilsson, *RM* 60 (1905) 161–89; P. Waltz, *Hésiode et son poème moral* (Bordeaux 1906) 1–20. Hesiod's repetitions, an indication of the oral style, were discussed by P. F. Kretschmer, *De Iteratis Hesiodicis* (Diss. Bratislava 1913). The more precise claims of an oral origin for Hesiod have been made by A. Hoekstra, *Mnemosyne* 10 (1957) 193–225; J. A. Notopoulos, *Hesperia* 29 (1960) 177–97; P. Walcot, *REG* 74 (1961) 1–19.

<sup>10</sup> The *Certamen* is reliably traced back to Alcidas the Sophist, of the beginning of the fourth century B.C. Cf. *RE* 1.1 (1893) 867–9 s.v. Ἀγών Ὀμήρου καὶ Ἡσιόδου (Bethe); 1.2 (1894) 1537 s.v. ALKIDAMAS (Brzoska); 8.1 (1912) 1171f s.v. HESIODOS (Rzach).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. n.1 above. This is not the place for a systematic review of Hesiodic scholarship. In addition to the standard editions of Rzach, Paley, Mazon, Evelyn-White and Colonna, I may mention the following, from whom I have learned more than is indicated by my citations hereinafter: A. Steitz, *Die Werken und Tage des Hesiodos nach ihrer Composition geprüft und erklärt* (Leipzig 1869); W. C. Lawton, *The Successors of Homer* (London 1898); P. Waltz, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9); W. Fuss, *Versuch einer Analyse von Hesiods "Erga καὶ Ἡμέραι"* (Diss. Giessen 1910); P. Mazon, "La Composition des Travaux et des Jours," *REA* 14 (1912) 329–56; H. M. Hays, *Notes on the Works and Days of Hesiod* (Diss. Chicago 1918); U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Hesiodos Erga* (Berlin 1928); Schmid/Stählin, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1); T. A. Sinclair, *Hesiod. Works and Days* (London 1932); W. Jaeger, *Paideia* I<sup>2</sup> (Berlin and Leipzig 1936) 89–112; J. Kerschensteiner, "Zu Aufbau und Gedankenführung von Hesiods Erga," *Hermes* 79 (1944) 149–91; F. Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca 1949); B. A. van Groningen, *La Composition littéraire archaïque grecque, procédés et réalisations* (*VerhNedAkWet.* 65.2, 1958) 283–303; H. Munding, *Hesiods Erga in ihrem Verhältnis zur Ilias* (Frankfurt/M. 1959); H. Fränkel, *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens*<sup>2</sup> (München 1960) 316–34;

not take them as they are? But it behooves one who would discuss the *Works* to state his position.

So I am concerned only with the moral and not with the literal historicity of Hesiod and his brother; and I would go further to suggest that the former position is not only the more reasonable but the more desirable. An author is, one may say, stuck with his actual self and surroundings but can use a fictitious character to project his image or message. It seems to me rather beside the point to wonder whether the Cynrus of Theognis was or stands for a real person, or what is the amount of autobiography in the collection. Does Propertius make better sense if we assume Cynthia to have existed, under that name or another? Does Catullus affect us because Lesbia was actually the elegant and much-married sister of Appius and Publius Pulcher? Are Maecenas or the Pisones more useful to the poetry of Horace than Pyrrha or Glycera or Lydia, with her Sybaris and Telephus? It may be necessary or expedient for a poet to mention a patron or a friend, but a fictitious character can be fashioned in any way that seems desirable. The same is true, I should think, of what a writer says about his actual friends and still more about himself. Was Socrates' father really a sculptor, his mother a mid-wife and his wife a scold? Did Diogenes really leave Sinope because he had fudged the currency? When Bion called himself a Borysthenite and stated that his mother was a prostitute, his father a salter of fish, was he to be taken literally? All of these attributions are too apt, too symbolically appropriate, to have happened without human contriving. In the same way, I think that the picture which the author of the *Works* presents of himself and his family is too important to his plot to be accidental. But I do not insist upon it. If one wishes to think of Hesiod and Perses in dirty chitons, quarreling over bits of Boeotian real-estate before the awful and venal kinglets of Thespieae, I have no objection. But I do not see that they are any the richer for it.<sup>12</sup>

For we must acknowledge that when Hesiod winds up his introduc-

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W. J. Verdenius, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1); H. Diller, "Die dichterische Form von Hesiods Erga," *AbhMainz* 1962, 2, 41-69; W. Nicolai, *Hesiods Erga, Beobachtungen zum Aufbau* (Heidelberg 1964). These all contain earlier and further literature.

<sup>12</sup> The most literal interpretations go back to the scholiasts, who even provided Hesiod and his brother with a father Dius, by emending v.299 from *δῖον γένος* to *Δίου γένος*. The most interesting recent attempt to rationalize Hesiod's historical position is that of van Groningen (*supra* n.4); cf. also Waltz (*supra* n.9) 25 and elsewhere. Others have regarded these family problems as a literary convenience if not a literary convention: Steitz 14f and Munding 23 (*supra* n.11); W. Kranz, *RM* 104 (1961) 3-46, 97-124.

tion with the order to his brother to tuck up his tunic and start digging, he was proposing something which no Greek (I would almost say, no human being) ever did if he could help it, ever looked on as anything but an unmitigated evil.<sup>13</sup> Hesiod repeats the horrid notion four times in one line (v.382), and a lingering, spondaic one at that, so that there can be no doubt about it.

ὦδ' ἔρδειν, καὶ ἔργον ἐπ' ἔργῳ ἐργάζεσθαι.

When he says "work," he means "labor," and our traditional translation of the title should not blind us to it. This is labor as it appears in *Old Man River*, or in the folk-song of the English farmer digging his turnips in the sleet and rain. Unpleasant and undignified, unintellectual and little rewarding. It may be a way to a poor livelihood, but never to riches. If Hesiod's brother had really wanted wealth and had had the sense he was born with, he would not have taken this advice.

It is true that the life of the landowner was highly respected. In many Greek societies land was the only dignified form of wealth, and this was farm land, productively and profitably farmed. In some states full citizenship was restricted to landowners, and Plato follows this principle in the *Laws*.<sup>14</sup> But these persons were not themselves laborers. A farm laborer can no more study virtue, which was the highest duty of a citizen, than can the artisan (*Leg.* 846E), although truth compels Aristotle (*Pol.* 1277b) to admit that the artisan may become rich, and this gives him respectability sometimes. But even so, Plato will not allow even farmhands to become artisans. The wealthy Crito, Socrates' friend, stored away grain and oil and wine and wool and other farm produce, but this was not the product of his own labor.<sup>15</sup> Plato (*Leg.* 848B) seems to think of the actual agricultural work being done by slaves, who constitute a third of the population with citizens and metics. In many societies they would be serfs, or the hired men known to both Hesiod (*Op.* 602) and Homer (*Od.* 11.489f), whose lot was the worst of all. It is natural that this feeling should have been held by the generally conservative philoso-

<sup>13</sup> For ancient attitudes toward labor, cf. P. Waltz, "Les Artisans et leur vie en Grèce," *RevHist* 117 (1914) 5-41. Self-sacrificing toil for others is a Christian notion (Schmid/Stählin [*supra* n.1] 277 n.7), as is the idea of doing things unpleasant for the good of one's soul (*laborare est orare*). Voluntary, amateur, light gardening is, of course, quite a different thing.

<sup>14</sup> G. R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City: a Historical Interpretation of the Laws* (Princeton 1960) ch. iv. Cf. also *Rep.* 421A.

<sup>15</sup> Xen. *Mem.* 2.9.4.

phers, but it was shared by others—I should be inclined to say, by all others. To Euripides (*El.* 73–80), the greatest disgrace inflicted upon Electra was her marriage to a laborer, even though he proved to have a noble character. Pindar (*I.* 6.66–73) quotes with approval Hesiod's injunction to work, but the work in question proves to be that of the athlete, who brings honor to his city. Homer's Odysseus boasts of his prowess with sickle and plow (*Od.* 18.366–74), but cannot have worked with them for years. Laertes worked with his slaves in his garden, during the days of the Suitors, but resumed his proper place in society on his son's return.<sup>16</sup> Phocylides sourly observed that if you haven't a trade, you must learn to hoe,<sup>17</sup> but Solon encouraged the professions over against agriculture, somewhat to the astonishment of his biographer. "In those early times," wrote Plutarch, manufacturing and commerce were respectable;<sup>18</sup> but in the sequel he praises only the latter, which as in the case of Solon could prove not only profitable but also broadening and educational. One met such interesting people when he travelled. That hard manual labor was necessary to a society, of course, everyone knew, but it was the reverse of ennobling and was best left to those who could not escape it or were good for nothing else.

This attitude becomes all the clearer, I think, if we look at an apparent exception. Xenophon was an admirer of Persians and Lacedaemonians, and an advocate of physical fitness.<sup>19</sup> He had seen the Persian nobles with Cyrus leap energetically into the Euphrates mud to free a stuck wagon (*An.* 1.5.7f). He had seen Persian parks and had heard the remark of Cyrus to Lysander about the one in Sardes: "Well, Lysander, the whole of the measurement and arrangement is my own work, and I did some of the planting myself." "I swear by Mithras that, if I am in good health, I never dine without working up a sweat, practising something martial or something agricultural or

<sup>16</sup> *Od.* 15.369-73, 24.205-53. The peculiarity of the Dyscolus was precisely that he chose to live on his estate rather than in the city. Professor Bickerman reminds me that some scholars, A. Aymard, for example, have taken Homer in the reverse sense. I disagree.

<sup>17</sup> Pseudophocylidea v.158 (Bergk).

<sup>18</sup> Plu. *Solon* 2.3, cf. 22.1. Solon's real attitude toward work appears in fr.13.47f (Bergk): ἄλλος γῆν τέμνων πολυδένδρεον εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν | λατρεύει, τοῖσιν καμπύλ' ἄροτρα μέλει.

<sup>19</sup> *Oec.* 2.1.19f, quoting with approval *Op.* 287–92 and also the well-known line of Epicharmus (287 Kaibel), τῶν πόνων πωλοῦσιν ἅμιν πάντα τὰ γάθ' οἱ θεοί (where there is no suggestion that Epicharmus regarded this as a desirable situation, however true). In *Oec.* 12.56f Xenophon reports that Socrates was falsely accused of using the Hesiodic "work is no disgrace" as a justification for tyranny.

indulging in some other work-out" (*Oec.* 4.20–4). In Xenophon's account (*Oec.* 5.1–20) of the gentleman Ischomachus, he praises agriculture as the finest of occupations. "The practice of it is a pleasure as well as an enrichment of the estate and bodily exercise good for an honest man." It provides food and luxuries, but also conditioning for man and horse for hunting and for war. This is splendid, but when the discussion gets to Ischomachus himself, the picture is quite different.<sup>20</sup> He lives in town, but keeps in condition for politics and war by an active life. Up before dawn, he does his business with friends and clients and then sets out for the farm. A slave leads the horse, and Ischomachus walks and runs. When he arrives, he sees that everything is being done properly, then mounts and exercises his horse; this finished and the horse groomed, the slave leads him back to town, with the master making the trip again on foot. And so on to bath and luncheon, well-exercised—but not with grubbing. To Ischomachus, too, and to Xenophon, farm work is something good for others but not for oneself.

Hesiod, however, recommends or purports to recommend quite a different life. "First of all," he says, "make ready a house and a woman and a plow-ox. Buy her and do not marry her, so that she may follow the plow, and stock the supplies which you will need, so that you will not have to borrow at the last minute and miss the critical moment."<sup>21</sup> This is the irreducible minimum, and later (vv.596–607) Hesiod relents a little, allowing his farmer to have a pair of oxen and mules too, a dog, slaves possibly, and an hired man and girl; but the former is to be discharged the moment the harvest is in and the latter in the event of pregnancy. This is relative affluence compared to the earlier situation, but it is a rather tough-minded expediency too close to the soil to afford the luxury of humanitarianism, and certainly as little attractive to the Greek mind as it is to us. It has been ingeniously suggested that Hesiod stood at the beginnings of agriculture and his precepts were intended for a society which was just beginning to raise its own food.<sup>22</sup> This might account for Hesiod's fervor, but it is historically very little likely, and Hesiod's precepts, numerous and interesting as they are, hardly add up to a complete

<sup>20</sup> *Oec.* 11.14–18. In *Mem.* 2.8.1 Socrates expresses pity for someone compelled to make his living τῷ σώματι ἐργαζόμενος.

<sup>21</sup> *Op.* 405–10, in summary.

<sup>22</sup> T. P. Howe, *TAPA* 89 (1958) 44–65.

treatise on agriculture.<sup>23</sup> They are maxims which farmers could know and appreciate, but the practical business of farming was learned from experience.

These maxims, however, make up the bulk of the poem as we have it. The *Works* proper occupy lines 383 to 764 and the *Days* lines 765 to the conclusion at line 828. It is reasonable to suppose that the author thought well of the concluding larger half (446 lines) of his composition, but his admiration was not shared by the later Greeks or by modern readers. The writers of Hellenistic and Roman manuals of agriculture found these lines useful or at least quotable, but otherwise they have been neglected in favor of the earlier smaller half (382 lines) of the poem, with its concentration on morality.<sup>24</sup> This is a problem which we cannot escape by assuming that the two parts of the poem were originally separate and only late and accidentally joined. We should be left still to account for the existence of these 446 lines of verse, technical, coarse and generally unattractive, which are much harder to explain by themselves than they are as a part of the whole poem.

There is, I believe, no evidence in antiquity that they were ever thought to have had a separate career, and it is worth noting that they could even, at least in part, be regarded as beautiful. Whatever the date and whoever the author of the treatise entitled "Of the Origin of Homer and Hesiod, and of their Contest,"<sup>25</sup> its origins go back at least to the late Classical period. They may be earlier. King Amphidamas of Chalcis, it is said, had died, and his brother King Paneides presided. After some verbal skirmishing reminiscent of Aristophanes, the king asked each poet to recite his finest verses. Homer gave the description of the two Ajaxes from *Iliad* 13.126–33 and 339–44, and the listening Greeks were entranced. Hesiod, however, won the king's decision with ten lines of his own, and what were these? Precisely the opening lines of the *Works*, 383–92; and the king's judgement was based on moral grounds. Agriculture and peace were better than wars and slaughterings.<sup>26</sup> The judgement of Paneides

<sup>23</sup> So Sinclair (*supra* n.11) xi f; P. Walcot, *SymbOslo* 38 (1963) 6.

<sup>24</sup> Steitz 8f; Fuss 4–18 (*supra* n.11). The agricultural value of Hesiod is ridiculed in *Ar. Ran.* 1033f. Lucian in his *Conversation with Hesiod* teases our author for not being able to predict the future except in ways known to every dirt farmer.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *supra* n.10.

<sup>26</sup> *Certamen* 315–23 (Goettling).



became proverbial in antiquity for stupidity,<sup>27</sup> and this, too, speaks volumes for the Greeks' attitude toward farm labor. Who could prefer Hesiod to Homer? But let us only look at the lines themselves. Homer is rugged and harsh:

Ἄμφι δ' ἄρ' Αἴαντας δοιοῦς ἴσταντο φάλαγγες  
καρτεραί, ἄς οὔτ' ἂν κεν Ἄρης ὀνόσαιτο μετελθῶν  
οὔτε κ' Ἀθηναίη λαοσσόος.

Hear then Hesiod in contrast:

Πληιάδων Ἀτλαγενέων ἐπιτελλομενάων  
ἄρχεσθ' ἀμήτου, ἀρότιό τε δυσσομενάων·  
αἱ δὴ τοι νύκτας τε καὶ ἡμέρας τεσσαράκοντα  
κεκρύφαται, αὐτίς δὲ περιπλομένου ἐνιαυτοῦ  
φαίνονται, τὰ πρῶτα χαρασσομένοιο σιδήρου.

In substance, possibly, neither passage is especially elevated.<sup>28</sup> In sound, Hesiod is smooth and rich, with the plethora of genitives, singular and plural. Taste is taste, and we may disagree with Paneides as a literary critic. But we must admit, I think, that the author of the second part of the *Works and Days* made a special effort to furnish it with a mellifluous opening. In taste and sentiment this is quite comparable to the line with which he opened the first part:

Μοῦσαι Πιερίθην ἀοιδῆσιν κλείουσαι,

although the sonority suggests rather the first line of the *Theogony*:

Μουσάων Ἐλικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ' αἰεΐδειν.

The Pleiades, daughters of Atlas, dominate the practical section of the poem, just as the Pierian Muses, daughters of Zeus, dominate the theoretical section—as I think we may legitimately call it. Theory precedes practice. The practice is the hard and harsh, dirty and unrelieved labor of agriculture and other banausic occupations. What is the theory which explains and justifies it?

Here we have not to accuse Hesiod of writing obscurely. Modern commentators are in agreement that his purpose was to explain why men have to work, and indeed he leaves no doubt that it was the will of heaven.<sup>29</sup> Eris first brought this about; the good Strife or Rivalry,

<sup>27</sup> W. Aly in *RE* 18.3 (1949) 583.

<sup>28</sup> The lines are quoted with enthusiasm also by Dio Chrys. 2.9.

<sup>29</sup> Schmid/Stählin (*supra* n.1) 274, and commentators generally.

who was the elder sister of the evil Eris, daughter of Night, who causes war.<sup>30</sup> Through jealousy of a neighbour's better portion, this Eris stirs up even a "handless" man, ἀπάλαμος, to go to work; and while this is (v.20) the first occurrence of the word ἔργον in the poem, the sequel shows that the labor of the farm is meant, plowing and planting. That is one explanation of men's working, and Perses, or the hearer in general, is advised to heed it. Since it is the doing of a goddess, and a Titan at that, the fatherless daughter of Night, it must be good as well as necessary. Perses must not allow himself to be distracted from labor in search of the more pleasantly acquired gains of the market and its litigation.<sup>31</sup> In all honesty, Hesiod cannot deny (vv.33f) that there are profits to be made here, but this takes capital. He continues with personal references to inheritance and litigation which are certainly obscure, whether or not they are to be taken literally,<sup>32</sup> including at the end an apparent warning against greed (vv.40f). I am inclined to agree with a recent commentator, however, that the words ὦδ' ἔρδειν of v.35 are to be taken by themselves: "So get to work."<sup>33</sup> They anticipate the concluding line of this half of the poem, already quoted (v.382):<sup>34</sup>

ὦδ' ἔρδειν, καὶ ἔργον ἐπ' ἔργῳ ἐργάζεσθαι.

After Eris, it was the gods, and specifically Zeus. They hid men's livelihood, their βίος, and did not give it up (vv.42–9). Otherwise one might work for a day and loaf for a year. The steering oar would have rest from the sea and the oxen from the plow. But Zeus hid the secret, enangered at Prometheus, and devised for men grievous woes, κήδεα λυγρά. These, not specifically identified at this point, prove presently to be connected with the Greek Eve, Pandora, lovely and talented but clever and (worst of all) vocal (vv.54–105). So she came to earth as the consort of Epimetheus, and things changed. Formerly men had lived free of other troubles and also hard labor,

<sup>30</sup> vv. 11–26; cf. H. Munding, *Gymnasium* 67 (1960) 409–22.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Wilamowitz (*supra* n.11) 45. In *Op.* 29, the agora is viewed only as a place of judicial activity: *νεῖκε' ὀπιπέουοντ' ἀγορῆς*; and it may be remembered that the activities of the lawcourts at Athens provided immense amusement for the populace (*teste Aristophane*). But in *Op.* 30, other diversifications of the agora are recognized also: *νεικέων τ' ἀγορέων τε*.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *supra* n.12.

<sup>33</sup> So M. L. West, *Philologus* 108 (1964) 157–73.

<sup>34</sup> This parallel would seem to make impossible the suggestion of van Groningen (*supra* n.11) 286 n.5, to take ὦδ' in v.382 to mean "as hereinafter described." But the usage of ὦδε here is not entirely clear.

χαλεπὸς πόνος, but the lady released all of these from her storage jar, retaining only hope,<sup>35</sup> so that land and sea are full of them. One cannot argue with them for they have no voices, and one must sail the sea and plow the land (vv.101–5). This is a bane, a πῆμα, to men, but necessary if they are to have bread to eat (v.82). After the first five lines, the word ἔργον does not occur in this passage, doubtless by design. It was ἔργον to which Pandora had brought human males, and this appears clearly as one of the κήδεα λυγρά. But it would not suit the author's purpose to make this view of work needlessly clear.

Then the author moves on to another explanation of the origin of inevitable labor. It may, again, be thought intentional that not everything is crystal clear in the story of the five ages and of the fable which follows them. But the general line of thought seems clear enough. In the previous two instances men have incurred the curse of labor through circumstances beyond their control. The influence of Eris, good or bad, was simply a fact of life, a function of nature. The appearance of Woman was due to the rivalry of Zeus and Prometheus and none of any man's doing, however gratified he may have been with her at first. But with the story of the five ages, man appears morally responsible for his own troubles. He has brought labor upon himself by injustice.

This is the story of the fall of man, and Hesiod parts company with his counterpart, the author of the first chapters of *Genesis*. It is man's own fault, and not to be blamed on woman or serpent. He was untrue to his origin; for in keeping with normal Greek thinking, Hesiod accepts that men and gods were alike in origin if not in nature (v.108). At first, in the Golden Age, they loved each other, and men performed at ease (ἡσυχοί) their richly rewarded ἔργα. The earth supplied them with its fruits of itself—αὐτομάτη (vv.109–20).

<sup>35</sup> The significance of Hope being kept shut up in the jar, and the question in general whether Hope is to be regarded as a good thing for men or the reverse, has been much discussed, without decisive results. Cf. e.g. Lawton 55, Hays 89, Kerschesteiner 165, Fränkel 332–4 (*supra* n.11). The general sentiment is that as the activities of Pandora in general have been unfortunate for men, so the action as regards Hope must be similar. If evils have been let out, then the good must be imprisoned, so that men may not enjoy it. On the other hand, the pithos is a storage jar, where the family goods are kept buried in the floor. The situation is familiar from excavations, and in *Il.* 24.527–33 the two jars are in Zeus' floor: κατακείται ἐν Διὸς οὔδει. On this analogy Hope would be kept in storage safely and not lost, and so may be a deceptive, evil thing. It is also possible to think that Hope was a good thing, that Pandora meant no harm and saved something for mankind out of the disaster; and this is the more generous view.

No explanation is advanced as to why this happy race came to an end. If it had not, of course, there would have been no story, and anyhow its people were compensated for their demise by becoming blessed *daimones*. But their successors on earth were childlike and stupid, unjust and impious, and so Zeus destroyed this Silver Generation too because they would not sacrifice or honor the gods. What work they did, if any, is not mentioned, but mankind was clearly on its downward course (vv.121–39).

The Silver people were rewarded by becoming chthonic deities to whom men paid honor only, as Isocrates explains, in order that they will do them no harm. These are the spirits to whom one sacrifices so that they will go away and leave him in peace.<sup>36</sup> Their successors on earth were Brazen, and these avoided the unpleasantnesses of agricultural labor by eliminating grain from their diet. Their *ἔργα* were those of Ares, and they ended by killing each other off. Hesiod clearly does not regard them as admirable (vv.140–55).

The fourth age of the Heroes follows, presumably to account for the actual, historical heroic age of the epic. These were by definition noble characters. All of the Greek notables, all of Hesiod's patrons were descended from them. When they were through at Thebes and Troy, they received their rewards as demigods (*ἡμίθεοι*) and went to dwell in the Isles of the Blest, where the earth produced for them delicious fruit three times a year. Presumably, since their labors are not mentioned, this dropped of itself into their laps or reached their plates otherwise without their exerting themselves (vv.156–69b).

In these four generations, then, Hesiod makes abundantly clear his feelings about farm work. Happy is he who can escape it. But then came the fifth, the Iron Age, which the poet dislikes intensely (vv.169c–201). Men have no rest from toil and misery by day or by night. Families quarrel. Neighboring cities fight. No one keeps his oath, and the successful crook is held in honor. Justice will be what one can get away with: *δίκη δ' ἐν χειρὶ, καὶ αἰδῶς οὐκ ἔσται* (v.192f). *Aidōs* and *Nemesis* will flee from earth, and men will have bitter woes, *ἀλγεα λυγρά* (v.200). There will be no escape from evil.

So Hesiod dislikes this age; but what is the relevance, what is the implication, of this description? Commentators have long recognized that it is incomplete.<sup>37</sup> From the logic of the narrative we should

<sup>36</sup> Isoc. 5.117 (*Philippus*).

<sup>37</sup> van Groningen (*supra* n.11) 283.

expect something like *Genesis* 3:17–19: “And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.” Instead, the only reasonable conclusion would seem to be that which Hesiod himself draws later, only to reject it (270–2): “Now may I not be just among men nor my son either, for it is bad to be a just man if the unjust will have the greater justice.” This is to play bitterly with the different meanings of the term *δίκη*. Nevertheless, Hesiod trusts that the justice of Zeus will win out in the end (v.273).

On what can such a hope be based? Will the consciences of men relent, their better natures assert themselves, and will men turn from war and chicanery to justice and honest toil? Hesiod may have thought so, without saying it, but instead he tells a fable (vv.202–11) which, he says, the nobles who are his patrons will be smart enough to understand. One has remarked that you do not intrude unpleasant observations on patrons, but hint at your meaning.<sup>38</sup> What, however, is Hesiod hinting at?

The story is simple. A hawk has caught a nightingale and is carrying her off, and she cried out. To which the hawk replied: “Silly fool, why do you make a noise? One far more powerful (or “better”: *ἀρείων*) holds you. You may have a fine voice (*ᾄδιδὸν ἑοῦσαν*), but you must go where I take you. I can eat you or let you go. Anyone is mad who wills to oppose those who are stronger (or “better,” *κρείσσονας*). He will not win and will suffer woes (*ἄλγεα*) in addition to his disgrace.” I would not labor the point that such bitter woes became the lot of men in the Fifth Age because of their sins, and earlier because of Prometheus; and that these woes included having to make their living through toil. I would comment merely that, on the face of it, all that the fable points out is that one is foolish to complain of constraint imposed upon him by one who is better and stronger. *Πρὸς κέντρα μὴ λάκτιζε*: “Do not kick against the pricks,” as Greeks of a later pious generation were fond of remarking,<sup>39</sup> especially when the *κέντρα* were applied by the gods or fate.

<sup>38</sup> Nicolai (*supra* n.11) 50–3.

<sup>39</sup> Aesch. *Ag.* 1624; and in a broader context, Pindar, *Pyth.* 2.94f.

It is, I suppose, to the credit of man's humanity that this fable has universally, so far as I can discover, been taken in precisely the opposite sense. Scholars have compassionate hearts, evidently. From the days of the earliest scholiasts down,<sup>40</sup> commentators have concluded, not that the nightingale is foolish and might better be still, obey, and hope for the best (which is what Hesiod expressly states), but that the hawk is sinful; he is a brutal and lawless predator who is tormenting an innocent and helpless victim, and a songster at that. Since Hesiod is an *αοιδός* also,<sup>41</sup> as well as the nightingale, it has been clear to generations of scholars that Hesiod is thinking of his own ill treatment at the hands of the gift-devouring nobles, and the moral which they are to deduce from the story is that they ought to be nice to him, poor man, just as the hawk ought to release its god-given meal and take to a vegetarian diet. It is true that Hesiod, in such a case, has failed to take his own advice and, so far from remaining silent, has been vociferously complaining for two hundred lines about a number of things.

It is, presumably, impossible to eliminate as hallowed an interpretation as this, but I would suggest two lines of evidence against it. Greek literature, and Latin too, is full of references to hawks and eagles capturing and devouring their prey, either as similes or as omens. I do not know of any instance where it is implied that the predators are wrong to eat their natural food, although the victims' plight may occasionally provoke pity.<sup>42</sup> There may be a possible exception in the omen of the hawk and the dove in *Argonautica* 3.540–3, where Aphrodite's dove escapes and the hawk dashes against the ship's stern post and is killed; but the specific moral in that case, the triumph of love over force, is so obvious that the relief of the escaped dove is hardly suggested.

A second type of evidence is analogy. Oriental parallels and back-

<sup>40</sup> A. Pertusi, *Scholia Vetera in Hesiodi Opera et Dies* (Milan 1955) *ad loc.*

<sup>41</sup> It is probable that this is the origin of the interpretation of the fable. Since Hesiod is an *αοιδος* and the bird is an *αοιδος*, so the bird stands for Hesiod, and the author would compare his own situation as regards the judges with that of the bird as regards the hawk.

<sup>42</sup> It is possible, and I hope, necessary, to cite only a few examples. In Homer, the hawk swooping on his prey is a symbol of swiftness (*Il.* 13.62–5, 819; *Od.* 13.86f); in Vergil, *Aen.* 11.721–4, it symbolizes irresistible ferocity in war. Eagles devour a pregnant rabbit in Aesch. *Ag.* 111–20, serving as a portent. In Hor. *Odes* 4.4.1–4, the eagle attacking its prey stands for Augustus' stepson Drusus. A snake devours nestlings and their mother as an omen in *Il.* 2.308–13, while a desperate struggle between snake and eagle is described as a simile in *Aen.* 11.751–6. I find nowhere any expression of horror or of the feeling that the predators are sinful.

ground are now widely claimed for early Greek literature and specifically for Hesiod. Without taking sides in this complex controversy,<sup>43</sup> I may cite a recently discovered Sumerian parable published by Edmund I. Gordon in 1960.<sup>44</sup> While it is fairly early, the tradition of these stories is a popular and persistent one, and this may, I think, show what antiquity would normally see in such a tale. It goes as follows: "The pork-butcher slaughters the pig, (saying), Must you squeal? (This) is the road which your sire and your grandsire travelled and (now) you are going (on it too); (and yet) you are squealing." I hope that I may not be accused of bad taste in comparing a Sumerian butcher and his pig to the ethereal nightingale and the cruel hawk, but I should like to urge that if the fable could mean what I suggest, it would make sense in the passage and provide a conclusion for the story of the Men of Iron. They, and the nobles too, are in the grip of forces greater than they, and they must conform; even the kings. Only six lines below (v.218), Hesiod comments: "Even the stupid learns from experience": *παθῶν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω*. Even the kings are subject to the will of Zeus.

I do not know, actually, that the Greeks were sentimental about nightingales; although they figured in myth, they were eaten with relish.<sup>45</sup> And in the myth, neither Tereus, the hawk, nor Procne or Philomela, the nightingale, is precisely an admirable character. The latter, as a matter of fact, is as bad as Tantalus, worse than Medea. Itys did not become the "much-lamented" accidentally. And Hesiod has elsewhere conspicuously failed to maintain a gallant attitude toward the fair sex. The hawk, of course, was not the bird of Zeus but of Apollo;<sup>46</sup> but Apollo was the mouthpiece of Zeus, and Zeus was the source of inexorable law.

At all events and however this may be, Hesiod now gives us a long encomium of justice (vv.213–73), and then after a bridging passage

<sup>43</sup> The possibility had long been suspected but was first argued recently by F. Dornseiff, "Hesiods Werke und Tage und das alte Morgenland," *Philologus* 89 (1934) 397–415; see most recently P. Walcot, "Hesiod and the Didactic Literature of the Near East," *REG* 75 (1952) 13–36. Biblical parallels are suggested further by F. J. Taggart, "The Argument of Hesiod's *Works and Days*," *JHistIdeas* 8 (1947) 45–77.

<sup>44</sup> *BiblOrient.* 17 (1960) 139.

<sup>45</sup> The complaint voiced in *Ar. Aves* 524–38 is that the birds are treated unceremoniously and smothered in unflattering sauces. The myth of Tereus, Procne and Philomela is not a very pretty one, although Aristophanes adopts a pleasant version in *Aves* 210–24. Otherwise, however, Tereus is the hawk in hot pursuit of a very guilty sparrow and nightingale.

<sup>46</sup> *Ar. Aves* 515.

(vv.274–92) an even longer encomium of labor (vv.293–382).<sup>47</sup> The burden of both of these is the same: justice, and labor, pays. “Those who give straight judgements to citizens and strangers and who do not transgress justice, they flourish in peace. They suffer neither famine nor folly, and carry out their ἔργα with good cheer. They have no concern with ships, but the earth bears them fruit” (vv. 225–37). “Work, Perses, so that famine may hate you and Demeter love you. Gods and men dislike the non-worker (ἀεργός), but through work (ἐξ ἔργων) men become rich. Work is no disgrace; idleness is a disgrace. If you work, soon the idle will envy you in your wealth, for virtue (ἀρετή) and fame follow wealth” (vv.299–313). On the other hand, “those who like insolence and foul deeds (σχέτλια ἔργα) cause their whole city to suffer, famine and pestilence together.” Unlike the just, their births are not true and the enemy defeats them at home and abroad (vv.238–47). And for the lazy man who will not work, poverty and an evil shame, an αἰδώς οὐκ ἀγαθή, is his lot (v.317).

It must be confessed that Hesiod, however eloquent in its praises, is never very precise in his definition of justice. In this passage as elsewhere, he plays shamelessly on the dual meaning of δίκη and its cognates. By δίκη he means justice in the abstract, the quality or attitude which one should show toward his neighbor, and this is the virgin goddess, Zeus' daughter, honored and revered among the Olympian gods. She sits beside her father and informs him when she is dishonored, when “the people pays for the folly of its nobles who give justice crookedly” (vv.256–62). She also visits the earth and in an extraordinary metaphor is thought of as dragged noisily through the streets by unjust judges: τῆς δὲ δίκης ῥόθος ἐλκομένης. Weeping, and putting on a robe of invisibility, she then escapes to tell Zeus, and the malefactors duly catch it (vv.220–4). (Whatever the interpretation of the hawk's fable, then, the men of the Iron Age will not enjoy their misdeeds in impunity.)

On the other hand, δίκη and still more the plural δίκαι refer to what happens in court, and indeed the closest that Hesiod comes to a definition of δίκη is in its own terms: δίκη is to give ἰθείας δίκας and to avoid σχολιάς δίκας, to be δίκαιος and not to depart from τὸ δίκαιον.<sup>48</sup> There is an implication that justice is not being greedy, for

<sup>47</sup> van Groningen (*supra* n.11) 297.

<sup>48</sup> Dikē is the opposite of Hybris (v.217) and of Bia (v.275), and expectedly excludes the usual human sins (vv.320–41).



“the half is more than the whole,” and “there is great advantage in mallow and asphodel” (vv.40f). On the other hand, however, wealth is highly prized and praised, so this cannot be the whole story. Perhaps Hesiod occasionally was the victim of his own maxims. And since men are adjured to live by hard, dirt farming, a diet of wild herbs might seem altogether too easy. And so, in fact, was this understood by Thales of Miletus, as quoted by Plutarch, who felt that Epimetheus did actually live on mallow and asphodel because he, unlike Pittacus, was too lazy to grind his corn.<sup>49</sup>

But however ill-defined, justice was of vital importance.<sup>50</sup> In the bridging passage beginning with v.274, Hesiod elaborates further: “Put this in your mind, Perses, and listen to justice; and altogether forget violence. For this is the law which Zeus has set for men,” in contrast to fish and animals and birds, which eat one another because they have no justice.<sup>51</sup> But men who do not speak justly and break their oaths, they will lose out in the longer run, if not in the first generation (v.284). And justice is goodness, and injustice badness; and it is a long and steep road to goodness (*ἀρετή*), requiring much sweat and energy (v.289). And what else requires sweat and energy? “Remembering my charge, Perses, work” (*ἐργάζεσθαι*). “Through work men grow rich and are loved by the immortals” (vv. 299, 308f). Wealth must not be seized, it must be worked for. Wealth acquired otherwise than by work is sinful. Idleness is sinful. Work is righteous and, in a word, just. So finally we may see through the argument. Justice is a responsibility which lies on men from Zeus, and work is justice,<sup>52</sup> and so, in the concluding couplet of this introductory theoretical part of the treatise, we have the conclusion: “If your heart in its breast desires wealth (and all the moral and material benefits thereof), then work, and work work upon work.”

The stage, I submit, is now prepared, and Hesiod may proceed with his studiously collected maxims, some concerning how and when to

<sup>49</sup> Plut. *Sept.Sap.Convivium* 14, 157E (Waltz [*supra* n.11] 6 n.2). Thales seems to have regarded work as a good thing, at least for others; cf. Sinclair (*supra* n.11) xxxv.

<sup>50</sup> In a recently found and not yet published Arabic manuscript from Istanbul, Alexander the Great is offered advice by Aristotle, who quotes Hesiod: “To do good in general is better than to do evil.” That is only a little more vague than Hesiod himself.

<sup>51</sup> vv.275f; but it is quite proper for men to eat them.

<sup>52</sup> This has been generally recognized, but without drawing any conclusions. Cf. Waltz (*supra* n.9) 55; P. Mazon, *REA* 14 (1912) 329–56; Hays 8; Sinclair xxix (*supra* n.11). But can Hesiod be really serious? This looks like pure humbug, a religion invented by a landlord for his tenants.

do things agricultural and some dealing with other matters of popular wisdom or superstition. I do not enquire here closely. If the *Works and Days* is oral poetry, if the poem was subject to expansion or changes in the hands or in the mouth of Hesiod or a successor, here is where this would take place most easily.<sup>53</sup> There is extensive topical grouping of observations in this second part but very little logical development or sequence of ideas. The first, the introductory part, however, seems to me to follow a carefully planned sequence of thought. It too is repetitious and not always strictly logical, but it presents a definite argument. Work is a good thing, farm work.

I hope that enough has been said at the beginning to substantiate the paradoxical, or disingenuous, nature of this claim of Hesiod's. To normal Greeks, the drudgery of farm work was anathema, and the occupation was inimical to the cultivation of mind and body which they regarded as virtue, ἀρετή. It was in the palaestra, in the market, in the courts and in the theory and practice of war that one became a proper man, ἀνὴρ καλὸς κἀγαθός.<sup>54</sup> Wealth might be acquired in many ways, but not by farming.<sup>55</sup> The farmer was a bumpkin, and while some have found an explanation for Hesiod's paradoxical enthusiasm in the fact that he was a Boeotian and the Boeotians were boors, the first is an assumption which is without relevance anyhow, since Hesiod's fame was widespread and not limited to Boeotia, and the boorish Boeotian was an invention of the rival Athenians, to belittle a troublesome opponent. The matter is certainly past our precise knowing, but it may be at least suspected that the collection of maxims, made out of curiosity or for whatever other reason, antiquarian or sophisticated or utilitarian or didactic, came first, and the explanation for and defense of them came later. When Hesiod, we may imagine, came to recite his homely injunctions and warnings, he felt that these could not be published by themselves and so put together a series of arguments that labor was not only respectable and legitimate but profitable and pious. As we have seen, it was to these arguments and stories that he owed most of his fame in

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *supra* n.9, and van Groningen (*supra* n.11) 302. See also the sensible comments of F. Solmsen, *TAPA* (1963) 293.

<sup>54</sup> Hays (*supra* n.11) 29 n.1. The youthful Alexander said that Hesiod was a poet for peasants, not for kings (Dio Chrys. 2.8–12) and Cleomenes said that Hesiod was the poet for Helots, but Homer for Spartans (Ael. *VH* 13.19).

<sup>55</sup> By inheritance, gift, marriage, war, piracy, professional services, the capitalistic employment of slaves (Xen. *Poroi*). Cf. recently A. Kränzlein, *Eigentum und Besitz im griechischen Recht* (Berlin 1963) and my comments, *Gnomon* 37 (1965) 63–7.

antiquity, although to us antiquarians the popular traditions which he has preserved are of value and interest.

The purpose and point of the invocation at the beginning of the poem (vv.1–10) seems now to be clear. In spite of the doubt of its authenticity in antiquity, moderns have generally accepted the first ten lines, if they have differed over their relevance.<sup>56</sup> The invocation of the Muses presents the subject of the poem, as in other cases; and so here too, for the poem is about Zeus.<sup>57</sup> Zeus makes men famous or unknown, great or lowly as he wills. To him Hesiod turns: *κλῶθι ἰδῶν αἰῶν τε, δίκη δ' ἴθυνε θέμιστας τύνη*: “Hearken, seeing and hearing, and establish straight statutes with justice.” Zeus is the origin of justice and Zeus its sanction. It is with the support and under the authority of Zeus that Hesiod turns to his practical instruction. What he tells is the will of Zeus. Zeus has established it, and Zeus will bring it to pass.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Steitz 6, Wilamowitz 39–43 (*supra* n.11). Praxiphanes reported having seen a text of *Op.* lacking these lines, and they were rejected by Aristarchus and others in antiquity. For Plutarch's view, see *supra* n.1.

<sup>57</sup> Ed. Meyer, “Hesiods Erga,” *Genethliakon Carl Robert* (Berlin 1910) 159–87 (= *Kleine Schriften* II [Halle 1924] 15–66); Schmid/Stählin (*supra* n.1) 278; Kerschensneider 151 and van Groningen 283 (*supra* n.11).

<sup>58</sup> Meyer, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.57); Solmsen 86–8 and Fränkel 226–32 (*supra* n.11).