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THE AMBIGUITY OF *ERIS* IN THE *WORKS AND DAYS*

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Οὐκ ἄρα μῶνον ἔην Ἐρίδων γένος, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ γαίαν 11
εἰσὶ δὺο· τὴν μὲν κεν ἐπαινήσειε νοήσας,
ἢ δ' ἐπιμωμητὴ· διὰ δ' ἄνδιχα θυμὸν ἔχουσιν.
ἢ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ δῆριν ὀφέλλει,
σχετλίη· οὐ τις τὴν γε φιλεῖ βροτός, ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκης 15
ἀθανάτων βουλήσιν Ἔριν τιμῶσι βαρεῖαν.
τὴν δ' ἑτέραν προτέραν μὲν ἐγένετο Νύξ ἐρεβεννή,
θῆκε δέ μιν Κρονίδης ὑψίζυγος αἰθέρι ναίων
γαίης τ' ἐν ρίζησι καὶ ἀνδράσι πολλὸν ἀμείνω·
ἢ τε καὶ ἀπάλαμόν περ ὅμως ἐπὶ ἔργον ἐγείρεν. 20
εἰς ἕτερον γὰρ τίς τε ἰδὼν ἔργοιο χατίζων
πλούσιον, ὃς σπεύδει μὲν ἀρώμεναι ἢ δὲ φυτεύειν
οἶκόν τ' εὖ θέσθαι, ζηλοῖ δέ τε γείτονα γείτων
εἰς ἄφενος σπεύδοντ'· ἀγαθὴ δ' Ἔρις ἦδε βροτοῖσιν.
καὶ κεραμεὺς κεραμεῖ κοτέει καὶ τέκτωνι τέκτων, 25
καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῶι φθονέει καὶ ἀοιδὸς ἀοιδῶι.¹

After a brief proem (1-10) in which he rather traditionally invokes the Muses and praises the power of Zeus, Hesiod begins the *Works and Days* with the remarkable assertion (11-12) that “there is not, after all, one kind² of *eris* (‘strife’), but on earth there are two.” He then elaborates the differences between the good *eris* and the bad *eris*, giving reasons why one should welcome the former and avoid the latter (12-26). This introduction sets the stage for the theme that, on the surface at least, motivates the entire poem: Hesiod’s advice to his brother Perses (27ff.) to avoid evil *eris* and turn instead to work, which is the path to true prosperity. This warning to avoid evil *eris* provides a transition from the discussion of *eris* to the advice that Perses work harder; but attempts to explain why Hesiod chooses to begin his poem specifically with this novel theory of the two *erides* have not been wholly satisfactory.

A common view is that, in Rosenmeyer’s words,³ “the passage on the two *erides* sets the tone. It opens, as it were, the sociological perspective, the ethical sights, within which everything that follows is to be seen.” There is much truth in such a view, but we may still wonder why Hesiod begins specifically with *eris*, when he might have chosen a more obviously relevant

generalization, such as: “There are two ways of life for a man, prosperity and poverty (or work and idleness, or justice and injustice).” The idea of a double-[174]natured *eris* plays almost no role in the rest of the poem, where although Hesiod sings about a variety of goods and evils, he mentions *eris* only three times after this opening. Perses should not let *eris* “who rejoices in evil” keep him from work (28, discussed below); oxen fighting (*ἐρίσαντε*, 439) in the furrow break the plow; and (if the “Days” are genuine) the fifth day should be avoided because on that day *eris* gave birth to oath (*horkos*), “a bane to those who swear falsely” (804).⁴ In other words, after his emphatic and prominently placed description of the two *erides*, Hesiod ignores the good *eris* entirely⁵ and shows little interest in the traditional bad *eris*. Why, then, does he begin so emphatically with this duality?

Furthermore, even if an explanation such as Rosenmeyer’s could satisfactorily explain Hesiod’s beginning with the two *erides*, why begin specifically with a denial of the traditional view of a single *eris*? It is often noted that this statement corrects *Theogony* 225-32, where Hesiod catalogues the birth and family of “hateful” *eris*.⁶ But the genealogy of *eris* is of such minor significance in the *Theogony* that Hesiod, who is no stickler for consistency,⁷ could hardly have felt obliged to acknowledge, let alone correct it before saying something new about *eris*. West, who works hard to find a loose coherence between the different “units” of the poem, offers the following explanation (p. 142): “Hesiod had the idea of saying ‘There is such a goddess as Emulation’ ... but he realized that this was a different Eris from the one he had spoken of in the *Theogony*.... He begins, therefore, by repeating the discovery aloud.”⁸ But why does he correct this inconsistency and not others? And why is this correction placed at the beginning? The inadequacy of this and other explanations⁹ leads me to the purpose of the present paper: to find a better explanation for Hesiod’s beginning his poem with a discourse on the two *erides* and specifically with a denial of the traditional genealogy of *eris* as related in the *Theogony*.

I begin by looking more closely at the discussion of *eris*. After asserting that there are two kinds, Hesiod describes them clearly as opposites (12-13): the one you would praise (“once you understand her”);¹⁰ the other is blameworthy. He briefly describes the effects of bad *eris* (14-16) in terms which are familiar from the traditional picture of *eris* in Homer¹¹ and the *Theogony*: she stirs up war and struggle and mortals do not like her. Hesiod then turns to the other *eris*, who is much better for men (17-19). He explains (20-24)¹² how she “rouses even the shiftless man to work.” A man who is not working sees his rich neighbor hastening to plow and plant and put his house in order, and “he envies his neighbor, who is hurrying to gain wealth. This is the good *eris* for mortals.” Thus far this *eris* seems unequivocally good: one man profits by being inspired to work for his own prosperity; the other loses nothing. The only discordant note is struck by the verb “envies” (*ζήλοι*), which raises a suspicion that this spirit of rivalry may have other, less desirable consequences.¹³

The suspicion is reinforced in the next two verses (25-26), which are often explained as proverbs loosely attached to the description of the good *eris*: “potter is angry (*κοτέει*) with potter and builder with builder, and beggar bears a grudge (*φθονέει*) against beggar and bard against bard.” Again, the verbs are the [175]key. As West notes (*ad loc.*), “*kotos* [‘anger’] and *phthonos* [‘grudge’] are not in the spirit of the good *Eris*.” Indeed, they point quite clearly to the bad *eris*, and the two lines taken alone would more naturally be understood as elaborations of the bad *eris*. Furthermore, as Wilamowitz observes, the three verbs in 23-26 form a progression: the initial envy, which prompts a man to work harder for his own prosperity, becomes anger and then a grudge, so that in the end he desires a smaller share for his neighbor, not just a larger share for himself. Finally, the mention of beggars confirms this conclusion, for it recalls the rivalry between the disguised Odysseus and the beggar *Irus* in *Odyssey* 18. Despite Odysseus’ warning that *Irus* should not begrudge (*φθονέειω*) others (18.17-18), this is precisely what he does, to his own clear disadvantage. The scene illustrates, in fact, the mixed results of *eris* (though there is no hint that such is Homer’s intent), which benefits Odysseus while harming *Irus*.

Lines 11-26 as a whole then begin with a triplet introducing the idea of two opposed *erides* (11-13), followed by two triplets containing unambiguous assertions of the bad (14-16) and the good (17-19) *eris*. As Hesiod tries to elaborate the beneficial effect of the good *eris*, however, text, syntax and meaning become problematic (20-26), with the result that there is no clear distinction between the positive inspiration to work and the negative begrudging of another’s success. The initial polar opposition has now become a confused continuum with no clear point of demarcation. Or, as Pucci puts it,¹⁴ “the very description of the good *Eris* itself contains its own disintegration.”

Critics have responded in various ways. Some try to deny the evident meaning of 25-26,¹⁵ others delete the couplet.¹⁶ Most recent critics, however, seek to explain Hesiod’s radical shift, usually in terms that imply some failure of method or ability. West concludes (*ad loc.*) that “the idea of rivalry makes the lines [25-26] relevant enough for Hesiod,” as if the poet, having forgotten his mission of a dozen lines earlier to provide a new and different account of *eris*, can now introduce any statement about rivalry that happens to occur to him. Havelock¹⁷ speaks of Hesiod’s “failure to sustain argument coherently” and takes this as an indication that the “oral reservoir” on which Hesiod draws is inadequate to sustain his new concept of the good *eris*. And Pucci, whose discussion of the passage is the most perceptive I have seen, also sees a discrepancy between language and thought: “Hesiod, therefore, fails to tame Discord and to channel her power toward the achievement of a peaceful fullness and presence. He fails because the letter of his text does not obey the metaphysical constriction he has imposed on the text” (131).

None of these explanations allows Hesiod much control over his text, but it is worth exploring the possibility, at least, that he may indeed have wished to compose lines 25-26 as they are, aware of the discrepancy between them and the opposition he developed earlier. It may be out of fashion to speak of an

author's intention, but critics who focus primarily on the text and its disintegration may sometimes lose sight of the poet, and of the fact that many ancient authors, including Hesiod, were evidently aware of the instability of language and the problematic nature of the link between language and "reality." Indeed the opening statement of the doubleness of *eris* can be seen as an [176] indication of precisely such awareness on Hesiod's part. And if this opening discussion contains a more complex and ambivalent picture of *eris* than we are at first led to expect, this may indicate that Hesiod's understanding of the word *eris*, of the role of strife in human affairs, and of the connection between these, is itself complex.

Lines 25-26 do not exhaust the complexities of Hesiod's *eris*, for his advice to Perses which follows immediately suggests a further elaboration of the word's meaning (27-34):

ὦ Πέρση, σὺ δὲ ταῦτα τεῶι ἐνικάτθεο θυμῶι,
μηδέ σ' Ἔρις κακόχαρτος ἀπ' ἔργου θυμὸν ἐρύκοι
νεῖκε' ὀπιπεύοντ' ἀγορῆς ἐπακουὸν ἔοντα.
ᾠρη γάρ τ' ὀλίγη πέλεται νεικέων τ' ἀγορέων τε, 30
ᾠτινι μὴ βίος ἔνδον ἐπηετανὸς κατάκειται
ᾠραῖος, τὸν γαῖα φέρει, Δημήτερος ἀκτῆν.
τοῦ κε κορεσσάμενος νείκεα καὶ δῆριν ὀφέλλοις
κτῆμασ' ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίοις.

Hesiod urges his brother, "do not let *eris*, rejoicing in evil, keep your spirit from work, an onlooker attending to quarrels in the agora. One who does not have abundant livelihood stored within has little concern for quarrels and agoras.... If you have a glut of this [livelihood stored within], then you might stir up quarrels and struggle, going after the possessions of others" (28-31, 33-34).

Here too, critics have had difficulty in explaining the connection between this advice and Hesiod's earlier description of *eris*.¹⁸ Although there is an evident contrast between the *eris* that here keeps a man away from work (28) and the good *eris*, which was said to rouse a man toward work (20), the bad *eris* now consists of watching quarrels in the agora which keeps one from work, whereas earlier (14) the bad *eris* was said to stir up war and struggle, which were presumably evil in themselves. But continuity between the two passages is indicated by a verbal echo,¹⁹ and the advice to Perses should be understood as amplifying rather than altering the picture of bad *eris*, much as 20-26 amplify the picture of good *eris*. And just as the good *eris* was gradually seen to be more complex, the bad *eris* too is seen to be more complex: by stirring up disputes it is harmful not only because these can hurt you but also because they take you from your work. And Perses' main concern should be work.

An additional feature of the bad *eris*, evident particularly from 30-34, is that this sort of *eris* is harmful only to a poor man; someone with sufficient wealth could stir up quarrels without suffering the same ill effects. And if the rich man can go after the possessions of others without harm, he can presumably profit from such activity, at least on occasion. Hesiod implies, in other words, that quarrels are harmful only because they distract a man from

work. Perses' folly lies not in stirring up quarrels *per se*, but in ignoring his poverty. Thus, much as the good *eris* by inspiring a man to compete may bring prosperity to some but be harmful to others, so the bad *eris* by stirring up quarrels is harmful to some but may be profitable to others.

If anyone doubts that Hesiod, who frequently warns against the wrongful acquisition of property, could intend to imply that the "bad" *eris* may profit [177]some men, he should remember that the context for these remarks is a judicial quarrel,²⁰ in which it is possible that a man might benefit from pursuing a legitimate claim by proper legal means, provided he is rich enough to be able to afford not to work. Moreover, *eris* is an essential part of the judicial process or *dikê* ("justice"),²¹ and Hesiod's *dikê* also exhibits a certain ambiguity. In the *Works and Days* he strongly supports justice and criticizes litigants and judges who corrupt it, but at the same time he recognizes that justice requires time and can thus be harmful to the interests of a poor man. He can also conceive of the possibility (270-73) that a just (*dikaios*) man may not benefit from justice (*dikê*); indeed, from his point of view this may have happened or be about to happen in his dispute with Perses. Thus *dikê* may harm the poor and benefit the rich (either justly or unjustly), and the *eris* that stirs up quarrels and leads to *dikê* may likewise be either beneficial or harmful.

In the middle of verse 34 Hesiod turns to his specific quarrel with Perses over their inheritance and, as we noted, says little more about *eris* in the poem. He has left us with a complex picture of a good *eris* that may also lead to anger and begrudging, and a bad *eris* that may benefit a rich man. It is impossible to extract a clear or consistent message from this. Prosperity stands out, here and throughout the poem, as a clear and unambiguously desirable value, but the rules Hesiod formulates for achieving prosperity lack this clarity. Even hard work, which is praised repeatedly for the benefits it brings, is clearly imposed on us as a necessity that we would prefer to avoid, like the men in the Golden Age, if only it were possible. And as he makes the rules more precise, he also suggests ambiguity, uncertainty, and even arbitrariness in their application to actual situations. If we are looking to Hesiod for practical advice with respect to *eris*, some obvious questions would come to mind: How should one conduct a rivalry so as to profit and not be harmed? Can one profit from rivalry without harming others? When does the benefit of quarreling over the possessions of others outweigh the harm? We may wonder indeed whether Hesiod would have answers to such questions.

There are, moreover, several other indications of ambiguity and arbitrariness in the poem.²² It is clear, for example, that in order to obtain the largest harvest, certain rules must be followed, particularly the rules about the correct time for plowing, sowing, and harvesting. Hesiod stresses (448ff.) that plowing should begin when one hears the cranes migrating (about the first of November): whatever the conditions, "you should plow during the season for plowing" (460). If a man plows as late as the solstice, his crop will be thin and poor and few will regard him (479-82). But there is a catch: "The mind of aegis-bearing Zeus is fickle and hard for mortal men to know" (483-84). The

late-planter may be saved by late rains sent by Zeus, and he may then have as good a crop as the man who planted in season (485-90). Similarly, as a rule one son is better for the wealth of the household (376-78), but Zeus might provide enough so that the house can support more sons, in which case there would be more profit (379-80). And a merchant ship should carry a large load in order to make a large profit, provided it is not shipwrecked (643-45), and you will not be shipwrecked if you sail at the right season, provided neither Zeus nor Poseidon wishes to destroy you (663-69). Hesiod is not recommending that [178]one plow late or have two sons (though he does advise against risking seafaring, while at the same time recognizing the large profit to be made). On the contrary, he is quite firm in urging adherence to the primary rules for success in agriculture and elsewhere. But however much a man may follow these rules, success is to some extent out of his hands. This is not a message of despair, however, for the exceptions do not invalidate the rules and a man will still do better in the long run if he follows these rules.

This tension between rules and arbitrariness finds expression in general terms in the proem (5-7):

*ῥέα μὲν γὰρ βριάει, ῥέα δὲ βριάοντα χαλέπτει,
ῥεία δ' ἀρίζηλον μινύθει καὶ ἄδηλον ἀέξει,
ῥεία δέ τ' ἰθύνει σκολιὸν καὶ ἀγήνορα κάρφει.*

In three balanced lines with notable anaphora Hesiod emphasizes the ease with which Zeus “gives strength [to a man] and reduces the strong, obscures the illustrious and makes illustrious the obscure, straightens the crooked and withers the proud.” Although the third pair of activities here seems to exemplify Zeus’ concern with justice, there is no indication that the first two paired activities are anything but arbitrary. Certainly they are not in any obvious way related to Zeus’ desire to punish or reward certain behavior. Taken together the three lines seem to portray a Zeus who may intervene in human affairs in some predictable fashion (to straighten the crooked), but may also intervene in an arbitrary manner, raising and lowering men for no apparent reason.

Some critics have presumed that the “ethical” message of line 7 should be understood in the preceding lines as well, so that Hesiod really means that “Zeus gives strength to a man [who is righteous] and reduces the strong [and corrupt],” but this interpretation has no warrant. Hesiod’s point is that Zeus (who here in some sense represents the gods and the non-human universe) displays both regular and arbitrary behavior. And the ambiguity and tension in Zeus’ behavior are “emblematic” (to borrow a phrase from Aeschylean criticism) of the ambiguity and tension in human affairs. These indications of arbitrariness and ambiguity do not indicate that Hesiod has failed to develop a coherent set of rules or that he is unable to think clearly or consistently about these rules; rather, his formulation of consistent rules is limited by his recognition that the regularity of life is not fixed, that ambiguity is inherent in some situations, and that some results are unavoidably arbitrary. The result is a tension between his insistence that adherence to the rules will lead to prosperity

and his acknowledgment that in some cases it may not, a tension of which he is well aware and which he tries to illustrate by his picture of ambiguous *eris*.

Hesiod attributes a similar ambiguity to *aidôs* (“shame”),²³ the last term I shall consider. Traditionally *aidôs* is the shame a person feels in the face of social disapproval, a shame that restrains him or her from violating social norms or the rights of others. In the general state of lawlessness forecast for the present age of iron Hesiod laments that “there will be no *aidôs*” (192, cf. 200), that is, no sense of shame restraining people from lawless behavior. In this context *aidôs* is clearly and straightforwardly good, as it is with few exceptions [179] in Homer. Later in the *Works and Days*, however, Hesiod elaborates in a three-fold anaphora a more ambiguous picture of *aidôs* (317-19):

aidôs δ' οὐκ ἀγαθὴ κεχρημένον ἄνδρα κομίζει,
aidôs, ἢ τ' ἄνδρας μέγα σίνεται ἢδ' ὀνίνησι
aidôs τοι πρὸς ἀνολβίῃ, θάρσος δὲ πρὸς ὄλβωι.

It is not a good *aidôs* that attends to a needy man,
aidôs, which greatly harms or benefits men;
aidôs, I say, leads to poverty, but boldness to prosperity.

The meaning of these lines has been disputed.²⁴ The first is apparently a proverb, for it appears in nearly the same form in Homer as advice to Odysseus disguised as a beggar (*Od.* 17.347), and Hesiod uses the same words later (500) with *elpis* (“hope”) in place of *aidôs* to warn against the empty hope a poor man may nourish that keeps him from work. The Homeric context suggests that the saying was a traditional warning that a poor man needs to be aggressive in pursuing his own gain and should not be too modest or too much restrained by *aidôs* (probably a general feeling of restraint and deference rather than specifically the shame of being poor or of needing to work or beg). The disguised Odysseus does avoid harmful *aidôs* and successfully obtains food from the suitors, and although he proposes cooperation with Irus, when rivalry (*eris*) ensues, he fights and defeats him, thus eliminating his competitor. In Hesiod the line comes rather suddenly after an extended exhortation to and praise of work (298ff.), which ends with an echo of Hesiod’s earlier advice against engaging in quarrels:²⁵ “Keep your mind away from the possessions of others and turn it toward work” (315-16).

It is not immediately apparent why Hesiod introduces *aidôs* in 317, but the remark that *aidôs* is not good for a poor man implies that, although it is not split in two like *eris*, *aidôs* is similarly two-sided. In 318 this duality is defined in terms of harm and benefit, and in 319 the harmful effect of *aidôs* is specified:²⁶ it leads to poverty and stands in clear contrast to boldness, which leads to prosperity. The beneficial effect of *aidôs* is left unspecified, presumably because it is well known, though Hesiod reminds us of the traditional, beneficial *aidôs* in the following lines (320-26), warning that the bold man must be careful to pursue wealth properly and not through force or lying words, for if a man thinks he can prosper by wrongful means, and if “lack of restraint (*ἀναιδείη*) drives out *aidôs*” (324), then the gods will easily reduce him to poverty again.

The idea connecting these remarks on *aidôs* to the preceding exhortation to work must be the struggle to free oneself from poverty. *Aidôs*—a strong sense of deference, an acceptance of one’s position in life, a reluctance to annoy others—will keep the poor man perpetually poor. The poor man needs to be bold and aggressive, but his aggressiveness must in turn be tempered by the good side of *aidôs* and he must refrain from wrongful gain. To some extent the ambiguity in harmful/beneficial *aidôs* can be lessened by reference to economic levels: a poor man is more likely to suffer the harmful effect of *aidôs*, whereas a rich man is more likely to be too aggressive and suffer from lack of *aidôs*. But there remains a definite tension in *aidôs*, for in avoiding harmful *aidôs* and [180]boldly pursuing prosperity, one risks losing the beneficial *aidôs* and being brought to ruin.

Thus the analyses Hesiod presents of *eris* and *aidôs* are similar in their emphasis on the duality and ambiguity of concepts whose traditional evaluation was unambiguous. More precisely, each is the reverse of the other: *eris*, the traditional evil, becomes also the good spirit of rivalry that inspires the poor man to work but may lead him to attempt to gain the possessions of others, whereas *aidôs*, the traditional good, becomes the sense of restraint that keeps a poor man poor but also restrains him from wrongfully acquiring others’ possessions. A simple conclusion might be that a poor man should seek beneficial *eris* and avoid harmful *aidôs* (as the disguised Odysseus had done), whereas the rich man’s main concern is to seek beneficial *aidôs* while at the same time avoiding harmful *eris*. But ultimately the ambiguities cannot be wholly resolved, nor can we eliminate the tension between the “ethical” message that the proper observance of the rules will be rewarded, and the occasional arbitrary intervention of Zeus or other forces in human affairs.

Hesiod’s purpose, in fact, is not to resolve but to affirm this tension and to reveal its presence in language as well as in human affairs. Language, as he tells us in *Theogony* 27-28, has a problematic relation to life that the neat opposition of truth and falsehood cannot fully comprehend.²⁷ But the ambiguity of language is an important reflection of the ambiguity inherent in life, and the purpose of Hesiod’s opening discussion of *eris* is precisely to assert this ambiguity in both language and life. He does this not by claiming that *eris* (like *aidôs*) is one entity with different effects but by the dramatic assertion that it is two separate beings with the same name and (as we learn) with characteristics that are in some ways opposite and in some ways the same.

In sum, when Hesiod first proposes the division of *eris* into two, it appears to represent a rather simple fact of the human condition, that there is a fundamental opposition between good and evil. This is not so much an ethical as a practical opposition—a life of prosperity vs. a life of poverty—and the entire poem exhorts us to strive for prosperity and provides instruction for achieving it. But as Hesiod fills in the picture of these two opposed *erides*, this opposition disintegrates and we are presented with a different picture—not a replacement but a supplement to the first. The result is not complete chaos but rather like a photograph that has a second image superimposed on the first.

Neither image by itself conveys the photograph's full meaning, but with difficulty we can train our eyes and mind to comprehend both images at once. This is how Hesiod wants us to hear his poem and comprehend his vision of the world, and this is why he begins with a discussion of the dual and ambivalent nature of *eris*.

We can now, finally, turn to the question why Hesiod begins this discussion with a negative opening: "There is not, after all, one *eris* but two." As we noted, these words refer to the *Theogony* and its traditional view of *eris* as unequivocally evil. Now, the *Theogony* is not wholly free of ambiguity, particularly in the proem, but the main body of the poem (116ff.) presumes a relatively clear distinction between good and evil. The gods and their families are for the most part easily categorized on one side or the other, and the poem [181] relates on a universal scale the eventual triumph of Zeus and the forces of good over the forces of evil. I suggest that when Hesiod came to compose the *Works and Days*, he recalled this unambiguous ethical framework of his earlier poem and wished to alert his listeners to the fact that this poem would present a more complex picture than the earlier one. He thus began the body of the poem with a dramatic rejection of the traditional view of *eris* as unambiguously evil. Even if Hesiod's listeners did not recall precisely the generation of *eris* in the *Theogony*, they would certainly be familiar with this traditional view, and these opening words would immediately make them aware that Hesiod was saying something different and evidently important. *Eris* itself plays a relatively minor role in the *Works and Days*, but the ambiguity that *eris* represents is for Hesiod a vital feature of language and of life and plays a significant role in the rest of the poem. The surface message is essentially the "ethical" lesson, "follow certain rules and you will achieve prosperity"; but the sub-text is a new, more complex lesson of ambiguity and arbitrariness. In order to convey the total picture, both regularity and ambiguity, Hesiod begins with the more difficult and novel idea, choosing *eris* as a vivid illustration; and at the very beginning of this illustration he makes clear by reference to the *Theogony* that he is departing radically from the tradition and even from his own earlier poem. The beginning of his poem casts doubt on the validity of this traditional ethical view and asserts in its place the complexity and ambiguity of the human experience. Thus the ambiguity of *eris* is important to Hesiod not so much because it sheds light on the nature of *eris* but because it exemplifies the ambiguity of the world, and the disintegration of Hesiod's text toward the end of this passage signifies not a failure to comprehend *eris* but the successful comprehension of a more important truth.



NOTES

1. For the text of the *Works and Days* I follow M. L. West, ed., *Hesiod: Works and Days* (Oxford 1978) except where noted. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to West are to this work. Besides West I have consulted the commentaries of U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (*Hesiodos Erga* [Berlin 1928]), T. A. Sinclair (*Hesiod: Works and Days* [London 1932]), C. J. Rowe (*Essential Hesiod* [Bristol 1978]) and W. J. Verdenius (*A Commentary on Hesiod, Works and Days, vv. 1-382* [Leiden 1985]). I shall not acknowledge their help on every occasion.

2. It is impossible to translate the full sense of *γένος* here; I have used “kind” to convey Hesiod’s general point, though *γένος* is not yet so abstract. The word indicates that “Hesiod has the genealogical background of the *Theogony* in mind” (West *ad loc.*).

3. “Hesiod and Historiography,” *Hermes* 85 (1957) 257-85, at p. 262.

4. This is a direct allusion to the *Theogony* (226-32), where *eris* is the mother of *horkos*. As the legitimate punisher of perjurers, *horkos* is not inherently evil, but she (along with battles, murders, quarrels, etc.) is the daughter of *eris* because strife causes perjury, which requires punishment by *horkos*.

[182]5. It could be said, of course, that inasmuch as the good *eris* stimulates work and leads to prosperity, Hesiod’s discussion of these subjects implicitly enlists the idea of a good *eris*, but nothing in the rest of the poem either requires or even suggests that the reader should think of good *eris* in connection with work or prosperity. West (supra n. 1) 36 is wrong in seeing a reference to the good *eris* in 27 (“O Perses, lay this [τὰῦτα] down in your heart”). τὰῦτα (plural!) more naturally designates “the lessons of lines 11-26” (Rowe), the specific point of which is then indicated in 28, ἔρις κακόχαρτος.

6. We should note that after the catalogue of her birth and family (225-32), *eris* is mentioned four times in the *Theogony* (637, 705, 710, 782); in all cases she is evil strife.

7. Rowe (supra n. 1) 104 argues from the presence of other inconsistencies, such as the conflicting parentage of the Fates in the *Theogony*, that it is doubtful whether Hesiod “would be interested in making a cross-reference of this kind between two different poems.” But Hesiod may have other reasons for the cross-reference.

8. West makes it sound as if the words just happened to occur to Hesiod at this point; this is particularly odd given his view that Hesiod thought out the general “prospect” of his poem and later revised the poem with the aid of writing (see “Is the *Works and Days* an Oral Poem?” in C. Brillante *et al.*, eds., *I poemi epici rapsodici non omerici e la tradizione orale* [Università di Venezia, Facoltà di lettere e filosofia S. Sebastiano 3, Padua 1981] 53-73).

9. Verdenius sees *WD* 11 as a “supplementary correction” motivated by Hesiod’s pledge to speak truthfully (ἐτήτυμα, 10), but the truth would be as well served if Hesiod had confined himself to the assertion of two *erides*.

10. So Wilamowitz, Sinclair, and Verdenius understand νοήσας (12). This is better than West’s “seeing her at work,” since at this point the good *eris* is a mystery to Hesiod’s audience, who need an explanation, not experience, in order to understand his meaning. Hesiod may anticipate some resistance to this novel idea.

11. Many scholars (most recently J. C. Hogan, “*Eris* in Homer,” *Grazer Beiträge* 10 [1981] 21-58) have noted that there are positive and neutral instances of *eris* in Homer,

where the spirit of “rivalry” is an essential component of the heroic life, and, e.g., Nausicaa’s girlfriends make a competition out of their washing clothes (*Od.* 6.92). But in general *eris* is still viewed as a harmful force, and I suspect there would be general agreement with Achilles’ wish (*Il.* 18.107) that *eris* might perish from among gods and men. For harmful *eris* in the *Theogony*, see supra n. 6.

12. I follow West’s text and interpretation of 20-24. P. Millett has some good remarks on the nature of this good *eris* and how it fits into Hesiod’s society. He warns against identifying it with the modern idea of economic competition (“Hesiod and His World,” *PCPS* 210 [1984] 84-115, esp. 94-96).

13. So Wilamowitz (supra n. 1) 44, “ζῆλος ist keineswegs an sich etwas gutes.” He notes that in 195-96 ζῆλος is clearly evil, and like the bad *eris* in 28 is modified by *κακόχαρτος* (“rejoicing in evil”), a word perhaps coined by Hesiod for these two passages and not found again until the Christian era.

14. Pietro Pucci, *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry* (Baltimore 1977) 132.

15. E.g., Rowe suggests that *κοτέει* and *φθονέει* are “simply two alternative words for the feeling of one rival for another.”

16. E.g., Luciana Bona Quaglia, *Gli “Erga” di Esiodo* (Turin 1973) 41-42 n. 12, with references to earlier works.

17. Eric A. Havelock, “Thoughtful Hesiod,” *YCS* 20 (1966) 61-72, at p. 66.

18. West (supra n. 1) 36-37 has a contorted explanation of Hesiod’s alleged thought processes here. Havelock (supra n. 17) 64 concludes that “the poet at this point [28] has abandoned the formal division with which he had begun.” Verdenius seeks consistency by assuming that Perses’ interest in quarrels stems from his desire to learn “the tricks of [183]legal action” in order to use them against Hesiod, but even if the assumption is true, this is clearly not Hesiod’s point here. For some excellent remarks on the organization of the poem see M. Heath, “Hesiod’s Didactic Poetry,” *CQ* 35 (1985) 245-63, esp. 245-48.

19. *πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ δῆριν ὀφέλλει* (14); *νείκεα καὶ δῆριν ὀφέλλοις* (33). The echo is reinforced by the presence of the fairly rare noun *δῆρις*, which occurs nowhere else in Hesiod (excluding the *Shield*), and only twice in Homer (*Il.* 17.158, *Od.* 24.515).

20. Hesiod’s quarrel with Perses is termed a *neikos* in 35. Quarrels (*neikea*) are among the offspring of *eris* in the *Theogony*, and *eris* and *neikos* are paired in *Th.* 782 and (probably) fr. 43a.36. In *Works and Days* *neikos* occurs only in this passage (29, 30, 33, in addition to 35). I would not go as far as G. Nagy, who suggests that “as the quarrel [between Hesiod and Perses] eventually reaches a resolution..., we realize that it must have been the beneficent and primary Eris all along” (“Hesiod,” in T. J. Luce, ed., *Ancient Writers: Greece and Rome* [New York 1982] vol. 1, 43-73, at p. 65). Hesiod may in fact have benefited from this dispute, but he is trying not to let his audience think so.

21. I use “justice” in the sense of “the system of justice” or “the legal process,” which I understand to be the primary meaning of *δίκη* in the *Works and Days*; see M. Gagarin, *Early Greek Law* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1986) 46-50. Heraclitus goes even farther and asserts (fr. 80) that *dikē* is *eris*.

22. I shall not discuss every ambiguity; most notably I shall say nothing about Pandora, for whom see Pucci (supra n. 14) 82-126.

23. Much has been written about *aidōs*. For Hesiod I have found most helpful K. J. McKay, “Ambivalent ΑΙΔΩΣ in Hesiod,” *AJP* 84 (1963) 17-27, 303 and D. B. Claus, “Defining Moral Terms in *Works and Days*,” *TAPA* 107 (1977) 73-84; there is an interesting discussion of *aidōs* in Homer by J.-C. Riedinger, “Les deux *aidōs* chez Homère,” *Rev. de Philol.* 54 (1980) 62-79.

24. For the text and meaning of 317-19 I have found Verdenius most helpful. In particular I have followed him (and others) in reading *κομίζει* in 317 (*κομίζειν* West) and in translating *πρός* (319) “leads to” rather than “is a feature of” (West). It is clear from 317 and 318 that Hesiod’s concern is with the effect of *aidōs* on people, not with its cause. Even if 319 implies that poverty fosters *aidōs*, it must also imply that *aidōs* fosters poverty. I disagree with Verdenius’ assumption, however, that these lines must apply clearly to Perses’ situation. Hesiod uses his brother as a starting point for advice that often (as in the remarks on *dikē* in 213-85) ceases to apply specifically to Perses’ own case. In the preceding section (298-316) Hesiod has been exhorting Perses to work, but his advice soon (certainly by 314) becomes so generalized that it could apply to anyone in his audience.

25. Cf. *κτῆμασ’ ἐπ’ ἀλλοτρίοις* (34); *ἀπ’ ἀλλοτρίων κτεάνων* (315).

26. A. Hoekstra’s idea (*Mnem.* 3 [1950] 99-106), that *aidōs* in 319 is good (the humble modesty of the poor), is rightly rejected by McKay (supra n. 23). Poverty is always bad for Hesiod; there is no need, moreover, for Hesiod to specify the beneficial effects of *aidōs*, which are well known to his audience. But the harmful effect implicit in 317 and explicitly mentioned in 318 would not be so familiar to Hesiod’s listeners, and he thus specifies it in 319.

27. On *Th.* 27-28 see Pucci (supra n. 14) 8-44.