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*Classical Philology*, Vol. 69, No. 1. (Jan., 1974), pp. 1-16.

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*Classical Philology* is currently published by The University of Chicago Press.

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# CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY

VOLUME LXIX, NUMBER 1

January 1974

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## WORK, JUSTICE, AND HESIOD'S FIVE AGES

JOSEPH FONTENROSE

HESIOD devotes the first two hundred lines of *Works and Days* to his proem and to three myths: Prometheus' theft of fire, Pandora, and the five ages of man—the *aitia* of the discourse which follows.<sup>1</sup> He joins the first two, as in the *Theogony*: Zeus created the woman to punish mankind for Prometheus' theft of fire in man's behalf. The third he expressly calls another tale (*WD* 106: *ἔτερόν τοι ἐγὼ λόγον ἐκκορυφώσω*). Each myth is for Hesiod primarily an *aition* of man's need to work for his livelihood, his *bios*; his central theme in the poem is work as man's lot on earth; and, as is customary for a didactic poet, he begins with the origin myth of the institution that is the subject of his poem. The myths themselves had a broader intent in the oral and poetic tradition from which Hesiod received them; as we may infer from cognate myths, they are in original intent *aitia* of man's sorry condition, of his sufferings, diseases, and crimes.

The myth of the ages stands apart from the fused Prometheus–Pandora tale. It cannot be fitted to or reconciled with it except by main force—although some

writers have tried to do so or have treated the three as if they were essentially one—for each tells about the earliest men and a primeval workless paradise.

After his proem Hesiod begins his myth series with the statement that the gods have hidden man's *bios*. Specifically it was Zeus who hid it in anger at Prometheus for deceiving him (*WD* 42–49), presumably in the division of the sacrificial victim between gods and men at Mekone (*Th.* 535–60, though it was surely Zeus who deceived himself). Before Zeus hid the *bios*, one day's work could provide a man's needs for a whole year. This is somewhat inconsistent with Hesiod's later statement (*WD* 90–95) that, before Pandora came to earth and opened the jar of ills, men lived without evils, work (if *ponos* in 91 means “work” rather than “suffering”), and diseases. For here, it appears, a man did not have to work even one day a year, and the happy age lasted until after Prometheus' theft of fire, which was subsequent to his arbitration at Mekone. The causes and means of man's loss of paradise are different in the two myths.

Both the Prometheus and the Pandora

1. “Age” is, I grant, a not wholly satisfactory translation of *genos*, which means “stock” or “breed” in this text; but these words will hardly do for translation or discussion (can we talk about Hesiod's “golden stock”?). and “race” must be rejected altogether as both misleading and inaccurate. “Generation” is one meaning of *genos*, but is surely unsuitable for the myth, since each *genos* obviously consisted of several generations in the usual sense of the term. The term “age,”

after all, may properly refer to the time when the *genos* lived on earth. I shall frequently retain *genos* (*genea*) and use it without italics.

An appendix listing books and articles on Hesiod's five-ages myth, and also editions of *WD* referred to, appears at the end of the paper. To these works I refer by author's or editor's name, often followed by page numbers, unless a more complete citation is required.

myths assume a continuity between the workless age and the less happy work-filled age that followed. Men were deprived of their *bios* (or of easy access to it), but lived on, subject to work, and reproduced their kind, exactly as in the Eden tale of Genesis. There was no hiatus at any point, just a great change in man's condition. But in the myth of the ages, each age comes to a complete end and the next is a completely new creation (an apparent exception is the transition from the heroic to the iron age). Where could one insert Prometheus and Pandora in the five ages? They cannot be placed at the end of the golden age or beginning of the silver age, since there was no transition from one to the other: the golden men disappeared completely under earth, and the silver age was a new beginning. The silver men were not descendants of the golden, and they disappeared completely too.<sup>2</sup> But the Pandora myth demands that we look upon Pandora as ancestress of living men and as archetype of woman-kind. For the same reason we must rule out the bronze age, although Prometheus' gift of fire was preliminary to his teaching mankind the working of metals (Aesch. *Prom.* 500–504; but Hesiod does not mention this, and Prometheus apparently introduced iron along with bronze), and although Apollodoros (1. 7. 2) placed him in the bronze age, when he warned his son Deukalion about the imminent flood that would destroy the bronze men. Furthermore no paradise begins or precedes Hesiod's bronze age. There remains the

time of transition from the heroic to the iron age. Since the iron men are Hesiod's contemporaries (174–75), they should be descended from Epimetheus and Pandora, if these first parents have a place in the myth of the ages. But we reach absurd conclusions if we place them at the close of the heroic age: for then Prometheus' theft of fire would occur after the Theban and Trojan wars, and Helen would precede Pandora. Herakles, who freed Prometheus, lived in the heroic age; but the liberation occurred ages after the theft of fire (Aesch. *Prom.* 1020–29; *Prom. sol. ap. Cic. Tusc.* 2. 10. 25). So there is no way of fitting the Prometheus and Pandora tales into the myth of five ages: this latter myth is entirely separate from the former.

The workless ages of all three myths have a common source in the widespread myth of a primeval paradise in which the first men lived an innocent, happy, and carefree life. The paradise of the Prometheus and Pandora myths is a simple Eden which men lost for their offenses, or rather for an offense that their champion and benefactor, Prometheus, committed.<sup>3</sup> The golden age of the five-ages myth is more elaborate, and it is followed by a series of ages, which, except for the fourth, are named for less valuable metals. Hesiod did not invent this myth of successive ages (if he did, we could not call it a true myth). We find variants in India and Persia.

In the *Vanaparvan* of the *Mahabharata* Hanuman tells Bhima about the four Yugas that have passed on earth, called Krita, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali.<sup>4</sup> The

2. In Aesch. *Prom.* 442–58, pre-Promethean man, as Prometheus describes him, looks a bit like silver man (*νηπιούς άντας τὸ πρὶν / ἔννοους ἔθηκα*), but the outcome is different; and these men were not *νήπιοι* in the sense that they depended on their mothers and played childishly.

3. There is reason to believe that in early Greek myth Prometheus was a first man, an Adam. It is his brother, Epimetheus, the reflex of Prometheus, who married Pandora and thus became ancestor of mankind. And what can the exchange with Chiron mean but the exchange of Prometheus'

mortality (and an end of suffering for Chiron) for Chiron's immortality (and prolonged suffering for Prometheus); see Apollod. 2. 5. 4. The transition first man > culture hero > god or daimon is fairly easy to make; compare the Indian Manu. On the distinction between primitive paradise and golden age, see Baldry.

4. *Mahabharata* 3, sect. 149; see also 3. 188, 191, where Markandeya speaks; Roth, pp. 21–33. Notice that in the Krita age there are no gods or demons; in Hesiod's first age the Olympian gods had not appeared.

Krita (Perfect) is very like Hesiod's golden age: men lived then without work, want, disease, decay, misery, discord, and malice; all needs were supplied at a thought. In the Treta virtue decreased by one fourth, but men still recognized truth and religious duties. In the Dvapara virtue decreased by another fourth, and men's intellects decreased too: they became passionate and subject to diseases, lust, and calamities. The final Kali age, like Hesiod's iron age, is the opposite of the first age: it is a time of avarice, deceit, hate, lust. The virtuous become poor and short-lived, but the wicked live long in prosperity (cf. *WD* 190–92). Men hate and murder one another; sons rob and kill parents; wives kill husbands and sons (cf. *WD* 182–88). There is a striking similarity between the Kali and iron ages in the feature of early senescence: in the Kali decrepitude and decay come upon men at the age of sixteen (*Mah.* 3. 188); the iron age will end when at birth men are already gray-haired (*WD* 180–81). These Indian ages are not named for metals, but each has its distinctive color, successively white, red, yellow, and black.

The four Persian ages, however, are named for metals. In a dream Auharmazd shows Zarathustra a tree that has four branches, each of a different metal: gold, silver, steel, and iron alloy.<sup>5</sup> The branches, Auharmazd explains, represent four ages to come, which together are Zarathustra's millennium; this is an adaptation of the myth to Zoroastrian religion. The golden age is the reign of King Vishtasp, when the true religion prevails and the demons are driven out; as in the Indian account, one eternal religion prevails. The ages of silver and steel are also identified with the reigns of kings who uphold the religion.

It is in the description of the iron age, especially in the seven-age version (see note 5), that this Persian account reveals its kinship to the Indian and Greek myths of ages. In this age the demons will control the world and all evils will break loose. Men will become cheaters and deceivers, as in the Hesiodic iron age. In fact, the statement that "great friends will become of different parties, . . . the affection of the father will depart from the son, and *that of the brother from his brother*" (*BY* 2. 30, Muir's translation), is very close in expression to *WD* 182–84, as well as to the Indian description. Again Auharmazd's prediction that in this last age righteous men will come to poverty and want (*BY* 2. 47) recalls *WD* 190–91: the righteous and good man has no favor among the iron men (cf. *Mah.* 3. 188: the virtuous become poor and do not live long).

It is in such correspondences of detail concerning the first and fourth ages that Hesiod's myth of ages reveals its kinship with the Indian and Persian myths: noteworthy are the emphases on deceit, hostility between kinsmen (expressed in terms of father and son, brother and brother), and disrespect for the righteous in the final age. Especially significant is Hesiod's constant use of the future tense in his account of the iron age; for the Persian account is in the future tense for all four ages, and one version of the Indian Kali age is expressed in the future tense (*Mah.* 3. 191). It is apparent that Hesiod has made use of a traditional Greek myth that was derived from the same source as the Asian myths, though he has changed it to suit his purpose. His second age is very different; he inserts a nonmetallic age of heroes, and so has five ages instead of four;

5. *Bahman Yast* 1 in E. W. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, I (Oxford, 1880), 191–94. *Bahman Yast* 2 (West, pp. 194–215) has a later version, in which there are seven ages; gold, silver,

bronze, copper, tin, steel, iron. See Reitzenstein (1924), pp. 3–5; Von Fritz, p. 241. This later version gives much more detail about the ages.

the second, third, and fourth genea are not descendants of the previous genos; his sequence does not plainly show a progressive degeneration of mankind's morals and conditions of life from one age to the next. Yet that the Greek myth which he adapted was much more like the Indian and Persian variants in these respects is evident from other versions of it, which may be influenced by Hesiod's, but do not repeat it or depend upon it. Ovid (*Met.* 1. 89–162) describes four ages—gold, silver, bronze, and iron—each descended from the preceding age (the first being created by the *opifex rerum* or by Prometheus) and each inferior to the one before. The silver men, like the Treta men, are only a little inferior in virtue to their predecessors. The violent bronze age corresponds to the passionate Dvaparayuga. The range of iron-age crime is as broad as in descriptions of the Kali age; in particular both Ovid and the Indian poet stress greed for gain. Ovid's Gigantes who war on the gods correspond to the demons of the Persian iron age. Ovid refers to the change from the eternal summer of the golden age to Zeus-Jupiter's division of the year into four seasons in the silver age; the Asian accounts refer to climatic changes in the course of the four ages. Finally Ovid's iron age comes to an end by flood, and the Persian iron age by destruction.

Other versions are more like Ovid's than like Hesiod's, although showing interesting differences from his. Aratos speaks of three ages—gold, silver, and bronze.<sup>6</sup> His golden men were not workless: they tilled the soil, which yielded abundantly through Dikē's favor, but did no other kind of

work. The silver age stands halfway between the gold and the bronze; men's behavior became worse, but Dikē remained on earth among them. The bronze men were warriors and bandits, the first men to eat meat (cf. *WD* 146–47); they became so bad that Dikē abandoned them and ascended to the sky. For Horace (*Ep.* 16. 41–66) the three ages are golden, bronze, and iron, the last two being equally hard; his golden men go to the Blessed Isles to continue their life of paradise. For Juvenal (6. 1–24) the three ages are golden (not explicitly named), silver, and iron. His account resembles that of Aratos in that his silver age is midway between the golden and the iron ages. The silver men were the first adulterers, but every kind of crime flourished in the iron age.<sup>7</sup>

The versions reviewed are plainly not drawn from Hesiod, but reveal a Greek myth of four ages, named for metals, which decline in moral character and conditions of life from the first to the fourth; none comes to a complete end, since each age after the first is descended from the preceding; the first parents of the golden men are the ancestors of all living men. In these respects the non-Hesiodic Greek myth is close to the Asian myths. In particular its silver age is very much like the Indian Treta age; it is inferior to the first age but superior to the third. Hesiod adapted this myth to his poem; from it he drew his four metal ages and his descriptions of the gold, bronze, and iron ages, although he differs somewhat in emphasis. He changed the character of the silver men, introduced an age of heroes, and brought the first three ages

6. Aratos *Phain.* 100–36. Antipater (*Anth. Pal.* 5. 31) mentions the same three ages, but does not describe them. Possibly this three-age version lies behind Apollod. 1. 7. 2, where Zeus destroys the bronze men with the flood.

7. Babrios *Prooim.* 1–13 is a description of the golden age, when animals, stones, and trees could talk; lines 3–5 are an incomplete interpolation about four other ages, apparently

based on Hesiod. Plato *Pol.* 271C–274E does not refer to the myth of ages, but to a myth of primeval paradise, when Kronos ruled, and a subsequent inferior age, in which Prometheus, Hephaistos, and other gods helped man in his difficulties. No doubt Plato's picture of Kronos' reign was influenced by Hesiod's golden age.

to a complete end (it is possible that these changes had occurred in the version that he knew, but it is more likely that Hesiod made them).

Hesiod tells the myth in the manner that best supports his thesis. His *Works and Days* is both a plea for justice and a gospel of work. In general scholars have related his myth of ages to the justice theme and have neglected its relation to the work theme. Yet Hesiod introduces it as an alternative to the Prometheus and Pandora tales, in which he plainly tells his brother Perses how and why Zeus has ordained work for mankind. And his myth of the five ages does in fact support the doctrine of Zeus's ordinance of work for mankind and illustrate the consequences of disobedience.

The golden men did not have to work for their subsistence, but lived as gods in a blissful paradise (109–26).<sup>8</sup> Zeus, however, was not king, perhaps not even born yet (or not until the latter part of this age), and so men were not yet subject to work: the earth produced abundant food without their labor. Kronos and the Titans then ruled the world: χρύσειον μὲν πρῶτιστα γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων | ἀθάνατοι ποίησαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες | οἱ μὲν ἐπὶ Κρόνου ἦσαν, ὅτ' οὐρανῷ ἐμβασιλεύεν (*WD* 109–11). The gods Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες have to be the Titans, as verse 111 makes clear by informing us that the golden genos lived during the reign of Kronos (the antecedent of οἱ μὲν is ἀνθρώπων rather than ἀθάνατοι, who are nevertheless defined in this verse)—unless we suppose that Hesiod used a conventional half-line formula for referring to deities without considering how well it fit his context.<sup>9</sup> The phrase is formulaic, to

be sure, but why may it not be used for the Titans, if in the myth of the divine succession they had ruled on Olympos before Zeus overthrew them? Kronos, the youngest Titan, deposed his father Uranos and assumed rule over the whole world; and the ruler of the world sits on Olympos, which, as the highest mountain known to the early Greeks, was the throne of world sovereignty. There is evidence enough that Kronos was supposed to have ruled from Olympos before Zeus assumed the heavenly kingship. According to Apollonios of Rhodes, Kronos lay with Philyre on the island of Philyreis εἶτ' ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ / Τιτήνων ἤνασσειν (*Arg.* 2. 1232–33). In a song that Orpheus sang, Ophion and Eurynome had ruled on Olympos: ἦειδεν δ' ὡς πρῶτον Ὀφίων Εὐρυνόμη τε | Ὠκεανὶς νιφόντος ἔχον κράτος Οὐλύμπιοι (*Arg.* 1. 503–504). Kronos and Rea succeeded them and ruled for a time over the Titan gods (1. 507). If Apollonios is late evidence, Hesiod appears to say the same thing in the *Theogony* near the end of his proem, where he announces that his song will include the tale of how the gods took Olympos: ἦδὲ καὶ ὡς τὰ πρῶτα πολύπτυχον ἔσχον Ὀλυμπον (*Th.* 113). These gods are Zeus and the Olympians (*Th.* 112), and Hesiod implies that they took Olympos from Kronos. Aeschylus implies this too, when his chorus of Oceanids say to Prometheus that new helmsmen now rule Olympos (*Prom.* 149). In Hesiod's account of the Titanomachy the Titans fight from Othrys, Zeus and the Olympians from Olympos (*Th.* 632–33). That is, the Titans retired to Othrys when Zeus overthrew Kronos on Olympos. For this seems to be the order of events in the myth of Zeus's overthrow of Kronos. (1)

8. *WD* 119, ἡσυχὸν ἐργῶν ἐνέμοντο means “they lived on their fields in peace.” For this meaning of *erga* see *Il.* 2. 751, 12. 283; *Od.* 14. 344.

9. The phrase has given trouble. Rosenmeyer, pp. 278–79, considers it a formula that can refer only to Olympian gods

under Zeus. For Meyer, pp. 37–38, it refers both in 110 and 128 to the Titans, who therefore ended the golden genos and created the silver; Zeus came to power in the silver age and ended it; then Zeus created the three following ages.

When Zeus had grown up, he came to Olympos from Crete and forced his father to disgorge his brothers and sisters with the help of Gaia or Metis.<sup>10</sup> (2) At this time Zeus could do no more than banish Kronos from Olympos and take the throne conditionally (since the final settlement was not made until the Titans had been at last vanquished, *Th.* 881–85); he had not the power yet to take possession of the whole world. (3) Kronos and his brother Titans were still at large and able to seize Mount Othrys as a base of operations. (4) From Mount Othrys they conducted war for ten years until their final defeat.

This is the sequence in the basic myth of the heavenly kingship, which came to Greece from Syria or Asia Minor. There can be no doubt that the archaic Greek myth known to Hesiod is cognate to the Hurrian myth of Kumarbi, a myth of the divine succession and theomachy. In that tale Teshub the weather god overthrew Kumarbi, who nevertheless remained free to raise a rebellion against Teshub.<sup>11</sup> Likewise in the older Akkadian myth of beginnings, as represented in *Enuma elish*, when Ea had subdued Apsu and destined his son Marduk to become king of the gods, malcontent deities rebelled under Kingu and allied themselves with Tiamat, Apsu's spouse, to make war upon the reigning gods. Marduk then had to defeat and remove the rebels before his power was finally secure.<sup>12</sup>

When Zeus came to power he brought the golden age to an end, as the following verses surely imply: *αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τοῦτο*

*γένος κατὰ γαῖα κάλυψε, / τοὶ μὲν δαίμονες  
εἰσι Διὸς μεγάλου διὰ βουλάς / ἔσθλοὶ  
ἐπιχθόνιοι φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων*  
(*WD* 121–23). If Zeus did not end the age, but came to power later—perhaps at the end of the silver age (see note 9)—then we must suppose a gap between the end of the golden genos and their investiture as guardian spirits. But for all genea except iron Hesiod tells us what happened to them at the end of their period on earth; and this final destiny apparently came upon the silver, bronze, and heroic men at once. So, in the absence of any statement to the contrary, we must suppose that the golden men became guardian spirits immediately at the conclusion of their age; and Hesiod tells us expressly that Zeus made this change in their condition.

The 'Ολύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες who created the silver genos (128) are, therefore, the gods usually called Olympian, Zeus and his family. This is certainly Ovid's understanding in his version of the myth of the ages: "postquam Saturno tenebrosa in Tartara misso / sub Jove mundus erat, subiit argentea proles" (*Met.* 1. 113–14). And when Zeus came to power he decreed work for mankind, whatever the reason for his bringing the golden men's paradise to an end.<sup>13</sup> We must remember that Hesiod tells the myth of the ages as an alternative to the Prometheus and Pandora myths, the lesson of which was Zeus's imposition of work upon mankind; and the poem's central doctrine is that Zeus's justice is founded upon man's getting his livelihood and wealth through work, main-

10. *Th.* 492–500; Apollod. 1. 2. 1.

11. See J. Fontenrose, *Python* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1959), pp. 211–16, and citations in n. 55; Heubeck, pp. 512–15; Lesky, pp. 40–49.

12. See *Enuma elish* 1. 80–161; Fontenrose, *Python*, pp. 149–51, 239–47. See *Hyg. Fab.* 150; jealous Hera urged the Titans to overthrow Zeus and restore Kronos; but Zeus defeated them and cast them into Tartaros. Since Athena, Apollo, and Artemis assisted Zeus, H. J. Rose (in his edition of Hyginus *ad loc.*) supposed that Hyginus had confused Titans with Gigantes. But the rebel leader was Atlas, who

was a Titan, and the rebels wanted to restore Kronos, their chief. The whole tale is unlike any version of the Gigantomachy. We are to suppose that the Titans remained on earth after Zeus's usurpation and did not rebel until the younger Olympians (who are commonly supposed to have grown up in a few days after birth) had appeared.

13. *WD* 17–19, 42–47, 398. According to Vernant (1965), p. 21, Zeus imposed work only on iron men. Does this mean that the silver and bronze men were doing what Zeus wanted them to do?

ly husbandry. Hesiod insistently makes the point to Perses: man must work to keep off hunger and to fill his barn with *biotos* (298–319). Work may be a regrettable necessity, since men once lived without it; but that was when Kronos ruled the world. In line 111 Hesiod makes it explicit and emphatic that Zeus had not yet come to power when men lived easily without doing work. To Hesiod's gospel of work we shall soon return.

Zeus imposed work upon mankind soon after he came to power, and it is evident that the silver men were subject to his ordinance. But they lived a hundred years with their mothers, who nourished them; they were utter simpletons occupied with childish pleasures in their mothers' houses. Then, after reaching maturity at the ripe age of one hundred, they lived only a little time, since in their folly they could not keep from injuring one another: ὄβριν γὰρ ἀτάσθαλον οὐκ ἐδύναντο / ἀλλήλων ἀπέχειν (134–35). In these few years of adulthood, when they were no longer dependent on their mothers, they suffered many woes because of their follies (133–34). They made no sacrifices to the gods, and soon Zeus in his anger sent them beneath the earth, where they became a kind of underworld spirit (127–42).

What Hesiod means is that the silver men failed to heed Zeus's ordinance. Instead of working, they depended on their mothers for their livelihood; and it was upon men, not upon women, that Zeus imposed work, the tilling of fields and the raising of flocks and herds. Women had their own work to do: Athena taught Pandora how to do women's work like

weaving (63–64). When their mothers died, these men, who neither knew how to work nor wanted to work, had no resource but to eat the food of men who happened to have some. If those who had food would not share it, the hungry would resort to force or theft, and in the consequent violence men were injured or killed. Hunger and injuries were the *algea* that their folly caused them; violence, theft, injury, and murder were the *hybris atasthalos* that they could not keep from committing upon one another. Thus a man did not live long after reaching the age of one hundred. These silver men made no sacrifices on the altars of the gods simply because they produced nothing to sacrifice; they raised no crops or livestock. Their neglect of the gods was their culminating misdeed and the immediate reason for their destruction: Zeus hid them under earth because they did not sacrifice to the gods (οὐδ' ἀθανάτους θεραπεύειν / ἤθελον οὐδ' ἔρδειν μακάρων ἱεροῖς ἐπὶ βωμοῖς, 135–36). The verb *erdein* is significant: in the word group ἤθελον οὐδ' ἔρδειν we hear an overtone, “they were unwilling to work” (cf. 382). Yet Zeus made the silver men *hypochthonioi makares*, blessed dwellers beneath the earth, of second rank (*deuteroi*), but still receiving honors.<sup>14</sup> Their otherworldly status is inferior to that of the golden men, who became guardian spirits on earth.

Perhaps Hesiod received this feature of the silver men's destiny after death from the traditional myth that he adapted, in which the successive ages corresponded to a decline in man's condition; and perhaps this decline was reflected in the final lot

14. At *WD* 141 the manuscripts read *θηητοί*, but Peppmüller emended this to *θηητοῖς*: the silver men are called blessed underworld dwellers by mortal men; and this emendation has been accepted by most editors, e.g., Rzach, Evelyn-White, and Mazon. But Wilamowitz and Sinclair retain *θηητοί*: the silver men became blessed mortals who live beneath the earth. This, if right, seems to mean that the silver men were mortals who went under earth after death and have

a special status there as a kind of daimon. See Goldschmidt, pp. 36–37. The golden men had been mortal too, but Hesiod does not make the point; they become daimones on earth, a higher level of deities. It may be that Hesiod refers to the destiny of the gold and silver men in 108: *ὡς ὁμόθεν γέγάσαι θεοὶ θηητοὶ τ' ἀνθρώποι*. That is, it is not all gods who have the same origin as men, but only those who had been gold and silver men.



assigned to each *genos*. In the Persian variant King Vishtasp of the golden age demolishes the figures of demons, who then go into hiding in darkness; and in the silver age King Ardashir separates demons from men and scatters them. Notice that Zeus hid the silver *genos* under earth, where they became a kind of *daimon*, and were then separate and different from later men. The late Persian account, in its own Zoroastrian way, appears to reflect the same original feature as the Hesiodic version.<sup>15</sup>

Hesiod, however, did not interpret the successive ages as a sequence of degeneration, as scholars with few exceptions have interpreted him.<sup>16</sup> Of course, those who see a progressive decline in Hesiod's sequence have had to grant that the heroic age breaks the line of descent and marks an upturn in human affairs. But if one reads Hesiod's lines carefully, he will see no decline aside from the contrast between the golden age and the later ages.

When Zeus had removed the silver *genos*, he created the bronze *genos* from ash trees, and they were nothing like the silver men, *οὐκ ἀργυρέω οὐδὲν ὁμοίον* (144). This does not mean that they were inferior; it means only that they were different. They might even be considered superior, since they were active men, mighty and warlike in contrast to the childish and lazy silver men. When Zeus saw that the silver *genos* was a failure, he removed it from earth and created a new *genos*, the bronze men; and, we may infer, he laid upon them the same ordinance, that they must work for their livelihood. At the outset, then, they were on the same level as the silver men at the beginning of their age.

15. See *Bahman Yast* 2. 16–17. Goldschmidt, p. 37, believes that Hesiod has adapted and united two different myths, the four ages and the division of divine beings into gods, *daimones* (upperworld and underworld), heroes, and the dead (bronze men).

16. See Roth, pp. 13–20; Meyer, pp. 42–56; Reitzenstein (1924), p. 7, (1926), p. 64; Von Fritz, pp. 232, 237, 240;

Yet the bronze men failed too; for they turned to war as their means of livelihood (143–55). What other purpose would they have in making war than to drive off other people's flocks and herds, as in many an ancient legend? That is, they ate meat; as Hesiod tells us, *οὐδέ τι σίτον / ἦσθιον* (146–47)—they ate no bread because they did not till the earth. Aratos makes the positive statement in his version that the bronze men were the first to eat the flesh of oxen (*Phain.* 132). Obviously they did not raise their own livestock either, but plundered other lands. That is, they did not do the work that Zeus intended for mankind. When Hesiod says *χαλκῶ δ' εἰργάζοντο*, he means that their weapons and tools were made of bronze, besides making an allusion to the historical bronze age: *μέλας δ' οὐκ ἔσκε σίδηρος* (151). The work that they did was the work of war, *οἴσω Ἄρηος / ἔργ' ἔμελεν στονόεντα καὶ ὕβριες* (145–46). Here *erga* is ironic: the labors of Ares are *hybries*, not the work that Zeus wants man to do. The bronze *genos*, then, had much the same end as the silver *genos*: they destroyed one another through violent action. Hesiod appears to say that Zeus had no need to remove these men himself; they annihilated themselves and went down nameless to the house of chill Hades.

Then Zeus created the exceptional age of heroes, which interrupts the sequence of metals (156–73). They, says Hesiod, were “juster and better men, the divine brood of hero men, who are called demigods.” They were the heroes of the Theban and Trojan Wars, and Hesiod knew that they had lived only a few generations before him and had preceded his own iron age.

Wilamowitz, pp. 139–40; Solmsen (1949), pp. 83–85 with n. 27; Defradas; Goldschmidt, p. 34; Griffiths (1956), p. 109, (1958), p. 92; editions of Goettling, Sinclair *ad loc.* Contrary to the degenerative interpretation, see Hartmann, pp. 19–20, 30, 58; Teggart, p. 52; Rosenmeyer, pp. 269–77; Vernant (1966), pp. 247, 252–53; Stewart, pp. 44, 46.

For him their exploits were historical facts: they were great and magnanimous men, obviously superior to either bronze or iron men. So he was forced to insert this exceptional age in the sequence.

If this was a superior genus, if these heroes were just and upright, they must have worked for their livelihood in obedience to Zeus. And Hesiod surely remembered the legends in which epic heroes plowed their fields, like Odysseus, or cultivated their vineyards, like Laertes, or tended flocks, like Anchises.<sup>17</sup> This is what Hesiod means when he calls this genus *dikaioteron kai areion* (158), and when he says that Zeus created it *ἐπι χθονὶ πολυβοτείρη*; for here the conventional epithet, as often in Hesiod's poetry, has meaning in its context: Zeus placed the heroes on the fertile earth that they would make productive. Moreover when the surviving heroes went to the Blessed Isles, *τοῖσιν μελιηδέα καρπὸν / τρις ἔτεος θάλλοντα φέρει ζεῖδωρος ἄρουρα* (172–73). This may mean that they sowed and reaped these crops with satisfying and untiring labor, and so may imply that they were used to tilling the soil in their life on earth (cf. 237). For in the workless paradise, as in the golden age, the fields produce continually; but if the fields produce three times a year, then, though unusually rich, they have to be worked—in this respect the Blessed Isles are unlike the golden age. Yet the heroes passed away also; these men were too good for this earth. They too lived in a time of wars, and many were killed fighting around Thebes and Troy; and they fought

over flocks and herds (Hesiod's example is the flocks of Oedipus: [πόλεμος] ὤλεσε μαρναμένους μῆλων ἔνεκ' Οἰδιπόδαο, 163). These were the conditions of the bronze age, and, as scholars have seen, the heroic age is the same period from another point of view, romanticized and glorified.<sup>18</sup> As Hesiod's bronze age preserves a genuine, if not entirely accurate, memory of the later historical bronze age, roughly 1400–1000 B.C., so the age of heroes carries the legendary and epic tradition of that time. Hesiod did not realize that the two genera were really two representations of a single period.

We notice too that the heroes destroy one another in wars as the bronze men did, though not completely. Zeus sends the survivors to the Isles of the Blessed beside the River Ocean, where they live a life without cares and sorrows (but perhaps with some painless tilling and harvesting), much as the golden men had lived on earth; what is more, they have Kronos as their ruler.<sup>19</sup> This is the Homeric Elysion (*Od.* 4. 561–69), which Zeus reserved for his human sons and daughters and their spouses; and though this paradise may not be entirely workless, yet work becomes easy. The heroes, in effect, have recovered *bios*.

Apparently the legendary tradition of great heroes created difficulties for Hesiod. It did not fit well into the scheme of successive genera, but he had to take account of it, never questioning the historical truth of the legends. Another peculiarity of the heroic age is that the name cannot designate the entire population of the period.

17. See *Od.* 18. 366–75, 24. 226–47; *Hymn. Hom.* 5. 53–55; *Hyg. Fab.* 95; *Lucian Dom.* 30; *Serv. auct. Aen.* 2. 81. The tale of Odysseus and Palamedes implies that Odysseus was used to plowing his own fields; what was surprising was not that he was plowing, but that he was doing so with a strange yoke pair and was sowing salt. The tale is surely ancient, although attested only in later sources. In any case *Od.* 18. 366–75 is evidence enough that Odysseus was used to plowing and reaping in his own fields.

18. See Von Fritz, pp. 233–36, 251; Meyer, pp. 51–53.

19. If *WD* 169 is genuine: some editors, e.g., Sinclair, reject it. Some scholars have mistakenly supposed that all Hesiod's heroes went to the Isles of the Blessed, e.g., Bamberger, p. 526. But in *τοὺς μὲν . . . τοῖς δὲ* (166–67) Hesiod plainly says that for some death in war was the end; the others Zeus settled at the bounds of earth in *makarṓn nēsoi*. See Stewart, p. 45, n. 21.

Whereas all inhabitants of earth in the first age were the golden genos, and all in the second were the silver genos, and likewise in the bronze and iron ages, not all men who lived in the heroic age were heroes. In the epics and legends which the heroic genos reflects, the heroes were only a minority of men on earth, the kings and great warriors. Hesiod knew very well that in the time of the Trojan and Theban Wars the population in general did not consist of heroes. This peculiarity of the heroic age points to another: it did not end in total destruction. The hero class died out or was translated; but the rest of the population survived into the iron age. Hesiod could not deny that he and his contemporaries were descendants of men who had lived in the age of heroes, mostly of the unheroic population, but also of the heroes who left progeny, as many of them did, according to tradition: there were prominent families in Hesiod's time who claimed descent from legendary heroes. This is Hesiod's meaning when he describes the heroes with the words *πρωτέρη γενεή κατ' ἀπείρονα γαίαν* (160). The history that Hesiod knew did not tell of a total destruction after the age of heroes or a subsequent re-creation of mankind: there was no such thing in the legendary tradition. And Hesiod has no such ending for this age; he tells us only what became of the heroes.

The heroic genos, as a stage in the sequence of mythical ages, represents Hesiod's attempt to reconcile the heroic

tradition of legend and epic with the myth of four ages which a different tradition brought to him. In effect, it is not a separate age, but the first part of the fourth and final age of iron. This is evident in the transitional verses (166–76): Hesiod does not introduce the iron men as he had introduced the previous four ages, whose creation he attributed either to the gods on Olympos (gold, silver) or to Zeus (bronze, heroes). He does not tell us that Zeus created the iron men after disposing of the heroes. The iron men are descendants of the new genos which Zeus created at 157–58. In effect, Hesiod divides the iron age into two parts, of which the earlier was better. This is what he means when he introduces the iron genos with a lament that he had not died earlier or been born later: *μηκέτ' ἔπειτ' ὠφελλον ἐγὼ πέμπτοισι μετεῖναι / ἀνδράσιν, ἀλλ' ἢ πρόσθε θανεῖν ἢ ἔπειτα γενέσθαι* (WD 174–75). He could have lived and died in the heroic age, because he belongs to the same stock as the men of that age, and there was no break between it and the iron age of his lifetime (he almost seems to say that his life began in the heroic age). In the heroic first period the general population, subjects of the hero-kings, were the iron men. The heroes were a distinct breed: they were *theion genos, hēmitheoi* (159–60).<sup>20</sup>

The iron age (174–201), like the silver and bronze ages, began as a new creation of mankind. After two disappointments Zeus made the iron men and, as is evident

20. According to one restoration of the mutilated verse 169c (173c) from Geneva Papyrus 94, Zeus created the iron men after the end of the heroic age. Most editors accept a different restoration; in any case, 169b–d are almost certainly spurious.

In Hebrew myth also the heroes lived in the early iron age, as we may call the wicked antediluvian generations. Then "the sons of God" came down to the daughters of men, exactly as the gods did in Greek legends; and these women bore their sons, who became "mighty men . . . of renown," i.e., heroes (*gibbōrim*). The "sons of God" are *be nē hā'elōhīm*, which can mean "sons of the gods" and also simply "gods," according to a common use of *ben*, "son": a "son of man" (*ben 'ādām*)

is simply a man (Numbers 23. 19), and a "son of a bull" (*ben-bāqār*) is a bull (Numbers 15. 8–9). This was, furthermore, the age of Tubal-cain, who first taught men the working of copper and iron (Genesis 4. 22); see Griffiths (1956), p. 114. The Hebrews adopted a polytheistic myth, perhaps when they were polytheists, and later adapted it to the Mosaic religion. Notice that immediately after the birth of the heroes, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth"; the generations which followed the heroes were wicked as in Hesiod's myth. See Genesis 6. 1–5, and cf. Ovid *Met.* 1. 151–62. Since Ovid ends his iron age with Deukalion's flood, his heroes were postdiluvian and postferrous.

from the whole poem, laid upon them the same injunction, that they must win their livelihood and wealth from work. If, as I have suggested, we take the heroic period as the beginning of the iron age, mankind lived much as Zeus intended, if we overlook the wars. But thereafter Zeus was again disappointed in his hopes. The post-heroic generations of men began to disobey Zeus and to shun work. The iron men increasingly turn to crime and fraud as their means of winning livelihood and wealth.<sup>21</sup> Hesiod lives in mid-course; many men still live a just and industrious life. But the corruption of the age will increase. Hence Hesiod describes the iron age in the future tense throughout (and he probably draws this feature from the tradition; see above, p. 3). Finally, when all men have been corrupted, Zeus will destroy this age too.

The bronze men engaged in collective violence; communities and tribes raided others. The iron men engage in individual crimes, and they are adept at nonviolent crimes, those that require cunning of mind and devious devices. They deceive, defraud, cheat, betray others, including parents and brothers; they readily forswear themselves for gain:

οὐδέ τις εὐόρκου χάρις ἔσεται οὔτε δίκαιου  
οὔτ' ἀγαθοῦ, μάλλον δὲ κακῶν ῥεκτῆρα καὶ ὄβριον  
ἀνέρα τιμήσουσι· δίκη δ' ἐν χειρσί, καὶ αἰδῶς  
οὐκ ἔσται· βλάβει δ' ὁ κακὸς τὸν ἀρείονα φῶτα  
μῦθοισιν σκολιοῖς ἐπέπων, ἐπὶ δ' ὄρκον ὀμείτῃ

[WD 190–94].

21. WD 176–77, οὐδέ ποτ' ἦμαρ / παύονται καμάτου should not be misinterpreted to mean that one evil of the iron age is unceasing work for mankind. Some translations (e.g., Evelyn-White's and Lattimore's) render *kamatos* as “hard work” or “labor,” and so not only give a reader a false impression, but also destroy Hesiod's argument. Hesiod's point is that iron men will *not* work, with the result that their lives will be full of suffering; for all good comes from work. In 177 the word means “suffering,” as the context shows; the sentence continues, καὶ οἰζὺς οὐδέ τι νύκτωρ / φθειρόμενοι: “men will not cease from suffering and sorrow by day, nor from destruction by night.” Hesiod's usual word for work is noun *ergon* and verb *ergazesthai*. He uses *kamatos* in only two other places, WD 305 and Th. 599, both about drones who eat or reap the *kamatos* of the worker-bees. Here *kamatos* emphasizes the fatigue suffered by the workers in their labors;

But violent crimes are far from absent, as verse 192 indicates. They make war too, if verse 189 (which also calls them *cheiro-dikai*) is genuine. In fact, the iron men have some characteristics of the second *genos* and of the third. Like the silver men they have no reverence for the gods. Therefore we may say, if we choose, that the iron age is worst as well as last. But there is little to choose among the three: the iron age is only different in its emphasis from the silver and bronze, hardly worse than they. The silver men also took others' goods violently and would appear to have had no more regard for kinsmen than for strangers. It can be said of the bronze men as of the iron men that might was their right (δίκη ἐν χειρσί, 192). Hesiod can use the word *hybris* for the deeds and characters of all three *genea* (134, 146, 191).

Zeus will end the iron *genos*, says Hesiod, when babes are born already gray at the temples. Thus the iron men's condition will reverse that of the silver men. They were children for a hundred years and then committed acts of *hybris* in feckless old age. The iron men will become at birth as the silver men were at death.<sup>22</sup> This will be the final stage of corruption and degeneracy, and Zeus's patience will come to an end.

Hesiod does not tell us explicitly that the primary fault of the silver, bronze, and iron men is their failure to work for their livelihoods. As often, he makes his point

when it means “work,” it means hard, unpleasant work. So in the Homeric poems it usually means weariness, distress, suffering, as *Il.* 4. 230, *Od.* 9. 75, and occasionally tiring hard work, e.g., *Od.* 7. 325, 14. 417. It is most likely to refer to labor when an idler consumes the worker's product, as at *Od.* 14. 417, WD 305, Th. 599. Hesiod and Homer use *ponos* in the same meanings: it is either suffering or fatiguing work. WD 91 indicates the absence of *ponos*, 113 of *ponoi*, in the primeval paradise, where it is appropriate to understand “hard work.” But in 91 the word is coupled with *kaka* and *nousoi*, in 113 with *oizys* (as *kamatos* at WD 177), so that “suffering” is more likely the principal meaning.

22. It is apparently a feature of the original myth that old age and childhood are reversed; the old act like the young, and children are born old or soon reach old age: see *Mah.* 3. 188.

indirectly, leaving it to his hearers to draw the lesson: he tells them the consequences of idleness, that it turns men to wrongful means of getting goods, and that these means lead finally to destruction. He does not tell us that Zeus destroyed these *genea* because they failed to heed his injunction to work. He does not, in fact, assign any motive to Zeus, aside from saying that the silver men's failure to perform their religious duties was the immediate occasion of their removal. And when the bronze men killed each other off, we are to understand that Zeus allowed this to happen; for Zeus then made a new *genos* that was more just, an action which indicates his disapproval of the vanished *genos*. In truth Zeus's motive was not just that these *genea* did not work; nobody should reach that conclusion from my argument. What I am saying is that their avoidance of work necessarily led them to unjust deeds that provoked Zeus's wrath and led to their destruction.

This is the central thesis of the *Work and Days*: injustice arises from trying to win livelihood and wealth without working for them; and the introductory myths are told to reinforce this principle by showing that it has been in operation since the foundation of Zeus's sovereignty. After invoking the Muses, Hesiod begins his argument with his statement on the two kinds of Eris (11–26), good Eris and bad Eris. Good Eris stirs men to work and to compete peacefully and industriously with one another:

ἢ τε καὶ ἀπάλαμόν περ ὁμῶς ἐπὶ ἔργον ἔγειρεν.  
εἰς ἕτερον γὰρ τίς τε ἰδὼν ἔργοιο χατίζων  
πλούσιον, ὃς σπεύδει μὲν ἀρώμεναι ἢ δὲ φυτεύειν  
οἰκόν τ' εὖ θέσθαι [WD 20–23].

That is, good Eris arouses even the rather indolent man to try to equal his neighbor who gets his wealth by going out to plow and sow; for Zeus placed this Eris at the roots of the earth, γαίης ἐν ῥίζησι (19).

Bad Eris promotes war and strife (13–15); she draws men from work to dishonest lawsuits and the bribing of judges (27–39). This Eris *kakochartos* is the *zēlos kakochartos* that accompanies men of the iron age (195–96).

WD 213–382 contains Hesiod's sermon on work as the foundation of justice. He first tells Perses how much superior is justice to injustice: δίκη δ' ὑπὲρ ὕβριος ἴσχει / ἐς τέλος ἐξελλθοῦσα (217–18). The city of just men flourishes in peace; earth yields crops in abundance; hunger and disaster never come upon them (225–37). But upon the unjust men's city Zeus sends famine and plague (238–47). Hesiod's point is that in the just city men cultivate their fields and attend to their flocks, and thus keep themselves from unjust deeds and the gods' disfavor. But famine comes upon the unjust city, because its people have not tilled the earth, but resorted to *hybris* and *schetlia erga*. These are not genuine *erga*; they are like the work that bronze men did. In 254 *schetlia erga* are opposed to *dikai*: Zeus's guardian spirits wander on earth, οἳ ῥα φυλάσσουσίν τε δίκας καὶ σχέτλια ἔργα. The plural *dikai* means judgments, but a valid judgment embodies justice. There is a wrong kind of work, and it is not the work that Zeus wants men to do.

After his long discourse on the superiority of justice to injustice (213–85), Hesiod addresses his brother Perses, bringing his message home to him. He starts with a metaphor of rough and easy roads (287–92): the road of *aretē* is long and steep, and rough at first; and the gods have put sweat on it as an obstacle to reaching virtue. That is, this is the road of work. But the road of evil is smooth and short. Then Hesiod tells Perses that the man who does not himself perceive the better course should heed the man who does perceive it (293–97); and his advice as the man who

knows is to work. Here in thirty-eight lines he states his gospel of work, beginning,

ἀλλὰ σὺ γ' ἡμετέρης μεμνημένος αἰὲν ἐφετμῆς  
ἐργάζεαι Πέρση διὸν γένος, ὄφρα σε λιμὸς  
ἐχθαίρη, φιλέη δέ σ' εὐστεφανὸς Δημήτηρ  
αἰδοίη, βιότου δὲ τετὴν πικρῆσι καλήν

[WD 298–301].

For hunger attends the man who does not work, and the gods hate him (302–304; cf. 230–31, 242–43). Work is the way not only to livelihood but to riches too:

ἐξ ἔργων δ' ἄνδρες πολύμηλοι τ' ἀφνειοί τε·  
καὶ ἐργαζόμενοι πολὺ φίλτεροι ἀθανάτοισιν.  
ἔργον δ' οὐδὲν ὄνειδος, ἀεργίη δὲ τ' ὄνειδος

[WD 308–10].

Work brings wealth, virtue, esteem, and the envy of idle men—here Hesiod alludes to the two-Erides doctrine—but idleness brings want and shame (312–19). There is no other right way of acquiring wealth: τὸ ἐργάζεσθαι ἄμεινον (314). Perses must turn his attention from taking other men's possessions to working, and so earn his living as Hesiod bids him (314–16). Goods must not be seized (χρήματα δ' οὐχ ἀρπακτὰ, θεόσδοτα πολλὸν ἀμείνω, 320), and the gods give them to workers (Grab is a bad girl, 356). The man who rejects work tries to get wealth by violent or deceitful means. At this point Hesiod reviews wrongful ways of getting possessions in what could be a picture of the iron age: violent seizure, falsehood, wrongs done to suppliant and guest, adultery with a brother's wife, robbing of orphans, ill-treatment of aged parents. All these are wrong works (*erga adika*), and Zeus will requite them (320–34). Here again Hesiod speaks of work that is not genuine, but effort expended in wrong directions. He continues, ἀλλὰ σὺ τῶν μὲν [*sc.* ἔργων ἀδίκων] πάντα ἔργ' ἀσιφρονα θυμόν

(335), where we may see a play upon the verb *ergein*, “hinder,” “keep,” and the root *erg-* suggesting “work”; “refrain from bad works and work instead.” Then in the very next line Hesiod says, καὶ δύναμιν δ' ἔρδειν ἰέρ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν (336), so that the sequence in three lines of *ergōn* (334), *eerg(e)*, and *erdein* is significant. The third verse (336) echoes 136: Hesiod concludes his exhortation to work with a behest to do the crowning work of sacrifice to the gods; and this only a man who works can do, since only he will have the *mēria*, *spondai*, *thyea*, which Hesiod mentions in the lines that follow and elaborate 336. Then, as the silver men aroused Zeus's anger, the pious worker finds the gods propitious: they reward him with good crops and increasing flocks, so that he can buy another man's *klēros*, and another will not buy his (336–41). Finally Hesiod concludes a passage of good advice to Perses with the injunction, σοὶ δ' εἰ πλοῦτου θυμὸς ἐέλδεται ἐν φρεσὶ ἧσιν / ὧδ' ἔρδειν καὶ ἔργον ἐπ' ἔργῳ ἐργάζεσθαι (WD 381–82). There follows the bulk of *Works and Days*, Hesiod's instructions on all the labors of the farmer.

Hesiod recurs several times to his doctrine of work in the course of his instructions on plowing, sowing, and reaping. Very soon, when telling how to get the best yield so as to avoid want and beggary, he is reminded that Perses has come begging to him. But Hesiod will give him no more than the advice, ἐργάζεαι νήπιε Πέρση | ἔργα τὰ τ' ἀνθρώποισι θεοὶ διετεκμήραντο (397–98); then Perses will have no need to go begging from others. Twice again (411–13, 498–501) he recurs to this theme: the lazy man or the sluggish worker comes to want and penury; and then in want, waiting on empty hope, he resorts to wrongdoing, κακὰ προσελέξατο θυμῷ; for it is a bad kind of hope that

attends a needy man. Finally Hesiod closes the poem by pointing this moral:

τάων [sc. ἡμερῶν] εὐδαίμων τε καὶ ὄλβιος ὅς τ' ἄδε  
 πάντα  
 εἰδὼς ἐργάζηται ἀνάτιος ἀθανάτοισιν  
 ὄρνιθας κρίνων καὶ ὑπερβασίας ἀλεείνων

[*WD* 826–28].

In these final verses Hesiod states the message of the entire poem: to work for your living is to live a life of justice and virtue, a life pleasing to the gods, who will grant you prosperity; to live without working is to live a life of injustice and transgression, since the non-worker must turn to criminal means of getting a livelihood. So what Hesiod wants to say in telling the myth of ages is that those *genea* (silver, bronze, iron) who reject work and turn to violence and crime incur Zeus's anger and come to an end: the silver and bronze men have passed away, and the iron men will vanish too from earth. It is the whole condition of these *genea* that offends Zeus: their idleness or exertion in false work, *hybris*, injustice, violence, and impiety. It is their wickedness that finally leads him to destroy them (or to let them destroy themselves); but their wickedness results from their refusal to work.

Whereas the combined Prometheus–Pandora myth tells about the origin of the work-institution, the five-ages myth illustrates the consequences of not working. After the myths Hesiod begins his sermon on work and justice, of which work is the foundation, and he shows that if ruler and citizens are just, their city will be prosperous, peaceful, and happy. This message may seem to be in some measure incongruent with his picture of the iron age, in which he places his own lifetime,

since that, he says, will grow worse and worse until *Aidos* and *Nemesis* leave earth and Zeus destroys the iron men (180); or, if not incongruent, then futile, since the just iron-age city must inevitably be corrupted too.<sup>23</sup> In fact, Hesiod leaves the myth at 201 and the iron age with it; and in what follows he does not have the iron age of myth in mind and is not advising *Perses* on the best course to take in deteriorating conditions. At 213, after the parable of the hawk and nightingale, he resumes his advice to *Perses* where he broke off for the myths at 42–46. After his passage on the two kinds of *Eris* he warns *Perses* against bad *Eris* (27–41), since a needy man has no time for quarrels and lawsuits but must apply himself to his work. For, he continues, the gods have hidden *bios* for mankind, who therefore must work the year around to find it (it is hidden under earth and men must dig for it). Then he enters upon the myth of Prometheus: this is one explanation of man's need to work and of the hardships and sufferings that beset him. The tale of Prometheus' recovery of fire for mankind leads to the Pandora tale, which is really an alternative tale of how misery came upon mankind. In the combined Prometheus–Pandora tale, work is viewed as a punishment that Zeus laid upon mankind as part of his hard lot, even the essence of that lot; that is the view of the traditional myth and Hesiod does not alter it. Then, concluding the tale, he says, “Now I shall tell you another story” (106–108). This story implies that work is a positive good; it is idleness that brings suffering and wrongdoing. It is another tale that men tell, and it too has a lesson for *Perses*. It is relevant to Hesiod's thesis and it

23. See Stewart, pp. 44, 47–51; Vernant (1965), pp. 38–46; Rosenmeyer, pp. 275–77. Teggart, pp. 57–67, saw that Hesiod is no longer talking about the mythical iron age after concluding the myth. In fact, he believed that Hesiod ended his account of the iron age at 181 and thereupon began a new

phase of argument on the consequences of violence and injustice. But the transition would be too abrupt, and any reader or hearer is bound to understand 182–201 as continued description of the iron age. Notice the future tense in 177–79 as in 184–201.

serves as a warning. Then Hesiod dismisses myth and resumes his argument, in which he gives his attention to his own age and its actual conditions and problems. The truth is that men through justice and work can improve their condition. The righteous city has much of the happiness and abundance of the golden age, or rather of the Blessed Isles, since men must till the earth and care for their flocks and herds. It is to his contemporaries that Hesiod addresses his argument, not to the iron men of the myth, since he tells the myth to support his argument and alters it for that purpose.

My interpretation of the five-ages myth does not necessarily rule out other interpretations. It may very well complement those which pair or oppose successive ages, or which see a new cycle begin with the heroic age.<sup>24</sup> There is no need to discuss here the patterns and structures which scholars have seen in this myth. I shall only say that Vernant's attempt to fit the five ages to Dumézil's tripartite structure of Indo-European society is unconvincing at best. He pairs the gold and silver men as good and bad sovereigns (first function), the bronze and heroic men as bad and good warriors (second function, chiasitic order of the first four ages), and the just and unjust iron men as good and bad producers (third function). The interpretation of silver men as bad kings (or priests) is derived from nothing that Hesiod says; it is only true that royal princes have generally depended on their parents and have not worked—but is that true of the sons of Greek *basileis* in the

geometric and archaic ages? Further, Vernant's interpretation demands a division of the iron age in two, and that means confusing the iron men of the myth with Hesiod's contemporaries whom he addresses in the person of Perses and talks about in 213–382 (Vernant also confuses them with the descendants of Epimetheus and Pandora).<sup>25</sup>

Yet I can agree with Vernant that Hesiod's five ages are synchronic as well as diachronic. The myth is a paradigm, an *exemplum* of his argument, a synchronic scheme presented as history. This is again to say that he has converted a traditional myth to his purpose. There are silver, bronze, and iron men among his contemporaries—and there are some golden men too, though now they live under Zeus and have to work for their bread. The silver genos represents those men who from shunning work come to hunger and want; they have to depend for their subsistence on others, who soon turn them away; and they anger gods and men. The bronze genos represents those violent men who seize others' goods; they follow the *dikē* of fish and beasts and birds (277); but the gods destroy them after a little time. The iron genos represents those who take another's goods by fraud and deceit, who give and take bribes, forswear themselves, overreach kinsmen and orphans, and abuse aged parents; Zeus and Dikē take notice of them too, and finally bring them to grief.<sup>26</sup> Hesiod's brother Perses has something of all three metals in him. But when rulers and citizens are just, Zeus and the gods prosper their cities, and

24. See Hartmann; Meyer, pp. 42–57; Goldschmidt; Vernant (1965 and 1966); Pucci, pp. 107–109, 115.

25. I find Dumézil's theory unconvincing even where his case is strongest; it is really an extension of the Indian caste division to all early Indo-European peoples. He and his disciples not only seize upon any triad that they find among I.-E. peoples, but even reduce fours and fives to triads.

26. See for the lazy (silver) *WD* 302–306, 317–19, 366–67, 394–404, 410–13, 498–501; for the violent (bronze) 202–12,

275–78, 320–26, 348, 356–60; for the unrighteous (iron) 220–24, 250–51, 258–69, 282–85, 322–34, 352. Thus Hesiod's myth is a parable for all ages including our own. Our silver men are the hippies and similar types, those who reject work and depend upon their parents and on others to support them as long as they can, and afterwards are helpless, turning to devious ways of making a living. Our bronze and iron men are easily identified.



they come near to the happy existence of the golden men and of the heroes in the Blessed Isles (225–37). In Hesiod's age, as distinct from the iron age of myth, men

can live this happier life, if they follow the ordinance of work and the way of justice.

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