

## HESIOD: THE EDUCATIONAL MEANING OF HIS DEFENSE OF DIVINE JUSTICE AND WORK



<https://doi.org/10.56238/arev6n4-467>

Submitted on: 11/29/2024

Publication Date: 12/29/2024

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze *The works and days* of Hesiod (700 B.C.), who asks Zeus to correct justice on earth with his superior justice, while trying to convince his brother Perses to abandon the lawsuit related to his father's inheritance and dedicate himself to a dignified and virtuous life. focused on work and respect for justice. In his argument, a model of life is developed, based on which man could act and position himself in Greek society, whose crisis already pointed to social transformations. Therefore, in methodological terms, this reflection is not limited to Hesiod's personal problem, but contemplates larger issues that guided that historical moment, composing a stage of struggle and legal and social demands. The relationship that the author established between religion and justice and justice and work was privileged, as well as his considerations regarding agrarian education and justice. The discussion contained in the article is justified because the theme involves a divided society in which individuals and interest groups, political and ideological motivations discredited justice when it did not serve their interests.

**Keywords:** Hesiod, Social Transformation, Education, Justice.

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## INTRODUCTION

The article has as its premise that the form of poetic expression can elucidate and point out ways for the analysis and understanding of the dynamics of history produced by men, particularly education (Sodré, 2002).

With this referential contribution, the worldview that is revealed in Hesiod's epic poem, *The Works and the Days*, probably composed around the year 700 B.C., is discussed. When one considers the tensions, struggles and contradictions of Greek society at that time, it is possible to assume that the model of man thought by the poet in terms of life, action, positioning and vindication announced a process of significant social transformations.

Through a reflective exercise, he seeks to unveil marks of this process in his denunciations to judges, whom he understood as corrupt, in his supplication for the action of Zeus to, with his superior justice, correct earthly justice, as well as in his argumentation to persuade and convince his brother Perses to leave the lawsuit in process, respect justice and dedicate himself to work to have a virtuous and prosperous life.

The poem brings as a background Hesiod's personnel problem related to the lawsuit with his brother Perses for the paternal estate, in addition to other themes such as agriculture, herding, navigation, but, in its essentiality, it privileges justice and work.

In the way the poem is composed, he uses references that go through his life story, knowledge of religion, culture, the tensions of his people, the justice that was then practiced, the land and the toil of the peasants in those fields, which was often inglorious and unrecognized.

This gave him the authority and voice to discuss conceptually, and in a new way, unknown to the Greek society and culture of his time, the issues that his artistic sensibility was able to capture, transforming this discussion into verses.

With this understanding, the objective of this text was defined: to section the poem into two interpretative axes, that of the relationship between religion and justice and that of the relationship between justice and work. The work is justified because, although the poem has been widely studied in the most diverse areas of knowledge, it contains information about a time and a man in action that motivates rereadings, opening the possibility of new angles of analysis.

Except for the due differences of time, place, culture and objectives, we find in Hesiod's poem reflections that can be related to contemporaneity, especially to a society

divided by political and ideological interests in confrontation and justice that, in its decisions and determinations, becomes the target of attacks by those who were not attended to in the appeal of their interests.

In methodological terms, the discussion is not limited to the poet's personal problem, but expands to a broader reflection on the social framework, which gave rise to the social transformations that Greece was already the stage for.

The understanding of men and their productions, with their conflicts, tensions and diversities, presupposes their insertion in the environment of tension, struggles and contradictions of their time. Transformations produce marks that are invariably carried with them in their experiences, but they also correspond to promises of personal and collective recovery because they are the result of a social reordering.

The ballast of the social and temporal conjuncture makes it possible to understand that the new demands and new behaviors of men express needs that have no place, rights and visibility in the social order in force, leaving them with the fringes of the system.

With this procedure, it is possible to identify what Hesiod points out as necessary, priority and fundamental for man to break with the state of passivity in the face of the adversities that marked life.

In addition to using *The work and the days* as a primary source, there is a bibliographic contribution that makes it possible to deepen the analysis of the selected thematic axes.

## **HOMER AND HESIOD: FROM WARRIOR HERO TO HERO OF WORK**

In *the Iliad* and *the Odyssey*, Homer sang the heroic *areté*<sup>4</sup> founded on wars, fantastic combats and competitions; on the other hand, Hesiod, a peasant and poet from Boeotia in a possibly contemporary epoch, between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C., proposed in *Work and Days* an educational model, an *areté*, also heroic, but unrelated to wars, but to work and justice. Just as Homer incarnated and conveyed the mentality and the peculiar life of a chivalrous character, Hesiod gave birth to a new culture, a new style of life

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<sup>4</sup> "The essential theme of the history of Greek formation is rather the concept of *areté*, which dates back to the most ancient times. We do not have an exact equivalent for this term in the Portuguese language; but the word "virtue", in its meaning not attenuated by purely moral use, and as an expression of the highest chivalric ideal united to a courteous and distinguished conduct and warrior heroism, could perhaps express the meaning of the Greek word" (Jaeger, 1995, p. 25).

and a new *archaic*<sup>5</sup> *paideia*, through which he defends the value of work and justice (Redondo; Laspalas, 1997).

Added to Hesiod's qualities is his condition as a farmer, woodcutter, wagoner and carpenter. It is worth remembering that the poet lived in a time and in a society in which the social division of labor had not yet been conceived and/or organized (Aquino, 2023). The multiple activities he performed corresponded to the needs of a mode of production based on incipient agropastoral and commercial activities, to which were added the goods obtained by the looting and booty promoted by the war.

Hesiod's period of activity was strongly marked by profound social differences. At the same time, the Greeks were moving to emancipate themselves from the old traditions maintained since ancient times and, guided by a common heritage, sought to organize a new way of producing life and living.

The cult of the dead linked to the tomb was being abandoned with the changes in customs caused by the Dorian invasion and immigration. The ancestors became memories and images of the myths and the cults were not renewed around the new chiefs, due to the practice of incineration of corpses. The establishment of contact with men of different origins, cultures and customs contributed to the rupture with the old traditions, already weakened, as common religious beliefs and practices were already observed between the Greeks and these peoples. In this environment of changes, the gods lost their sacredness, gained humanity and could become characters in narratives that distanced them from the mysteries: the religion of the gods took over the space of the religion of the dead.

This relationship established between man-gods had a double dimension: while man was valued, the gods were humanized and endowed with human form and feelings (Andery *et al*, 1996, p. 26-29). This may explain Hesiod's concern to bring Zeus closer to men: through his superior justice, life on earth could become safer, fairer, and more comprehensible in the world of men.

Another fact to be considered is that the *polis*, a unique experience in Greece, was still in its embryonic phase.

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<sup>5</sup> Paideia, by its very nature, is not restricted to a formative procedure for preparing children for adult life: the concept encompasses lifelong formation, by life and for life and incorporates "culture, understood not in the active, preparatory, educational sense, but in the perfective sense that the word has among us today: the state of a fully developed spirit, having blossomed all its potentialities, that of man becoming truly man" (Marrou, 2017, p. 178).

It was this scenario of tensions, struggles and transformations of Greek society, these were the historical conditions that inspired Hesiod's poetics. In his most important work, he expresses his concern with the world of men, with the way they were organized, with agriculture and navigation, with their needs and limitations. Thus, work and justice gain centrality in his poem.

Its 828 verses are divided into five fables and tales and/or blocks, in addition to the *Invocation: The Two Struggles, The Myth of Prometheus and Pandora, The Five Races, Justice and Work*.

It is reiterated that the background of this poem is a problem of Hesiod's personal order: with an authorial voice, he exposes the legal demand with his brother Perses, who, for goods left by his father, had corrupted judges in his favor.

Hesiod transforms, consciously or not, a personal case into a collective case and represents the picture of tension reigning in his environment, therefore common to other peasants: the dispute over land between large and small landowners gave rise to judicial practices incompatible with legality to the detriment of small landowners on scarce land, marked by the agricultural crisis, social and religious (Lafer, 1996).

It was this picture of difficulties that Hesiod discussed in his poem: in his understanding of justice and work, he proposed guidelines that were not linked to Greek experiences, experiences and practices.

## **DIVINE JUSTICE AS A HIGHER AUTHORITY**

In legal terms, what is known as pre-law was in force in Greek society at the time. It is understood that the exercise of arbitration, of the *basileus*<sup>6</sup>, was the genesis of the justice exercised by the courts or other courts focused on this practice. At that time, the manifestation of justice did not concern archaic law, even because there was not yet an autonomous justice, a condition that presupposes specialization, an instance that gives autonomy to judge. After this period, Greece, in its legal order, was always bound by an idea of justice, which freed it from all the formalism that this instance brings with it. Thus, in Greece, unlike Rome, there was never a Philosophy of Law; what developed was a Philosophy of Justice, whose highest elaboration occurred much later with Aristotle (384 – 322), in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, it is necessary to take into account that its

<sup>6</sup> It was not necessarily kings, but great noble lords who owned land, "whose political power in a community makes them central figures in the administration of justice" (Werner, 2022, p.16).

outline had already been outlined by Hesiod in *The Works and the Days* (Lafer, 1996, p. 15-18).

His movement of denunciation and conviction, his thought and his poetic argumentation are circumscribed to the concept of *Dike*, whose polysemy is explored throughout the poem (Werner, 2020, p. 19). The genesis of this concept refers to the order and/or discretion of judges, qualified by Hesiod as "kings" (Hesiod, 1996, v. 38, p. 25), who were requested in cases of demand by parties in litigation. There is a substantial difference between the concept used by Hesiod and the Latin terminology of "law", *ius lus*, which, in its origin, seems to enunciate a "saving precept", common in formal and solemn celebrations of law in past times.

The Latin word *ius* can relate to both a prescribed legal formula and a legally safeguarded demand.

According to the Greek mentality expressed in his thinking and speaking, law is configured as an order that, according to the "sacred rite", is an imposition from top to bottom on the parties in dispute. Roman usage does not authorize speaking of "*falsified*", "*distorted*" *iura*, since *iura* refers to what is "upright". *Ius* always refers to something irreproachable; among the Greeks, there was already talk of the authority and control of "kings", or of men designated by them for this purpose, but who, independently, could assume their own strength, particularly in mythical and almost magical times, prior to the development, organization and establishment of guiding precepts for this human action. Thus, the Greek spoke of *dikai*, that is, of non-"straight", "distorted", and "right" right.

*Dike* is related to the decision, of a normative nature, of an authority that judges. The action of judging can be arbitrary, mistaken, even because the authority, due to lack of rectitude in the office entrusted to it, can use it to obtain illicit benefits.

The sentence of the authority that judges justly to attend to those who seek it, be it the community or society, and to pronounce on their behalf, is subordinated to a higher court, to a higher and higher instance, which, in principle, can also be called *Dike*, in the highest sense of justice.

Hesiod explains why, feeling threatened, faced with the risk of having his rights denied by the distorted *dikai* which, distanced from the *Dike*, of divine essence, constituted "judicial violence", he appealed to the instance he understood to be superior (Klinger, 1953, p. 25-26).

What Hesiod proposes is a harmony, a devotion to the gods, having as a reference an energetic and austere ethics for the benefit and promotion of the success of justice in human relations for the good of all (Galino, 1973, p. 124). The way to reach the just, as opposed to and overcoming the unjust, is law and justice (*diké*).

Justice, for Hesiod, would only have a place in a society that practiced and cultivated it with care, commitment, and respect for men (Werner, 2020, p. 20). In his understanding, law and justice are anchored and subject to Zeus. This determines the eternal happening, the coming of men, both in their ascent and in their descent (Klinger, 1953, p. 27); in short, he can modulate the situation.

His faith in Zeus assured his certainty in divine justice. In his words, the all-powerful Olympian kept thirty thousand immortal guardians in constant vigilance of mortals (Hesiod, 1996, v. 252, p. 41); those who violated its laws and determinations were reserved for ruthless punishments and punishments.

His appeal for divine justice for his cause implied a greater scope in social and conceptual terms, as can be identified in the arguments and allegations developed in the poem.

## THE PUNITIVE ROLE OF DIVINE JUSTICE ON EARTH

Already at the beginning of the poem, Hesiod puts into practice the argumentative axis in which he establishes the intimate relationship between justice and religion. Around this axis, he seeks to legitimize superior justice, divine justice, and, based on it, defend the rights that were denied to them.

Anchored in the faith he claimed to have, he invoked the Pierian Muses<sup>7</sup> to come to meet him and intercede for him with Zeus: "Pierial Muses who glory with your songs, come! Say Zeus your father hineando [...] see, understand, and with his justice straighten sentences" (Hesiod, 1996, vv.1,2,9, p. 23).

In this reverence for the muses, the approximation he already cultivated with them is implicit. In *Theogony*, for example, he had stated that they had taught him their songs and their gift of clairvoyance when, in shepherding work near Mount Helicon, they had assigned him the status of spokesman.

<sup>7</sup> Calliope, Clio, Eratus, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polymnia, Talia, Terpsichore and Urania. "Agreste deities, daughters of Zeus, who inhabited the mountains, with a special predilection for the Helicon massif, in the region of Delphi" (Horta, 1980, p.28).



We know how to tell many lies to the facts and we know, if we want, to listen to revelations. Thus spoke the virgins of the great Zeus truthful, as a scepter they gave me a branch, to a lush laurel tree picking it admirably, and inspired me with a divine song so that I may glorify the future and the past, they impelled me to hinear the being of the fortunate always alive and to sing them first and last always (Hesiod, 1992, vv.29-35, p. 107).

This argument gave him confidence to express with authority the ordinances of Zeus about justice, whose origin was in divine power.

By representing this approach to the muses, Hesiod makes known the mythical spirit of his time. The poets (*aedo*) were praised, loved and protected by the muses, which likened them to the *basileus*. In addition, they were seen as a mythical experience that converted them into a kind of enlightened ones (Regino, 2020, p. 11). Moreover, it is probable that they enjoyed an almost religious respect because of their verses. In those times, "science" and art were merged with divination, the mastery of which represented true wisdom. (Aquino, 2023). For this reason, Hesiod felt supported by his protectors to reach Zeus, to take shelter in this trench and obtain the shield of the higher divine law in his action for justice on earth.

In the sequence, there is an almost silence of the poet about the muses, at the same time that he begins a direct movement towards Zeus. The removal of the muses would be, considering the historical moment, strategic for the poet (Werner, 2023), as his objective was to obtain his intercession with Zeus so that he could appeal for his justice. Once this mediation was done, the response to the next supplication was no longer within the scope of his powers and attributes, but rather in that of Zeus, to whom he directs his invocation: "You! I Perses" (Hesiod, 1996, v.10, p. 23). In addition, the muses, a divine source of inspiration, tutored the exploits of epic heroes, fantastic warriors of Homeric songs (Werner, 2023, p. 14), but Hesiod pleaded and made known a new model of hero.

Such questions may clarify the position taken by Hesiod to sediment, in Zeus, the paths he would take to substantiate his allegations. His appeal was for Zeus to correct the biased and corrupt sentences handed down by judges not committed to his justice, which affected the fundamental rights of men, especially those less favored by the social order, and favored those who could corrupt them with personal benefits.

For the poet, the justice thought and instituted Zeus to guarantee order in the universe, the harmony between the gods and between men was superior and universal in the care of immortals and mortals (Siciliani, 2011). After all, it had been promoted by the supreme god of Olympus: his action would restore justice among mortals, so that detractors



would be held responsible and punished for affecting the order among men and the social balance.

His appeal was for the justice of men to be guided and practiced based on divine rules: everything that escaped this guidance would fall into illegality.

An implacable defender of divine justice, Hesiod sentenced that any and all disrespect for justice, such as the unjust sentences that affected and unprotected those who resorted to it, betrayed and contaminated justice. Its guardian, the goddess Justice (Dike), in atonement, would assume punitive attitudes and actions, whose results would be individual and collective.

Very quickly runs the Oath by crooked sentences  
and the cry of Justice, dragged wherever men take it  
Gift-eaters and by crooked sentences come it!  
She continues to weep over the cities and the customs of the peoples  
[clothed with air and men carrying evil]  
who expelled it and did not distribute it correctly (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 220-224,  
p. 39).

For Hesiod, justice was the greatest of virtues. By its nature, it ennobled men, peoples, and civilizations; it was a factor of balance, trust, harmony and respect among men (Cás, 1996, p. 58). Those who dedicated themselves to vigilance, respect and fidelity to justice would be contemplated with ample benefits and progress and these were not restricted to the executors: the benefits extended to the collective, to the whole society.

Those who give sentences to outsiders and natives  
straight, departing nothing from what is just,  
for them the city grows and in it the people flourish;  
On this earth is the nourishing peace of the young and to them  
the long-evident Zeus does not destine a painful war:  
neither does hunger accompany men or  
misfortune (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 225-231, p. 39).

Throughout his argument, Hesiod shaped a 'pedagogy of punishment and fear', combined with the 'pedagogy of prize or reward'. The violators of justice, those who diverted it by crooked lines, would be punished by Zeus; On the other hand, his cultivators, by fidelity to righteousness, would be graced with divine rewards.

This thought of Hesiod implied a new understanding of education for the Greek man: positive and negative stimuli were opposed to the Homeric pedagogy based on the divine benefits resulting from acts of warrior bravery.

The 'punitive pedagogical' practice presupposed a behavioral discipline according to the order set by Zeus himself. This threatening and intimidating clairvoyance of a teleological nature, in turn, promoted fear among men and gave rise to actions and attitudes related to good human practices.

Hesiodian pedagogy was not simply based on rewards and punishments, but also on the stimulus represented by the omnipresence and omniscience of Zeus (Cás, 1996, p.59-60). The objective of this didactic resource was to favor the effectiveness of the training process. It would be an incentive to maintain experiences, behaviors and moral practices that would lead to a meritorious life.

It is possible, therefore, to understand that the poet expressed his understanding that the Greek sought effectiveness in the direction of justice over time.

For this reason, Hesiod warned his brother about Zeus' care for justice, his beloved daughter (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 256-257, p. 41). It was responsible for ensuring impartiality in disputes between mortals, ensuring fairness in judgments and straight sentences that contemplated the rights of all.

The tense situation was motivated by the legal problem between him and his brother, who was acting excessively, but it is possible to think that Hesiod was convinced of the correctness of his own behavior. Otherwise, it would not be justified for him to propose to call him to the good practices of the just measure (Werner, 2023). This is what can be concluded from the speech in which he refers to the knowledge he needed to share with those who were unaware of cosmic truths: "To you good things will I speak, O Perses, great fool" (Hesiod, 1996, v. 286, p. 45).

To this end, in a didactic tone, Hesiod develops a monologue of a formative nature composed of advice, admonitions and teachings related to superior and virtuous values, which would confer honor and dignity to those who dedicated themselves to the upright life that pleased the gods.

Such teachings were developed through fables, myths and reports of personal experiences, always with the objective of illustrating what he proposed and seeking a solution to his personal problem. It was a matter of showing the great mistake that the brother was making and the disastrous consequences that he could unleash for himself and for the community (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 338-340, p. 47-49). His argument was that Zeus was ruthless with the executors of immoral practices that disrespected the social order he established.

With this ethical and moral conduct, Hesiod sought to preserve himself from a new unjust action committed by venal judges (Aquinas, 2023) and proposed that the legal dispute be resolved between the two brothers, based on divine laws, superior to those of men, and that Perses abandon corrupt justice: "Let us decide here our dispute with right sentences, which, of Zeus, are the best" (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 35-36, p. 25).

He pondered that his brother had already benefited in another situation of sharing assets left by his father, because corrupt judges had granted a sentence in his favor, moved by illicit interests, incompatible with the justice created by Zeus: "We have already divided the inheritance and you have taken much more by taking away and stealing and you have also done it to seduce gift-eating kings, that this litigation they want to judge" (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 35-40, p. 25).

To give more prominence to the argument, in the sense of denouncing and, at the same time, convincing through his 'punitive pedagogy', Hesiod brought to reflection the *Myth of Pandora*, referring to the illicit committed by Prometheus, a titan who stole the sacred fire from Olympus, with dishonest tricks, contrary to divine designs.

The punishment for this illegal behavior, considered immoral, did not take long: Zeus sent to earth, as a gift, the "Pandora's box", which was received by Epimetheus, although he had been warned by his brother not to receive anything that came from Olympus. Moreover, his curiosity led him to open the box, and at that moment all the evils for men came out of it; the only exception brought by this fatal gift was Hope (Hesiod, 1997, vv. 50-96, p. 25-26).

According to this myth, from then on, man, who enjoyed a life of tranquility, without illness, effort and fatigue, was subjected to difficulties, unpleasantness and work as a way of obtaining his subsistence (Werner, 2023).

With the example of Prometheus, his goal was to convince Perses that offenders were subject to punishment and that he should adopt honest practices to avoid the wrath of Zeus and that, by individual excess, the illegalities did not affect the collective.

The example also served as a comparison between myth and personal history: Prometheus, the titan, with trickery, tricked Zeus into stealing the sacred fire; Perses, his brother, with articulations, judicial maneuvers and bribery, resorted to dishonest judges to steal his share of the paternal estate.

To emphasize his brother's excessive behavior and to make a moral, ethical and pedagogical appeal for his brother to adopt the right measure, Hesiod brought to the scene

another mytho-ontological support (Schuller, 1996), such as the description of the myth *The Two Struggles*, with which he opens his poem. The dispute and tension existing on earth are motivated by struggles between Olympic entities: "There is no single origin of Lutas, but on earth there are two! One would praise those who understood it, condemnable to another it is; in spirit both differ" (Hesiod, 1996, v. 14, p. 23).

At one extreme would be Eris Malignant, mistress of injustice, instigator of discord, fomenter of strife and division, promoter of wars; in the other, Eris Benigna, contrary to all forbidden and disharmonious practices that affect man. The second calls on mortals to assume superior practices of human promotion, including emulation at work (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 14-19, p. 23).

Thus, he framed the litigating brother in the domains of the Evil Eris, considering that, in his action and behavior, moved by corruption and theft, he promoted discord among them, hurting the moral code cherished by the gods. On the other hand, Hesiod, a peasant, hardworking and honorable, acted under the influences of Eris Benigna: "Now I myself am righteous among men" (Hesiod, 1996, vv.270, p. 43).

To guarantee what was legally his right, Hesiod had to resort to the justice of Zeus, superior to human. He stated that his condition as a righteous man represented little to the executors of the law, who defiled justice in its essence, and this was reason enough for him to entrust the exercise of justice to the divine sphere.

Thus, his centralist view of justice is evident: because, as a sublime instance to guarantee it, since, being a superior power (Marquez, 2021), Olympus would act according to the ethical-moral code established by Zeus to the gods and men. With this legal understanding, he denounced and disqualified the justice practiced by men, who, with crooked sentences, departed from what was consecrated by Zeus.

In addition to the Two Fights, using the fable of the *Hawk and the Nightingale*, it was based on the distinction between men and animals, on the differences between animal practices and human behavior:

So said the hawk to the nightingale with a colorful lap  
in the very high of the clouds, carrying him in his claws;  
he miserable swept all over by curved claws  
He moaned as the other arrogant man said to him:  
"Unfortunate, what do you shout? He has a stronger good for you;  
you will go where I take you, even if you are a good singer; (Hesiod, 1996, vv.  
203-208, p. 37)

Through this fable, he figured the authorities who prevented him from enjoying his rights. The judges, like the hawk, exercised the judicial force to subdue him and he, like the nightingale, struggled between its powerful claws, unable to get rid of his predator (Regino, 2020).

From this perspective, the lawsuit filed by the brother against his person was a legal violence as harmful as the physical violence of the hawk, even though it was common and even accepted by his society.

It is understood that this conceptual discussion promoted by Hesiod was uncommon or even unknown in his time. Justice differentiated between men and animals: in the animal world, physical force prevailed and defined the life of the species; In the world of men, disciplinary justice would guarantee security among mortals. His understanding was that justice would be ordering and regularizing life in society, a civilizing and humanizing action of men.

Thus, he urged his brother to correct his behavior according to Eris Benigna, arguing that Perses had long been overdoing illicit attitudes with corrupt officials and that this would cause him suffering.

Excess is evil to the weak man and neither is the powerful  
It can easily sustain them and under their weight it collapses  
when he falls into disgrace; The route to follow on the other side  
it is preferable: it leads to the just; Justice overrides Excess  
when one reaches the end: the fool learns by suffering (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 214-218, p. 39)

With this discussion, Hesiod introduces another element of conviction: in the face of good and evil, it was up to man to choose and define the course to take in his life, the role to assume in society. In this way, he removes from the hands of the gods the responsibility for human actions and experiences and puts into debate man as responsible for his history. In a voluntary decision, the latter should define and assume his path, regardless of the results of this option (Schuller, 1996, p. 29-30).

This concept, that of man as the producer of his historicity, was foreign to Greek culture, since society and the lives of men were organized and directed by the gods themselves. This concept of the visionary poet-thinker regarding the effective role of man in defining the course of his life would be, in a distant time, in the future, thought, discussed and theorized by thinkers who dedicated themselves to understanding the action of man in the process of historical construction.

At that moment, he based himself on this reference to persuade his brother to awaken to the best tendencies, to assume correct and just attitudes, because both parties in litigation would be rewarded; otherwise, punishment would be inevitable, excessive attachment to illegal advantages displeased Zeus and opposed the goddess Justice in her most sacred foundations.

Mistreated by the crooked sentences issued by the executors of the law, this goddess would punish men: "She continues to weep over the cities and the customs of the peoples [dressed in air and to men carrying evil] who expelled her and did not distribute her correctly" (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 223-230, p. 39).

Even weakened by disrespectful legal actions, Zeus' beloved daughter held underlying powers (Klingner, 1953), fundamental and, for the correction and punishment of these illegalities, she would interact in denunciation to her plenipotentiary father who would respond immediately to her clamor.

The didactics of fear of the gods was not restricted to the brother; His sententious voice also warned the judges who abused the power of justice.

Rigorous in his condemnation, he did not characterize them as "sons of Zeus" (Bowra, 1983, p. 33), but as "devourers of the people", "gift-eating kings" (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 38-39, p. 25), accusing them of being corrupt and money-changers not committed to social justice but to obtaining personal benefits: "Fools, they do not know how much half is worth more than the whole" (Hesiod, 1996, v. 40, p. 25). In contrast, the goddess Justice was considered guardian and protector of the rights of mortals, being supported by her father, lord of a superior justice that transcended the justice of men:

And there is a virgin, Justice, begotten, glorious and august by Zeus among the gods of Olympus have, and when someone offends her, sinuously insulting her, she immediately sits down with Father Zeus Cronida and denounces the minds of unjust men until the people atone for the folly of kings who devise evil and variously deviate, formulating crooked sentences. That being said, line up the words, O gift-eating kings, forget crooked sentences once and for all! (Hesiod, 1996, VV. 256-264, p. 41-43).

He called them to obedience to divine justice, warning that good judicial practices were cherished and observed by the gods: "And you also, O kings, consider this justice, for the immortals are very near, and among men they observe when they harm one another with crooked sentences, neglecting the divine gaze" (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 248-251, p. 41).

In addition to the magistrates, he charged the aristocracy because justice in their social practices was neglected in favor of their personal interests. Their actions were



predatory, because, abjugated by authorities marginal to the divine laws, these men harmed the poor and unprotected peasant.

The peasants, in turn, were exhorted to correct their behavior and to be concerned with work, which promoted and liberated man. With this meritorious practice in their lives and in their relationships, regardless of whether they are in the midst of good or bad forces, these men would transform and give dignity to their social existence.

Inspired by the confidence he had in divine justice, Hesiod maintained his optimism, even when he was harmed by a justice based on corruption, because he considered that one thing was certain: "it is known that the greater justice the more unjust will have" (Hesiod, 1996, v. 272, p. 43). This was the price to pay for those who did not submit to the goddess Justice.

### **SIGNALING NEW TIMES: THE CIVILIZING ROLE OF JUSTICE AND LABOR**

Hesiod's second argumentative axis is that of the intimate relationship between justice and labor, in which, considering his historical moment, he seems to be expressing a new understanding of the two themes.

The exercise of impartial justice, in his perception, would give security to the socially and politically marginalized man, would give him tranquility in the execution of the office in his lands, many of which were under demand, offering him the possibility of subsistence and a dignified and compatible life.

A society and/or community in which justice was understood and practiced in its essentiality would provide conditions and guarantees for a prosperous work, converting it, contradictorily, from a divine punishment originating from the theft of the sacred fire by Prometheus into a good, into a virtuous practice appreciated by the gods. This practice, cherished by the gods (Hesiod, 1986, v.310, p.45), was a factor in man's transformation, enabling him to approach a life without work and without other afflictions.

He had lost this life because of the unbridled act of the titan, who had disrespected the determinations and laws established by Zeus. This act would have attracted punishment for himself and for other men, as well as the proliferation of injustices. However, the space for the injustice that promotes conflicts and tensions to thrive would be limited by the disciplinary action of Justice (Werner, 2022, p. 19).

As an enabler of harmony and social order in human and interpersonal relations, justice would guarantee the practice of the good, the honest, the legal, the virtuous, the productive work indispensable to human life, thus preventing social missteps (Cás, 1996).

In Hesiod's thought, incorporating these guarantees, justice was the greatest of the goods granted by Zeus to men (Assumption; Assumption; Silva, 2023).

For the poet, his brother did not have great inclinations for work and, for this reason, he dedicated himself to illicit practices to illegally obtain benefits; work, on the other hand, was the only human activity that created conditions for obtaining wealth, fortune, virtuality and well-being for all those who dedicated themselves to it.

But you, always remembering our advice,  
work, O Perses, divine progeny, so that the famine  
I hate you and want you the good ruddy and venerated  
Demeter, filling the barn with food;  
for hunger is always of the idle companion;  
Gods and men get angry with those who idle live  
(Hesíodo, 1996, vv. 298-304, p. 45).

By encouraging his brother to value work and respect justice, Hesiod shows that his formative principle is that the wealth resulting from work would be legitimate: "if in strange riches you desire your courage, do so: work upon work works" (Hesiod, 1996, v. 381, p. 51).

For this reason, he exhorted his brother to live worthily of its fruits: "You, O Perses, listen to justice and do not expand Excess" (Hesiod, 1996, v. 213, p. 39). Dedicating oneself to work meant leaving the controversies of the agora, because it would not benefit from idleness: "your chest from work does not move away to listen to quarrels in the agora and listen to them" (Hesiod, 1996, v. 29, p. 25).

In this exhortation, the poet contradicts a concept dear to the Greek aristocracy: idleness, as a form of free life, stripped and devoid of the coercions, rigors and fatigues of manual/mechanical work. For this social sector, this activity was despicable, restricting any form of man's freedom and divine punishment.

From his perspective, idleness no longer had the same appreciation as the gods: "gods and men are irritated by those who are idle and live: [...] Work is dishonorable, idleness is dishonor!" (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 303-311, p. 45).

Defending the austere work ethic, which, for him, dignified the gods and promoted justice in human relations (Jaeger, 1995), he argued that his brother's work in the fields would result in benefits, while idleness favored illegal and unjust practices, that is, disrespect for justice. As a result, he hurt men, society and the gods.

In short, Hesiod's conception was that work constituted a fundamental distinction in the lives of men. Combined with justice, work would enable a return to the natural order, to a just life (Andery *et al*, 1983, p. 28). Agriculture, therefore, would be a source of prosperity and joy: "at feasts they enjoy the cultivated fields; the earth brings them much food" (Hesiod, 1996, v. 231, p. 231-232).

Even with the difficulties related to work, dedicated work and work in the fields would result in fortunate goods: "For work, men are rich in herds and resources, and when they work, they will be much more expensive for immortals" (Hesiod, 1996, v. 309, p. 45). Dedication to work would make any situation incompatible with the gods difficult.

In addition, work would promote "competition", the dispute and/or competition between parties to achieve a common goal: "If you work for yourself, the envious will soon envy you, because you prosper; to wealth glory and merit accompany" (Hesiod, 1996, vv. 312-337, p. 47), "This awakens even the indolent to work, because one feels the desire to work with a view to the other rich hurried to plant, to settle and the house to benefit" (Hesiod, 1996. vv. 20-23, p. 23-24).

Agriculture appears as a new way of producing life, opposed to the wars and booties that characterized the action of the aristocracy and its mythical heroes and, since ancient times, sustained and guaranteed the Greek material bases, but, at that time, showed signs of fragility and exhaustion.

The agricultural scenario, a constant stage of humanity's struggle (Pereira, 1998), is transformed by Hesiod into a new battlefield: in it the hard, obstinate and constant struggle to take from the earth, with his arms, from sun to sun, essential conditions for the maintenance of life.

In other words, in his poem, Hesiod does not represent the war that took place on the battlefields, the movements and brave actions of the intrepid heroes, dignified in the Homeric poems. It represents the struggles that took place in the fields, in preparing the land, in planting and harvesting, which were not always successful. In short, it represents the actions of a new hero, the worker.

Instead of the Greek concept of the negation of mechanical work, Hesiod proposes a new understanding of this human practice: that it is a moral practice that promotes human dignity. The meaning he attributes to it is not that of the accumulation of goods, but that of subsistence, of maintaining one's own existence, of a life without many difficulties in which, in some cases, the surplus could be used for exchange and/or help from neighbors.

One might think, based on Hesiod's visionary argumentation, that he understood the transformations that were already being announced in Greek society at the time. His work is set in the period in which, from the denial of the old social order, sustained by the aristocracy and the family and collective bases, a new society based on individualism, individual ownership of land and work emerged (Andery *et al*, 1996).

In addition to the specific and direct objective of the poem, by addressing sensitive issues, even uncommon for the Greek world of his time, and establishing a relationship between justice, work and agriculture, it opened up possibilities of understanding the very historical dynamics promoted by the Greek man for his society.

It is probable that the differences between the old aristocratic social order and the new social order were perceived by the poet and that the reflections of this movement appeared in the ordering of his poem. If, in the old aristocratic order, justice was promoted by *Themis*<sup>8</sup>, in the new social order that was unveiled, according to the Hesiodian perspective, it *was Dike* that oriented towards the just, towards the organization of society and towards meeting the interests of all those who cried out for justice.

Finally, in *Work and Days*, in addition to an individual issue, Hesiod represented a society with profound social differences, he represented different realities in the same reality. At the time, the Greeks were already developing a process of emancipation from the old aristocratic traditions and, with reference to the need for a common legacy, they were organizing a new way of producing and living that distanced itself from the old social order.

The ideals and practices of the heroes, sung by Homer and dignified by the aristocracy, were consigned to the past (Schuller, 1996); In their place, other values, other ways of seeing, understanding and living society and the world signaled the first footprints of rationality that would guide Greek culture in the future.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In these final considerations, it is initially highlighted that the arguments, allegations, denunciations and convincing strategies elaborated by Hesiod in *Work and Days* were based on a worldview and a pedagogical model for the formation of the ideal man in the field. Based on the agrarian educational ideal, articulated with justice, the peasant would have prosperity, freedom, security and tranquility in his work at that time of social crisis.

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<sup>8</sup> "Themis, the goddess of Law, personifies Justice and the Eternal Law" (Grimal, 2005, p. 435-436).

The cosmic understanding that underpinned his teachings and his admonitions about ethical-moral values gave the poem the status of a pedagogical piece that not only outlined the needs that were posed to this same man and to Greek society in crisis, but also transformations that were announced.

By exhorting to industriousness, justice, simple and practical wisdom, proper to a dignified life in the countryside, he exposed an educational conception with a social background that was opposed to that which was privileged by the aristocracy.

In this conception, he privileged the humble world of the rural man, marked and marginalized by poverty, ignorance and an excluding society. This was the man that the poet contemplated in his poem and, even if indirectly, converted into a new hero, different from the one who, until then, was recognized by the Greeks.

In the educational proposal envisioned by Hesiod was the path to the ideal man thought by him, the path for him to live, act and position himself in the scenario of transformations in Greek society. In moderate behavior, temperance in action, in a sense of justice and in an ordered life were the conditions for him to act with serenity in the midst of misfortunes and injustices.

Justice and work, in the Hesiodian conception, would endow man with discipline in his actions. Observing and complying with the dictates of justice, respecting and submitting to the moral law, piously revering the gods, believing in a superior ultra-earthly order that valued work, paying attention to earthly justice in its practices, acting with severity in favor or disfavor of those who had the right, this man would preserve the natural order of things, keeping it on the path for which it was created.

Centered on the democratization of education and justice, it preceded the thinking developed by the Greeks in the future, in the midst of the social transformations that occurred over the centuries.

Hesiod's ethical, moral and didactic teachings are considered as the first manifestations of this kind in Western culture, endorsing him as a trainer and/or educator of the peasant man. In fact, his pedagogical propositions went beyond the limits of particularity and gained broader formative contours, as he addressed a problem that affected peasants and other workers, who suffered the same injustices.

In short, the Hesiodic epic was not confined to a commonplace. His visionary spirit, which he pontificated as a gift received from the Muses, went further, encompassing work such as transformation and liberation, the democratization of education and justice, as well

as the struggle for rights that would lead to social justice. In other words, he poetically represented issues that, in other times, hundreds and thousands of years distant from his own, are the subject of reflections and debates and that, for many scholars and researchers, have their genesis in Hesiod.



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