Classica Cracoviensia
vol. XXVII (2024), pp. 17–37
https://doi.org/10.12797/CC.27.2024.27.01

Bogdan Burliga
University of Gdańsk

Ἔρις and 'Hesiodic Society' of the Iron Age

ABSTRACT: In this article I turn attention to the role of Eris ('Strife'/'Discord') in Hesiod's *Opera et dies*. Namely, I attempt to consider the question of extent to which the role of the personified deity of 'Strife', so evidently exposed in the poem, as well as the related story (μῦθος) of the Iron Age, can be interpreted as a Hesiodic 'commentary' on the socio-political reality of his time.

KEYWORDS: Hesiod, myth, 'Strife', conflict, war

1. Introduction

Almost all of you remember L.P. Hartley's famous *aureum dictum* from his 1953 novel *The Go-Between*: 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.' The phrase has become famous and has gained immense popularity (also among professional historians), as it suggests an unbridgeable gap between the experiences of people from the remote past and those of our own, stressing out that we, today, will never understand fully those who lived and acted in another, distant time and another place. Hartley's *bon mot* was recalled by Steven Pinker[1] but in a specific context, namely that 'If the past is a foreign country, it is a shockingly violent one'.[2]

[1] Pinker 2012: 1.

[2] However, dealing with the issue of violence in the past ages, he put forward the thesis of its reduction nowadays. Some of his readers, and I personally, disagree with this claim.

In this note, dedicated to the memory of the late Dariusz, a dear friend of mine from those memorable College years at *Alma Mater Cracoviensis*, my aim is modest. Relying on Hesiod's *Works and Days* as an unique testimony, and taking Pinker's above remark as a point of departure,[3] I will try to address the question of whether and to what extent the 'society' described by the Boeotian poet was 'stigmatised' by Ἔρις, and in consequence, by phenomenon accompanying it, violence (in the broad sense of the word) that in the then realities meant war(s), as well as 'law of the stronger'-rule (economic exploitation,[4] then social inequalities, so injustice). But first a few necessary words about *status quaestionis.*

2. Reading 'Hesiodic Society'?

I put the term society in quotation marks and for obvious reasons. For, as regards Hesiod, the question arises whether it is right to claim at all that he was describing a historical society of archaic Greek communities (*poleis*?) and social relations – in this case in his native Boeotia. This is a controversy well known to all historians dealing with Homer's poems.[5] So, as for the question of the value of *W&D* for a (hypothetical) reconstruction of 'la vie quotidienne à l'époque d'Hésiode' (if anyone would dare to write about it), some hesitation among scholars can be observed. As Osborne[6] put it: 'The contribution which the Homeric and Hesiodic poems make to the historian rests not with any additional information which they provide on topics illuminated by the

[3] Further on, in the main text, I will use the abbreviation *W&D*, as used in English-language literature, while in the footnotes the traditional Latin indication is retained: *Op. for Opera et dies* and *Scut*. for *Scutum.* I use here Solmsen 1949 in the OCT series; for *Theog.* – West 1966.

[4] See van Wees 2009.

[5] On this topic and difficulties that follow see Raaflaub 1997; Raaflaub 1998; Raaflaub 2006; Gould 2001, but cf. Crielaard 1995 and Crielaard 2002.

[6] Osborne 1996: 156.

archaeologist, but with the evidence they give for ways of seeing the world, ways which archaeology can at best only dimly illuminate.'[7]

This *caveat* remains valid as one has to do with mythical material and poetic language. Yet, it also is clear that the poem must contain some invaluable data,[8] other than practical details on agriculture, how to run a farm (*W&D*, 336–828),[9] in keeping with tradition of the Oriental wisdom-literature.[10]

Difficulties inherent in interpreting many invaluable pieces of information *W&D* provides have long been noted by specialists. Nevertheless, several scholars have drawn attention to the realities of Hesiod's world.[11] So, although the phrase 'Hesiod's world'[12] emphasises, to some extent, the artificial dimension of the Hesiodic reality as a literary construct, there is no doubt that from behind his mythological 'curtain' (his poetic language) brutal reality peeks out, every now and then.[13]

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[7] According to van Wees 2022: 30, Hesiod 'offers mainly qualitative information rather than quantifiable data'.

[8] Zanker 1986.

[9] See Walcot 1961; Kumaniecki 1963; Nicolai 1964: 159–186, cf. West 1978; Verdenius 1985; Tandy, Neale 1996; Hanson 1999; van Wees 2009: 445.

[10] West 1978: 3–25; Tandy, Neale 1996: 4; Tandy 2018. Needless to say, the present argument is based on the fundamental assumption that the Hesiodic narrator is not literary fiction (see Starr 1962: 269; West 1978: 55, cf. Zanker 1986), i.e. that the author of the poem does not introduce completely fictionalised details, see West 1978: 33–34; on this see Evelyn-White 1943: xiv; and esp. Stoddard 2004: 1–2.

[11] See especially Millett 1984, cf. Sinclair 1932; Zanker 1986: 26.

[12] Millett 1984, cf. Osborne 1996: 140–147; Ulf 2009: 81–99.

[13] The problem of what to do with and how to use mythical material, including Hesiod's poems, was already no small issue in antiquity (e.g., for Xenophanes: Diog. Laert. 9.18, cf. Thuc., I 22.4). About 350 years after Hesiod, Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics* α (984b), denies that Hesiod sought causes/principles. Further, in Book β, he raises an argument against Hesiod and his disciples that they did not remember 'us' (the philosopher's own generation) and wrote vaguely, for themselves. Why? Because (*Met.* 1000a11–21) these 'theologians' (οἱ μὲν οὖν περὶ Ἡσίοδον καὶ πάντες ὅσοι θεολόγοι) used unintelligible (mythological) language (e.g., speaking of νέκταρ and ἀμβροσία). As a result, their stories of first causes (τῶν αἰτίων) are beyond the reach of understanding. This is a priceless testimony as it shows Aristotle's helplessness, investigating the question of beginning or first principle, in the face of mythical genealogy. That is why Stagirite advises not to deal with stories, both those of Hesiod and those of others (περὶ μὲν τῶν μυθικῶς σοφιζομένων οὐκ ἄξιον μετὰ σπουδῆς σκοπεῖν), but with 'true research' (παρὰ δὲ τῶν δι' ἀποδείξεως λεγόντων δεῖ πυνθάνεσθαι). That myths

To put it briefly, it is the reality of the world of the early Greek communities and πόλεις,[14] roughly at the turn of the 7th century.[15] But what can you see when the 'the curtain' is torn, even just a little bit?

3. Thinking through Storytelling (Mythologically) – the Origins of Ἔρις in *Theogony*

Hesiod's first masterpiece of lively narrative, *Theogony*, features a whole retinue of different deities and their genealogies, as for the ancient Greeks. Reflecting on the past was thinking in terms of succession of generations – a vision extremely evocative and influential for later Hellenes, as Herodotus (II 53.2–3) did not doubt.[16] Thus, listening to the splendid epic story about the birth of the gods, the Greek addressee ended up with a whole thicket of names of various divine beings. Even today, Hesiod's mythical κόσμος, to use the title of J. Strauss Clay's 2003 study, appears like a living organism, a space where various forces (deities) either interact or compete with each other).[17] This being so, however, we will not be far from the truth in the claim that from among a vast number of deities the personification of Strife,

must have been a problem in the Peripatetic school is brilliantly shown by a disciple of Theophrastus, Dicaearchus of Messene (quoted by Porphyry, *De abst.* IV 2.2) who believed that if from the story of the Golden Age you remove too much of 'the mythical layer' (τὸ δὲ λίαν μυθικὸν), you can get to know this era; here also instructive is Plutarch, *Thes*. 1.1–3, cf. Strabo, *Geogr*. I 2.35 (τοῦ μυθικοῦ σχήματος; ἐν μύθου μᾶλλον σχήματι) and Lucian, *Hist. conscr*. 60.

[14] Raaflaub 1993: 59–64; Raaflaub 2000: 34–37, 57.

[15] It is assumed that the poet was writing approximately 'in the last third of the eight century BC' (West 1988: vii, cf. West 1966), although some speak of a century around 750–650 (Ulf 2009), cf. Starr 1962: 268; van Wees 2022: 30 ('around 700 BCE'). Tandy, Neale 1996: 1, say of 'the early seventh century B.C.E.'.

[16] Cf. Woodard 2007: 83–84; Dowden 2011: 48ff., on 'establishing canon'; Graziosi 2016: 35.

[17] Vernant 1988. Here I leave aside the well-known problem of the influence of Eastern cosmogonies on the myths repeated and retold by Hesiod; on this see Walcot 1966; West 1997: 276–333, cf. Burkert 1992: 124–127; Ready 2007: 130–131; Woodard 2007: 92–118.

Ἔρις, the daughter of the black Night (*Theog*. 123: μέλαινά τε Νὺξ; 224–225: Νὺξ ὀλοή […] Ἔριν τέκε καρτερόθυμον),[18] has been given special treatment. It will not be unreasonable to claim that it was this terrifying power (*Theog*. 226: Ἔρις στυγερὴ) that, to a certain extent, even fascinated the Hesiodic narrator.[19] Why? The easiest way would be to say that the narrator was watching the effects of her all-influence in the real, earthly world. For Hesiod, using modern medical terminology, Ἔρις was like a havoc-causing virus that permanently infects people's minds and ways of thinking (and therefore: acting). This statement sounds rather gloomy, but that is why it appears just as not very optimistic is the reading of *W&D*, being a cry for justice.

In *Theog*. 211–225 the siblings of Eris are carefully enumerated: her mother Night (called ἐρεβεννή – 'gloomy')[20] ἔτεκε στυγερόν τε Μόρον καὶ Κῆρα μέλαιναν καὶ Θάνατον, then Ὕπνον and φῦλον Ὀνείρων; other children of Night were: δεύτερος Μῶμος and Ὀιζύς ἀλγινόεσσα, as well as (v. 217) Μοίρας καὶ Κῆρας νηλεοποίνους.[21] The poet does not omit also Nemesis ('Indignation')[22] – Νέμεσιν πῆμα θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσι. And finally, another unfriendly offspring of the Night were Ἀπάτη and Γῆρας, labelled οὐλόμενον. This fear-inducing list of children (daemons, in fact) of the Night (an exception would be Φιλότης) ends, not coincidentally, with Ἔρις, apparently her most beloved child. The importance of this last daughter is confirmed by further lines of the poem (*Theog*. 226–232) where, in turn, a catalogue of her children follows – the baleful, raging Ἔρις-Strife interacts with the help of her offspring. In a sum, the all-powerful deplorable influence and impact of the bad Ἔρις are far more visible and tangible than Ἔρις of a different

[18] The black Night was born from Χάος ('Chasm' – Most 2006) – *Theog*. 123: ἐκ Χάεος δ' Ἔρεβός τε μέλαινά τε Νὺξ. Fränkel 1973: 111–112, understood 'Night' as 'the Darkness of Night' which probably better conveys the meaning of the allegory, cf. Ramnoux 1959.

[19] See West 1978: 28. Pausanias (IX 31.4) records an interesting tradition, still repeated among the Boeotians in the 2nd century AD, namely, that the initial invocation to the Muses in the *Op.* is spurious, and that the poem began, remarkably, with the story of the two Erides. The tradition was older, however, as ancient scholia prove, see Cassanmagnago 2009: 594–595; Rzach 1908: 53; Verdenius 1985: 13.

[20] Most 2006.

[21] See Ramnoux 1959: 258.

[22] Most 2006.

kind (γένος), whose positive interaction, in turn, the poet describes in *W&D*, 17–26.[23]

As regards the offspring of Ἔρις, again, it is a rather frightening and scary bunch – the personified misfits afflicting mankind, resembling the later Four Horsemen from the *Book of Revelation* (Ἀποκάλυψις). Here Hesiod's imaginary, as well as his narrative skills when transmitting these myths, come to the fore:[24] αὐτὰρ Ἔρις τυγερὴ τέκε μὲν Πόνον ἀλγινόεντα/ Λήθην τε Λιμόν τε καὶ Ἄλγεα δακρυόεντα/ Ὑσμίνας τε Μάχας τε Φόνους τ' Ἀνδροκτασίας τε/ Νείκεά τε Ψεύδεά τε Λόγους τ' Ἀμφιλλογίας τε/ Δυσνομίην τ' Ἄτην τε, συνήθεας ἀλλήλῃσιν,/ Ὅρκόν θ', ὃς δὴ πλεῖστον ἐπιχθονίους ἀνθρώπους/ πημαίνει, ὅτε κέν τις ἑκὼν ἐπίορκον ὀμόσσῃ. Would anyone after this overview still doubt that in comparison with this 'pathological' relatives the Addams family known from pop culture looks like bystanders and polite homemakers? But let us be serious about this: although the children of Eris are only a small group among the Greek deities, even it allows us to understand, a little better of course, the famous claim ascribed to Thales that 'everything is full of gods' (Arist., *De anima*, 411a8).

If one tries to explain this specific mythical theme in contemporary terms, one can say that Hesiod speaks of 'various personifications or abstractions to the phenomena of nature'.[25] In a similar vein Professor Łanowski, an eminent Polish philologist, in his introduction to the translation of Hesiod's poems,[26] wrote that the *Theogony* described by the poet could be termed 'groza przyrody' ('horror of nature').[27] But what is fascinating about Hesiod's literary production is that he does not stop at describing cosmic forces (in *Theogony*), but alludes to how these forces work on earth, how they determine the lives of people in

[23] Note, however, that the description of the good Eris (*Op*. 17–25), personifying reasonable ambition, is surprisingly tiny, if compared to the characterisation of the bad one. As von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1928: 43, observed, 'H. bemerkt, daß er in der Theogonie 225 nur eine Eris angenommen hat, eine Böse, die eine zahlreiche Deszendenz hat', cf. Jaeger 1936: 89–112; Sinko 1959: 170; Walcot 1961: 2–3.

[24] Zampaglione 1973: 24.

[25] Trépanier 2010: 275, cf. especially Burkert 1995; Parker 2011: 78, but cf. West 1966: 33–35.

[26] Łanowski 1999: 14.

[27] Cf. Graziosi 2014: 27 – 'a strange and disturbing story'.

his era, and how they affect their character and conduct; in short – what kind of motives drive humans. That is what *W&D* is about as well.

4. Descending to the Ground

Hesiod did not write history, this is a banality. This genre of writing was yet to come.[28] The poet reasoned in terms of 'tales' (myths) and through myths told about the world – yet another mere cliché. But it is (probably) not a cliché to ask how to do it by writing an epic poem and using traditional verse measure, when you want to tell about real problems, including those affecting you personally. The result? Hesiod's second poem, the happily preserved *W&D*, concerning the 'affairs of this world'. This earthly world of Hesiod was there and then, and sometimes while reading it now, we even feel it tangibly. The Hesiod-realist came down to earth and writes about *Realien*, things as unpoetic and intimate as avoiding peeing against the sun or on the road, among others trivialities (*W&D*, 727, 757).[29] But let no one be fooled. Do you think Lady Ἔρις has disappeared from the estate of Ascra and is not present in Boeotian (and other, actually – everywhere) οἶκοι at the turn of the 7th century BC? Quite wrongly: in *W&D* the ghoul of Discord feels excellent and still acts even more so then; the dreadful Ἔρις defines, so to speak, the then reality, shapes it, making that one enters 'the corrupt contemporary world in which he lives';[30] she makes that this reality remains gloomy and hard, stigmatised by conflicts.[31]

As we remember, it was already mentioned in *Theogony* (v. 228) that Eris with the epithet καρτερόθυμος is the mother of Ὑσμίναι, Μάχαι, Φόνοι and Ἀνδροκτασίαι. These dark children of hers (and let us not forget that the aunt of these four – Eris' sister – was Νέμεσις, called πῆμα θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσι: v. 223) were responsible for wars and

[28] Griffiths 2011.

[29] According to Osborne 1996: 144, 'the teaching [...] is not practical but moral'. Hesiod himself would probably protest, because the two goals are not in opposition to each other; see Łanowski 1999: 19.

[30] Bachvarova 2010: 78.

[31] Cf. Solmsen 1949: 76.

feuds (*Op*. 14; 161),[32] for perhaps the most sad phenomenon associated with her, bloodshed.[33]

In his emphasis on the military role of Eris, Hesiod is reminiscent of Homer's *Iliad* (4.440–441), where the deity is the sister and inseparable companion of Ares, the god of war (Ἔρις ἄμοτον μεμαυῖα,/Ἄρεος ἀνδροφόνοιο κασιγνήτη ἑτάρη), which reminds us that she was also the direct perpetrator of the three goddesses' dispute over the golden apple that eventually led to the Trojan war.[34] As Giroux reminds,[35] according to Quintus of Smyrna (10.53–73) Δεῖμος ('Terror') and Φόβος ('Panic'), also mentioned by Homer (v. 440), were her nephews – as if her children were not enough. And when Homer describes the shield of Achilles, he does not fail to remind his reader that Hephaestus, carving a siege on it, imagines, of course, Eris raging in battle, here called 'Din of Combat', and with Ker accompanying it: 18.535–538 (see esp. Ἔρις ἐν δὲ Κυδοιμὸς ὁμίλεον, ἐν δ› ὀλοὴ Κήρ).[36] This motif (and verses, except for one word) appears, of course, in *The Shield* (147–150), attributed to Hesiod.[37]

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[32] See West 1978: 191

[33] Cf. Walcot 1978: 8–9.

[34] In at least three suggestive places Eris is associated (understandably) with Achilles: at 1.7–8 it connotes the hero's sharp dispute with Agamemnon (Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς./Τίς τάρ σφωε θεῶν ἔριδι ξυνέηκε μάχεσθαι;); at 1.177 Agamemnon accuses Achilles of liking feuds and strife (αἰεὶ γάρ τοι ἔρις τε φίλη πόλεμοί τε μάχαι τε); and at 18.107–110 the hero himself admits (and complains) that Discord (and Anger, its loyal companion) prevails among gods and men alike (ὡς ἔρις ἔκ τε θεῶν ἔκ τ' ἀνθρώπων ἀπόλοιτο/ καὶ χόλος, ὅς τ' ἐφέηκε πολύφρονά περ χαλεπῆναι,/ὅς τε πολὺ γλυκίων μέλιτος καταλειβομένοιο/ ἀνδρῶν ἐν στήθεσσιν ἀέξεται ἠΰτε καπνός).

[35] Giroux 1986a: 846–847, with four representation of this deity in art (Giroux 1986b: 608–609), cf. Deecke 1884–1886: 1338–1339.

[36] Rutherford 2019: 208–209, accepts an older view that the lines are later interpolation. This is not convincing.

[37] Those who see *The Shield* as the work authored by Hesiod (it is questioned by Most 2007, cf. Rutherford 2019: 209), also point out the prominent role of the evil Ἔρις in this poem. Undoubtedly, this is the same 'Strife' referred to in *Theog*. and *Op.* Here, it is imagined ('painted') – by the way, a fine piece of rhetorical ἔκφρασις – on the forehead of the dragon, whose image adorned the centre of the described shield. The author calls this deity δεινὴ Ἔρις (v. 148). It is 'wretched' (v. 149), as it incites men (apparently) to fight and to making war (vv. 149–150). Such interpretation is the most logical here, as this very Ἔρις is the Ἀσπὶς-poem accompanied by equally gloomy as-

Thus, it is plain that *W&D*, in the first part of the poem, is not dealing with tillage, dominated thematically by war,[38] just as war was associated with this deity later in the classical era, as Aristophanes, among others, attests (*Pax*, 255–288), where Κυδοιμός is servant of Πόλεμος.[39] But the relevant question is: why? For what reasons does Eris occupy such a prominent place in Hesiod?

My first, noncommittal suggestion would be the following: it would be tempting to wonder if this might have been an allusion to some events from the poet's time. Of course, you are right, Hesiod gave no clues here,[40] it is true. But can it be denied that he intended his preliminary complaints at the beginning of the poem about Eris (fuelling the 'evil war' – πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ δῆριν ὀφέλλει: *W&D*, 14)[41] to be an echo of events known (probably from hearsay) to *his* audience? Can it be excluded that in this and other so frequently pessimistic (and

sistants – 'Assaults' (Προϊωξίς) and 'Counterattacks'' (Παλίωξίς, v. 154), then followed by 'Din of Battle' (Ὅμαδός), 'Killing' (Φόνος) and 'Slaughter' (Ἀνδροκτασίη, v. 155).

[38] On its importance in ancient Greece see Havelock 1972; Nowag 1983, but see Hornblower 2007. Hesiod does not devote as much attention as Homer does to the issue of the suffering that war inevitably brings (Burliga 2016). Nevertheless, he is fully aware of it. (See below for a description of the Iron Age generation.) His interest in war and armed conflicts as important factors (regrettably) in his time, a part of the then everyday 'reality' (Raaflaub 2006: 456, seems to be claiming the opposite), is confirmed only by the 'sibling' Homeric poems. Likewise, it can be said that although Hesiod nowhere expresses such a thought directly, his poems contain the message that is not far from that famous gnome of Heraclitus writing of πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς (22B, F53 Diels & Kranz, *FVS* = F212 Kirk, Raven, Schofield 1983). Also Heraclitus' another thought (quoted by Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VI 42.20 = F80 Diels & Kranz = F211 Kirk, Raven, Schofield 1983) that Εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνὸν καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ' ἔριν καὶ χρεών ('One must know that war is in common, that justice is strife, and that all things come about by strife and constraint' – Laks, Most 2016: 167) is very similar to what Hesiod says (unsurprisingly, Wade-Gery 1949: 81, calls him 'the first Presocratic', cf. Koning 2010: 190). Kirk, Raven, Schofield 1983: 193–194 stress out metaphorical nature of this language which is meant to point out 'changes in the world'. But the sources of such 'mythological' way of thinking (notice again γινόμενα πάντα κατ' ἔριν) are to be sought in the observation of daily practices, or events.

[39] Κυδοιμός figures prominently in the *Iliad*, XVIII 535, as a companion of Eris, as well in in *Scut.*, 156–159 and 248–257; see Edwards 1995: 220–221.

[40] See Osborne 1996: 143.

[41] West 1966: 26; West 1978: 191.

generalising) in tone comments on war there was no distant memory of the 'Panhellenic' conflict between Chalcis and Eretria on Euboea, dated usually to the late 8th – early 7th centuries, and known today as the so-called 'Lelantine War'?[42]

These questions, of course, cannot be answered authoritatively as a source like *W&D* imposes its insurmountable constraints.[43] However, there remains as legitimate another question about the roles of the Iron Age myth, the one in which Hesiod himself, as he imagines it, lives. Why did the Boeotian bard choose this Oriental (as the majority of scholars claim) metaphor to represent his own 'era'? Why, as the Budé editor of the text wondered, 'La *mythe des races* "couronne" la démonstration d' Hésiode'?[44]

Hardships of real life must have been for the poet one factor that, in all likelihood, made him cite the Oriental myth of the five ages of mankind,[45] with an emphasis put on the last of them, the Iron Genera-

[42] As Osborne 1996: 146 thinks, 'the present world, whose logic and morality *Works and Days* explores, is a world without war' (also Raaflaub 2006). Which is true, most probably, if one assumes that no allusion to a specific conflict can be found in the work. But there is no certainty about this assumption (see Hornblower 2007: 22). Be that as it may, it is puzzling that the Hesiodic narrator mentions (*Op*. 651–657) his sailing to Euboea from Aulis, precisely to Chalcis, where he participated in a musical agon for Amphidamas (supposed to have been a participant of 'the Lelantine War' – West 1966: 43–44; West 1978: 30–40; Coldstream 1977: 313) and won a tripod as a prize (see Taplin 2000: 28; Nelson 2005: 332). The poet's participation and his rivalry with Homer was doubted by Plutarch (*Mor*. 153f–154a), but not the Lelantine clash itself. Also related to this conflict is the testimony of Archilochus (F3 West, *IEG* = Plutarch, *Thes*. 5.2–3) and his mention of δεσπόται Εὐβοίης δουρικλυτοί. Archilochus' *floruit* is usually dated to the mid-7th century (cf. F19 West, *IEG*; see comm. by Swift 2019: 208–209) but it is plausible to argue that either he was referring to this earlier conflict on the Lelantine plain or tensions and animosities on Euboea continued – μῶλον Ἄρης συνάγηι/ἐν πεδίωι (but see Brouwers 2013: 79–82, 88). On this war cf. Herodotus, V 99; Thuc., I 15.3, with Hornblower 1991: 49, cf. Arist., *Polit*. 1289b37–39; Strabo, *Geogr*. X 1.12; see Parker 1997; Lane Fox 2010: 158–159, but cf. Hall 2007: 2–8, esp 6, on 'circular reasoning'; also Most 2006: xxv.

[43] There is a very interesting discussion by Ormand 2014 how another poem ascribed to Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women*, can be used as a historical source.

[44] Mazon 1947: 73.

[45] West 1978: 28.

tion (γένος σιδήρεον: *W&D*, 176) of his own day (vv. 176–201;).[46] It is fulfilled by the race of truly ruthless men. The song, once listened to by Hesiod's audience, sets off a series of evocative, powerful images that capture – thanks to imagination of the poet, displaying his talent to use ἐνάργεια – the attention of the listener who becomes the 'spectator'. Accordingly, before eyes of the listener unfolds a bleak and truly depressing vision of a 'lost generation', doomed to 'miserable suffering' (v. 200)[47] as they face anguish (v. 178) and hardship (v. 178).[48] The Iron Age men are those whom the poet characterises as impious, disrespecting parents, mocking the bonds of friendship, breaking oaths (v. 190), prone to perjury (v. 194). Their moral decline is marked by the disappearance of conscience and any sense of shame (vv. 193, 200).[49] Above all, this world knew no justice.[50]

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[46] Cf. Vernant 2006; Woodard 2007: 123; Van Noorden 2014: 43–88; see Griffiths 1956. On the modern category of the 'Early Iron Age (c. 1100–700)' (EIA), as used by archaeologists, see Morris 1998: 3; Morris 2002; Morris 2007: 211, cf. Whitley 2001: 75–101.

[47] Cf. Spiegel 1990: 54.

[48] Here one must leave aside the problem of how to reconcile such a vision with Hesiod's myth of Prometheus' guilt and Zeus' punishment of humans, in the form of sending Pandora upon them (Fontenrose 1974: 1; Nisbet 2004: 154). It seems that for Hesiod these were two parallel tales – altogether no novelty as far as the nature of Greek myths, understood as a kind of social practice, is concerned. They were a vast collection of very different stories, often incompatible with each other, created (repeated, retold, reinterpreted) for the actual moment and need by local communities or even a minor group within them, cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1997: 1; Mojsik 2018: 31.

[49] Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1997: 4.

[50] On the constant need for righteousness in social relations and a call to strive for it in *Op*. 109–380, see Dickie 1978; Beall 2005–2006; Most 2006: xliv; Most 2010. It is not, however, that Hesiod was some kind of social radical. He was well aware that the world of social inequality and poverty (cf. *Op*. 717) was in a sense a man's *nemesis*, i.e. people were not equal and never would be, so the stronger always triumphs over the weaker (Sinko 1959: 173 aptly recalls here *Il*. I 180). This purpose is served by the inclusion of perhaps one of the most famous fables of antiquity – the one about the hawk and nightingale (cf. West 1966, ad loc.; Burn 1966: 73–74; Andrewes 1981: 218; Spiegel 1990: 51; Buxton 1994: 177–179), openly addressed, nota bene, to landlords, 'the kings' (Hall 2007; Donlan 1997; Brouwers 2013: 43). Here is what hard reality looked like and the poet 'can revoke no remedy', as Snodgrass 1980: 118 wrote. (Although it is questionable whether Hesiod was looking for 'remedy'.) What, then, was the 'iron' (read: merciless) nature of the times in which Hesiod lived? It was pride,

But the second factor of the Hesiodic Iron Age society is bellicosity.[51] The narrator calls the 'iron men' wicked (v. 193), inclined to waging wars and attacking others; they are violent (v. 189), hybristically proud and arrogant, so ready to commit violent acts (v. 192;).[52] Such a scenario, again, highly pessimistic, is complemented by a remark about the 'Envy' accompanying the conduct and behaviour of the Iron Age villains (v. 195).[53] In general, the picture is depressing and Hesiod leaves no shadow of doubt that this impious and doomed world is like this because it is guided, or rather ordered, by the controlling everything Ἔρις – that sinister master, responsible (in the logic of myth) for the contemporary poet's world.[54] Eris, as noted above, in the imagination and belief of the Greeks, had many terrible children, but perhaps the worst are those associated with the war.[55] Descending with Hesiod from the celestial spheres (in *Theogony*) to the earth (in *W&D*), we conclude with surprise that this earthly world is not any better, nay, it is a kind of carbon copy of relations prevailing in the world of the gods. (In *Theog.* at least until Zeus brought cosmic order as such.) Both are under guidance of Ἔρις. Such a conclusion is not very reassuring, but such was the world in which Hesiod happened to live.[56]

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conceit and arrogance, so at the very beginning of the poem mention is made of 'the proud' – βριάων, ἀρίζηλος, and ἀγήνωρ – vv. 5–7.

[51] Preller 1860: 69.

[52] See Fisher 1992: 185 – 200; Querbach 1986: 7. That Hesiodic narrator condemns wars is evident in how he describes the men of the Bronze Age (*Op*. 145–146) who also care only for the deplorable works of Ares (Ἄρηος ἔργα στονόεντα, cf. Deacy 2000), thus committing acts full of pride (ὕβριες). On the contrary, the lack of wars was a fundamental criterion for calling this time the 'Golden Age': those living in that distant, blessed epoch knew no wars (Vernant 2006: 32), living a peaceful lifestyle and being just happy – hence praise of them in *W&D*, 109–125.

[53] On envy in social relations see Walcot 1978; Most 2003: 132.

[54] As R. Buxton 1994: 145 wrote: 'divinities of Greek mythology […] are neither good nor evil, but powerful'. I am afraid Hesiod would only agree with that last epithet.

[55] See Sissa, Detienne 2000: 104, quoting *Il.* XI 72–77 – a truly gore passage where angry Eris, labelled as πολύστονος ('fraught with many groanings', v. 73 – Murray 1965), joyfully (ἔχαιρε) takes part in battle even when the gods retreated from the slaughter and are staying on Olympus.

[56] In the Archaic Age, when thinking about the past, the ancient Greek reasoned, it is believed, via myths (stories) that reflected experience (various kinds of experience). Therefore, Hesiod did not tell a 'story' (narrative) in the manner, for example, as Thucy-

This is where Thucydides could come in with some help. In his famous reconstruction of the past, not just prehistory but also the epoch of Homer and Hesiod,[57] the Athenian historian paints a rather dark picture of what life in early Greece was like. Chapter 5 in particular shows a hardly idyllic vision, just as inequality (I 8.3) and lack of peace (I 12.1) were common social phenomena – evidenced by the most notorious war of distant era, that between Chalcis and Eretria (I 15.3). Thucydides admits that full knowledge of this past is impossible, mainly due to the fact that poets embellished ancient history and many events took on a legendary character – ἐπὶ τὸ μυθῶδες ἐκνενικηκότα (I 21.1).[58]

5. Conclusion

It was Simone Weil who formulated the very well-known thesis that the real 'hero' of the *Iliad* is force and that Homer's poem deals *de facto* with violence.[59] As I only tried to succinctly point out here, the same is true of the 'world' and 'society' of Hesiod, whether we situate them in the second half of the 8th century or the first half of the 7th century. Hesiod instructs his fellows (and, of course, his greedy brother)[60] because was wronged in the division of paternal property. Instruction is the poet's main purpose but that does not change the fact that his poetry – and therein lies its priceless value – provides insights into a reality that was far from what he himself would have wanted. His outlook is that of a man with a sober mind who knows what the world around

dides did. Nevertheless, Hesiod's 'mythical' vision of the epoch in which he himself lived (in the mythological language – 'the Age of Iron') remains true to the extent that, to quote Fowler 2015: 196, the poem 'addresses large questions about human life and world we live in' (also Fowler 2015: 199).

[57] The insightful 'archaeologia'– passus, I 1–17; Hornblower 1991; Whitley 1991.

[58] It is tempting to ask whether in some way Thucydides was not also impressed by Hesiod's vision and his hardly optimistic account. The historian was familiar with the epic, having openly criticised Homer, but it is possible that Hesiod's pessimistic remarks somehow influenced his view of the past, filled with local conflicts and plundering invasions.

[59] Weil 1956.

[60] See Most 2006: xlvi.

him is like; it was the world that Hesiod found and which – the poet was aware of this – was not easy to make a better place to live. Hence the author's appeals for 'justice',[61] coupled with a series of instructions and admonitions.

As is widely known, it is Thucydides who is usually called now 'a realist', a thinker who took a close look at what principles and rules societies and states function according to, as well as what motives people are usually driven by. In this understanding of the term 'realism', however, the label of 'a realist' should be given to none other than Hesiod, 'a landowner who is not part of the ruling elite of *basileis*',[62] and whose worldview, long before Thucydides, betrays a similar perspective, far from idealistic illusions, on a society infected by constant feuds and war.

In his book, Pinker[63] writes of Homer that 'his characters, to be sure, deplored the waste of war, but they accepted it as an inescapable fact of life'.[64] I think that this last phrase also can perfectly be applied to Hesiod, a man who experienced and understood that conflicts, contentions and wars (*Theog*. 228; *Op*. 14; 161) were factors inherent in the man's life.

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[61] On Hesiod's emphasis on the need of justice (Dike) see Starr 1962: 268; Murray 1980: 62; Querbach 1985: 9; Strauss Clay 2009.

[62] Van Wees, Fisher 2015: 9.

[63] Pinker 2012: 5–6.

[64] See also Jaeger 1936: 98.

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