

CHAPTER 22

HESIOD FROM ARISTOTLE TO POSIDONIUS

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πολλὰ ψεύδονται αἰοιοί

INTRODUCTION

THIS chapter examines the reception of Hesiod among the Peripatetics, Epicureans, and Stoics, from Aristotle to the end of the Hellenistic Period.¹

Two Hesiodic passages above all seem to have captured the attention of these philosophers: the genesis of the primordial divinities in *Theogony* (hereafter *Th*) and the Myth of Ages, especially the golden age in *Works and Days* (hereafter *WD*). Both pertain to origins, cosmic-divine and human, respectively. Broadly speaking, their attraction is easily explained: gods and humans are of central interest in Greek culture, and *archai* are a quintessential concern of ancient philosophy.

Granted the importance of these passages and their provision of one unifying thread within this particular history, philosophical interest in and use of Hesiod over the three centuries in question was diverse and complex. The reception is in fact not tightly unified at all.

One factor contributing to the disunity is the state of the evidence. This is extremely limited, disparate, and elusive. Often we know little about the central philosophical contributions of the philosophers, let alone the loci or aims of their remarks about or treatments of Hesiod. A second factor is the diversity of interests and attitudes among, as well as within, the schools. The poverty of evidence surely bears some responsibility for the way this extant content appears, but in many cases the two factors seem to bear independent responsibility for the lack of unity.

Consider one obvious point of entry into the reception history: the topics of poetry and Hesiod as poet. Take the Peripatetics first. Despite the value Aristotle accorded to

poetry, he did not treat Hesiod's works as worthy of poetic theoretical attention. Instead, Aristotle appears to have been interested in Hesiod principally as a *theologos*. Some of Aristotle's prominent successors, for example Theophrastus and Eudemus, seem to have regarded Hesiod likewise. In contrast, and although in this case the evidence is extremely scanty, other second- and third-generation Peripatetics integrated Hesiod into the important advances they made in literary criticism. The lack of evidence impedes our ability to explain this divergence among the Peripatetics, but there is no reason to believe that the lack merely makes the divergence apparent as opposed to real.

In the case of the Epicureans, we have relatively clear evidence for striking disparities among their views toward poetry and poetic theory. Epicurus himself was largely uninterested in poetry and apparently hostile toward poetic form as a vehicle of philosophical expression. Philodemus, by contrast, composed both poems and, like a number of Epicurus's successors, philosophical works on poetry. Lucretius broke still more radically with his master and predecessors when he versified the central ideas of Epicurus's *On Nature*.

For their part, the Stoics were interested in poetry, and for various reasons. The dearth of evidence limits our appreciation of this variety. But we know that one of the distinctive and remarkable ways the Stoics viewed poetry, in particular archaic poetry, was as a kind of repository of the cosmological and theological ideas of early humans. Insofar as these ideas were not apparent to the poets themselves—for example, because they were embedded in the etymologies of divine names—such Stoic interpretations of the poetic texts have been described as allegorical. I prefer to call them archaeological. And insofar as the Stoics employed the texts in this way, they engaged them not as poetry per se, but again as records of ideas that happened to be transmitted in poetic form. Consequently in this case at least, the Stoics were not interested in Hesiod as poet or even in Hesiod per se, although they were very much interested in Hesiod's texts.

Archaeological excavation constitutes a significant part of the Stoic evidence on Hesiod, but there were numerous other things that they, as well as the Epicureans and Peripatetics, said and made of Hesiod, whether in the guise of poet, *theologos*, cultural icon, or even *philosophos*. We have tantalizing traces of these sayings and doings, but often little more.

Throughout my discussion I refer to many of these traces as well as the broader themes and forms of engagement mentioned previously. Doing so introduces many loose ends and provocative but dangling questions into the account. I have preferred to render such an untidy picture precisely because it is a more faithful one.

THE PERIPATOS

Aristotle

Hesiod is not mentioned in the surviving portions of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Nor is there a good reason to believe he was mentioned in the lost portions.² Given the

popularity of Hesiod in fourth-century BCE Athens, Aristotle's silence requires explanation.

Central to Aristotle's theory of poetry is imitation of human action and unified plot structure (*muthos*). As Stephen Halliwell writes, "even human themes will not provide suitable substance for a . . . *muthos* unless they are organized into a single structure of action" (1986: 282). Hesiod's *WD* and *Th* arguably depart from these conditions to such an extent that unless Aristotle sought to highlight these poems as paradigms of failure, he would have little motivation to discuss them.

Although Hesiod is not a subject of interest in *Poetics*, Aristotle was interested in Hesiod. The *Vita Menagiana* lists among Aristotle's writings a *Hesiodic Problems* in one book. Compare Aristotle's *Homeric Problems* and *Problems in Archilochus, Euripides, and Choerilus*. No fragments from the *Hesiodic Problems* survive, but some idea of its content might be gained by considering the numerous fragments of the *Homeric Problems*. Some fragments concern Homer's biography; most engage specific passages or verses and discuss pertinent heroic behavior, customs, and society, including textual inconsistencies and narrower philological issues.

"Problems in X" does not however designate a well-defined category, and it is noteworthy that Aristotle and his contemporaries lack a term for this type of inquiry. For convenience I refer to it as "literary critical" (Blum 1991: 46–47, 86; Richardson 1994: 26). But we should acknowledge that "literary criticism" does not designate a particularly well-defined theoretical domain. Both "literature" and "criticism" are vague terms.

Aristotle makes about ten references to Hesiod in his surviving corpus and fragments.³ Most are of a metaphysical and cosmological nature. For example, at *Metaphysics* 984b28 Aristotle cites *Th* 116–20 to illustrate that Hesiod was the first to adumbrate the *aitia* of motion and change. At *Physics* 208b29–31 he cites *Th* 116 to suggest how Hesiod would be justified in committing to the view that space is distinct from body. And at *On the Heavens* 298b28 and *Metaphysics* 1000a9 Aristotle refers to Hesiod's general commitments in *Th* apropos of the question of whether the principles of perishables and imperishables are the same or different.

Aristotle's first three references express no disparagement, but the one at *Metaphysics* 1000a9 does. There, Aristotle insists on turning from those such as Hesiod, who do not use proof (*apodeixis*), to those who do. An explanation for this disparagement is that Aristotle is primarily concerned with the epistemic value of the content of Hesiod's contribution, whereas in the three other cases he is interested in locating Hesiod's contribution within a teleological history of philosophy.

The evidence suggests the following tentative conclusions. Aristotle did not appreciate Hesiod as a poet. However, he did recognize the cultural historical importance of Hesiod's poetic contributions. Aristotle was principally interested in Hesiod as a *theologos* (cp. *Metaphysics* 1000a9) and so as a proto-philosopher.⁴ Accordingly, Aristotle did not esteem Hesiod's intellectual contribution for its own sake, but he appreciated its importance for the development of philosophical thought.

Several of Aristotle's prominent successors appear to have regarded Hesiod in the same terms.

Theophrastus

Theophrastus cites Hesiod four times, all in the *History of Plants* (3.7.6, 7.13.3, 8.1.2, 9.19.2) and in each case it is a passage from *WD*. Each citation is in passing. Sometimes Theophrastus simply adduces Hesiod in agreement, sometimes in disagreement.

From Aristotle to Posidonius numerous Hesiodic citations are of this kind. A default interpretation of such en passant citations, as I call them here, is that they serve to demonstrate or merely express the philosopher's *paideia* or to give to some thought a veneer of archaic precedence. Consider a comment by Tony Long on Chrysippus's citations from Homer: "Like all educated Greeks, of course, the Stoics had lines of Homer and other poets in their heads which they could use to make an ethical point and to show that their philosophy accorded with 'the common conceptions' of people" (1992: 49).

The philosophers' attitudes toward traditional culture are diverse and complex. Various reasons may motivate an en passant citation. Sorting out the explanation in a given instance requires attention to the Hesiodic content of the citation, the philosopher's broader philosophical commitments, and the philosophical context in which the citation is made. For example, if a citation is ethical and the author is a Peripatetic, then possibly the citation is being employed endoxically. Observe that in Long's remark "common conception" (*koina ennoia*) is a technical Stoic epistemological term. Space constraints here do not permit much scrutiny of en passant Hesiodic citations. But I underscore that their meanings may not be transparent and are worthy of consideration.

Given the relatively large number of Theophrastus's surviving works, the dearth of references to Hesiod is suggestive. Consider further that there is no reference, in particular to *WD*, in Theophrastus's *On Signs*. Again, one might expect a number of citations from *WD* in the Peripatetic *Economics*, a text some, including some ancients, attribute to Theophrastus. In this case there are two citations (1343a20, 1344a16), and in each instance the author agrees with Hesiod. But both, like those in the *History of Plants*, are en passant.

Like Aristotle, Theophrastus took a theoretical interest in poetry. He also wrote on rhetoric and specifically encouraged the study of poetry for rhetoric (fr. 666.1–16, 24, 707 Fortenbaugh, Huby, Sharples, and Gutas [= FHS&G]). If more than scraps of works such as Theophrastus's *On Poetry* and *On Style* had survived (fr. 681–709 FHS&G), we might have more to say about his reception of Hesiod. On the other hand, what does survive does not indicate that Theophrastus drew Hesiod into the poetic-theoretical discussion.

In sum, the dearth of Hesiodic citations in Theophrastus suggests that he found little in Hesiod worthy of theoretical engagement and probably even so with respect to the domain of literary criticism.

Eudemus

A fragment from Eudemus includes Hesiod among other Greek and “barbarian” prephilosophical *theologoi*, listing their various claims about the primordial divinities (fr. 150 Wehrli). In Hesiod’s case these divinities include Chaos, Earth, and Tartarus and hence derive from *Th* 116–20. The original source of the fragment is contested, but one plausible view is a *History of Theology*, which Gábor Betegh describes as “a synoptic collection of the theologians’ ‘genealogical narratives’” (2002: 354). As Betegh also emphasizes, one of Eudemus’s central and original contributions in this work is the “application and institutionalization” of Aristotle’s distinction between *theologoi* and *philosophoi* (355). That is, the figures whose views of the primordial divinities Eudemus includes belong to a category that Aristotle had defined, but whose “demarcation was not usually observed outside the Peripatos” (355).

Eudemus’s interest in Hesiod as a prephilosophical *theologos* is a notable exception that underscores the generalization that evidence of Peripatetic interest in Hesiod during the Hellenistic period is literary critical. Before turning to this evidence, I consider one further possible exception, in this case from Dicaearchus.

Dicaearchus

Dicaearchus composed a work of historical anthropology, *On the Life of Greece*. Evidence of its content is slim. But the work apparently began with a description of the first humans. In this portion Dicaearchus appears to have engaged with Hesiod’s Myth of Ages, specifically with the golden age. Under Trevor Saunderson’s interpretation (2001), in both Hesiod’s and Dicaearchus’s accounts early human life is autarkic and free of labor. But Dicaearchus seems to have departed from Hesiod’s idyllic view of the period, maintaining that the quality of nourishment available to the first humans was poor and that in subsequent ages technical developments such as hunting and agriculture brought certain qualitative improvements.

Granting some engagement with Hesiod’s golden age, Dicaearchus’s theoretical view of Hesiod’s contribution remains obscure. Was Dicaearchus’s aim doxographical: to provide a (critical) record of his predecessors’ historical anthropologies and in particular Hesiod’s prominent treatment? Or did he have a different objective?

Praxiphanes, Chamaeleon, Megacleides, Hieronymus

Despite its extremely fragmentary and elusive nature, there is important evidence that a number of Hellenistic Peripatetics made significant advances in literary criticism and in doing so integrated Hesiod into their studies.

Praxiphanes of Mytilene is mentioned among those who athetize the proem of Hesiod's *WD* (fr. 28A–B Matelli). No work on Hesiod is attributed to him. However, a work *On Poems* and a dialogue *On Poets* are. The discussion of Hesiod's proem might have occurred in one of these.

The athetization may also be significant insofar as Praxiphanes was, at least within one literary critical tradition, considered the first *grammatikos*—"as we use the word now," Clement of Alexandria remarks (fr. 9A Matelli). Regarding this and related testimonies, Elisabetta Matelli comments: "Praxiphanes was considered the founder of a new kind of [literary study] that dealt with critical exegesis of texts" (2012: 55–56n5).

Chamaeleon of Heraclea composed works on a number of poets, including Homer, Anacreon, Sappho, Simonides, Stesichorus, and Aeschylus. No title *On Hesiod* is attributed to him. However, testimonies report that he accused Heraclides Pontus of plagiarizing his view of the relative chronologies of Homer and Hesiod (Diogenes Laertius 5.92). Chamaeleon must therefore have devoted some work or portion of a work to this aspect of Hesiod's life. The testimonies are also significant in indicating the biographical dimensions of Peripatetic literary criticism and the development of chronography more broadly. The latter is a subject Aristotle and his successors variously fostered, for example through their research and composition of lists of athletic and dramatic victories.

Chamaeleon's contemporary Megacleides (Janko 2000: 138–43) composed a work *On Homer*, which among other things compared Homer's treatment of Heracles with those of other poets. Megacleides apparently criticized the treatment of Heracles in the Hesiodic *Shield*.

The third-generation Peripatetic Hieronymus of Rhodes also discussed the *Shield*. The *Gudian Lexicon* reports that Epaphroditus, in his *Commentary on the Shield*, cited Hieronymus's explanation of the word "*alkaia*" (at line 430) as principally referring to the lion's tail because it rouses the animal's strength (*alkē*) (fr. 45 White). The same explanation occurs in Hieronymus's contemporaries Callimachus and Apollonius of Rhodes. Apollonius expressly defended Hesiod's authorship of *The Shield*, and it is noteworthy that with the exception of Aristophanes of Byzantium's athetization, *The Shield* "remained with [*Th*] and [*WD*] in every ancient text of Hesiod" (Pfeiffer 1968: 178).

Andrea Martano observes that Hieronymus's explanation of "*alkaia*" does not occur in Peripatetic zoological works (2004: 458–63). This supports the possibility that it was introduced in a literary critical context. More precisely, Martano argues that Hieronymus cited the explanation in a *hypothesis* (465–70).

Conclusion to the Peripatos

In his oration on Homer, Dio Chrysostom speaks of Aristotle as he "from whom, as they say, *kritikē* and *grammatikē* began" (53.1). Dio's claim may be defended to this extent. The literary critical work of Aristotle and his successors appears to have harnessed the general methodological and theoretical interests and advances of the Peripatos to

traditions of literary criticism extending back through the sophists and rhapsodes. Contra Plato, Aristotle invigorated these traditions, and in doing so he and his successors prepared and informed the work of the Alexandrians.

Granted this, one fundamental question to be considered is on what grounds those Hellenistic Peripatetics who made literary criticism one of their central preoccupations departed from Aristotle in making Hesiod an important object of study. Above all it would be valuable to know whether and how they explicitly responded to the absence of Hesiod from their master's *Poetics*.

A more general philosophical question that the Peripatetics' literary critical activity raises is why they recognized and then embraced poetry as a legitimate object of inquiry. The basic answer seems to be that poetry is a central contribution of culture and that culture is a legitimate object of inquiry. But why? Relative to Aristotle's scheme of theoretical, practical, and productive knowledge, poetry exemplifies productive knowledge. So the answer requires not simply clarifying that poetry has value as a human achievement, but how its value, apparently diminutive relative to other objects of inquiry, qualifies it for sustained theoretical attention. Consider the familiar, loosely analogous question of how in Aristotle's ethics the choice between theoretical and practical lives is to be adjudicated. Our question concerns the choice between different sorts of theoretical pursuits.

THE GARDEN

Epicurus

A central feature of Epicurus's ethics, including the epistemology and physics that serve it, is criticism of traditional mythology and mythological poetry, especially for their portrayals of the gods, divine involvement in human affairs, and post-mortem existence. Epicurus is notoriously hostile toward conventional *paideia*. In an often-cited fragment, he encourages Pythocles to avoid it; in another, he praises his student Apelles for having done so to that point (fr. 89, 43 Arrighetti). Consequently, we would expect Epicurus either to have engaged with Hesiod in a hostile manner or to have deliberately ignored him altogether.

There is no explicit reference to Hesiod in Epicurus's extant texts, and there is just one testimony explicitly associating Epicurus and Hesiod. This is ostensibly a biographical remark, although probably fictional, from Apollodorus, scholar of the Garden in the second century BCE, which claims that Epicurus turned to philosophy because he despised his schoolmasters for their inability to explain to him Hesiod's primordial Chaos (Diogenes Laertius 10.2).

Granted this there is some, admittedly speculative reason to think that in *On Nature* Epicurus criticized Hesiod among a number of early sources of misguided theology. The grounds derive from the Epicurean Velleius's criticism of Homer and Hesiod in

Cicero's *On the Gods* and topically related sections of Philodemus's *On Piety* (cf. Obbink 1995: 201–2). These treatments have a common source, although its identity is disputed (cf. Heinrichs 1975; Asmis 1990a:35). But given Lucretius's dependence on Epicurus and account of the origins of religion in *On the Nature of Things* (5.1161–240), I speculate that all three authors depend, directly or indirectly, on portions of Epicurus's *On Nature* (probably book 12 or 13) that discussed these topics.

Beyond this there is little to say about Epicurus directly on Hesiod. There is, however, something to be added regarding Epicurus's and his successors' attitudes toward poetry. Given that Epicurean ethics is hedonistic and that a traditional and central function of poetry is to be pleasing, the enjoyment or even composition of poetry might be thought to have some role in the Epicurean life. For example, Epicurus might have admitted traditional poetry within symposiastic contexts for purposes of entertainment rather than instruction.

In fact, the topic of poetry in the Epicurean philosophical tradition is complex and controversial. Philodemus composed well over a hundred epigrammatic poems, some of which were intended to celebrate the *Eikas*, the monthly festival Epicureans held in honor of their master. But Lucretius's epic versification of the central ideas of Epicurus's *On Nature* is intended to be instructive as well as to charm. And Philodemus's *On the Good King according to Homer* in fact employs Homeric epic didactically.

Diogenes Laertius lists the titles *Symposium* and *On Music* within his catalog of Epicurus's writings (10.27), and he attributes to Epicurus this *doxa*: "It is only the wise man who can converse properly about music and poetry" (10.121). On the other hand, Diogenes also attributes to Epicurus this *doxa*: "The wise man would not be actively engaged in the composition of poems" (10.121). Moreover, we know of a number of Epicurean theoretical works on poetry and poems. Metrodorus, Demetrius Lacon, and Philodemus each wrote treatises *On Poems*, and Zeno of Sidon wrote a work *On the Utility of Poems*.

However determinate Epicurus's own views were, they evidently left theoretical space for development and disagreement among his successors. For example, the *doxa* against the composition of poetry could be interpreted as entailing only that poetic composition should not be an Epicurean's central or professional occupation. And the *doxa* supporting the wise man's reception of poetry could be interpreted to mean that he is intellectually fortified against the harmful potential of traditional poetry and therefore equipped to enjoy as well as to discourse on it. Granted this, we have no explicit evidence that Epicurus himself included, let alone admired, Hesiod's poems qua poems.

Philodemus

Philodemus's theory of poetry survives in the fragments of his treatise *On Poems*. Hesiod is mentioned there once (book 4, col. 103.7). The context is Philodemus's statement that Hesiod is a better poetic craftsman than Stesichorus. Philodemus's intriguing claim may constitute a criticism of Aristotle who, in his dialogue *On Poets*, arguably stated the

contrary (Janko 2011: 263, 411). However, the grounds for the contradictory claims are obscure (cf. Janko 2011: 222–38).

David Sider has suggested that the rare use of an inflected form of “*triēkonta*” in Philodemus’s seventeenth epigram, which concerns marriage, alludes to Hesiod’s use of this word in the genitive at *WD* 695–97, where the context is the appropriate age for a man to marry (1995: 54). Some support for Sider’s position may be gained from Philodemus’s explicit citation of *WD* 405–6 in his *On Economics* (col. 8.25–40), a treatise concerning marriage and the household. The context is a discussion of Theophrastus’s citation of the same Hesiodic verses in his *On Economics* (1343a20)—assuming Theophrastus is the author, as Philodemus does—in which Theophrastus is concerned with the essential components of a household and subsequently addresses the appropriate qualities of a wife and how a husband should treat her. In this latter case, Theophrastus once again cites Hesiod, in this instance *WD* 696, with approval (1344a16).

Philodemus treats Theophrastus critically, among other reasons because the Epicurean rejects the Peripatetic’s idea that a wife is indispensable to a well-functioning household. But the interpretation of Philodemus’s criticism is complicated by the question of whether *WD* 406 was absent from Philodemus’s text or whether his text contained a variant reading (cf. Tsouna 2012: 90).

Philodemus mentions Hesiod a number of additional times. One instance occurs in *On Piety* (B 9970–80 Obbink). In addition, Dirk Obbink has convincingly argued that in another fragment from this treatise Philodemus refers to the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (2004: 188–90). The broader context of these references is traditional mythological representation of the gods’ unethical behavior, especially Poseidon’s sexual exploits.

Overall, Philodemus’s engagements with Hesiod are minimal. His references to Hesiod in *On Piety* are representative of Epicurean hostility to traditional mythographic poetry. Those in *On Economics* indicate a willingness to address other aspects of Hesiod’s thought. But with the exception of the claim in *On Poems* and the possible and indeed tenuous allusion to Hesiod in one of his epigrams, Philodemus evinces little appreciation for or interest in Hesiod as a poet.⁵

Lucretius

The evidence from Lucretius suggests the same conclusion. As an epic poet, Lucretius views himself as heir to Homer and Ennius, and as a didactic poet as heir to Empedocles. But Lucretius never refers to Hesiod, and it is difficult to find in *On the Nature of Things* clear and specific allusions to Hesiod.

Monica Gale has argued that Lucretius’s engagement with Hesiod, specifically *WD*, is to be found less in “close verbal correspondences” than in “wide-ranging thematic and symbolic interaction” (2013: n6). In particular, through his treatments of piety, labor, and justice Lucretius creates “a kind of anti-Hesiod . . . holding up an Epicurean mirror to the Hesiodic world view.” Lucretius rejects Hesiod’s view that the gods involve themselves in human affairs and that toil, in particular physical labor, is required for

well-being. In contrast to Hesiod's view of the theistic grounds of justice, the Epicurean views justice as arising out of social agreement.

It may be objected, however, that Lucretius's handling of these three themes does not constitute a direct response to Hesiod, but rather to broadly accepted traditional views. More compelling is Gale's argument that Lucretius engages with Hesiod's Myth of Ages in his own history of civilization in book 5 (2013: 42–50). Most strikingly, Lucretius reproduces the metallic stages of gold, silver, bronze, and iron, yet in an account of the history of metallurgy (5.1241–96). Within this discussion, in particular in the transition from the Bronze to Iron Ages, Lucretius clearly alludes to Hesiod's language at *WD* 150–51 (5.1289–91).

Conclusion to the Garden

I have suggested that some indeterminacy in Epicurus's own views about poetry may have enabled his successors' more accommodating and eventually welcoming developments. But this is hardly a satisfactory explanation for what occurred. The history of Epicureanism might instead have followed a course of increasing hostility.

The basic explanation for Lucretius's decision and justification for versifying Epicurean philosophy seems to be that he was the first to appeal to a Roman audience in their own language. As he emphasizes in a much-discussed passage, the sweetness of the verse serves to attract the patient so that the difficult content will be more easily digested (1.933–42, 4.8–25).

But this answer cannot straightforwardly be applied to explain Philodemus's poetic theorizing and composition. Philodemus did spend most of his life in Rome and Herculaneum and had a significant influence on a number of the most prominent Augustan poets. But he first studied in Athens under Zeno of Sidon, who was already interested in the utility of poems. Philodemus's poetic and aesthetic contributions are therefore likely to be understood as a function of various factors: his personal interests and the interests of his Roman students and hosts, but also the aesthetic theoretical interests of the Athenian Garden in the late second and early first centuries BCE.

Despite their poetic theories and compositions, neither Philodemus nor Lucretius took much of an interest in Hesiod. The reasons for that may be drawn from Gale's discussion: Hesiod's theology and emphasis on the value of labor are antithetical to the relevant aspects of Epicurean philosophy.

THE STOICS

Zeno

On the basis of several testimonies pertaining to Zeno's interpretations of select passages in Hesiod's *Th* (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* [hereafter *SVF*] 1.103–5, 100, 118,

276) Hans von Arnim attributed to the founder of Stoicism a commentary on Hesiod's *Th* (*SVF Fragments relating to Zeno's titles* 1.71–72, nr. VI). But Diogenes Laertius lists no such title in his catalog of Zeno's works (7.4). And while Diogenes's catalogs are not always complete or reliable, Keimpe Algra has forcefully argued that von Arnim's attribution is misguided (2001).

All of the testimonies concern the names of mythical divinities, and all appear to derive from cosmological or cosmogonic contexts. Most significantly among them, Zeno interprets Hesiod's primal cosmogonic sequence of Chaos, Earth, and Eros at *Th* 116–20 as largely in agreement with his own view of the genesis of the cosmic elements. Consequently, Algra plausibly suggests that the likeliest source for the Zenonian testimonies is Zeno's physical treatise *On the Whole*.

Following Algra's interpretation, two basic questions arise: What general theoretical grounds support Zeno's interpretation of the *Th* passages? And why was Zeno motivated to engage Hesiod at all? Consideration of these questions leads to a particularly vexed set of issues. I address the first question here and the second in the conclusion.

Allegory and Etymology

Discussions of the Stoics' treatments of poetry have been bound up with the topic of allegory. The basic claim is that the Stoics' interpretations of the poets are allegorical; hence Zeno's interpretations of passages in Hesiod's *Th* are. The basic claim should, however, be qualified. Although most of what they wrote on the topic has perished, we know that the Stoics had much to say about poetry. Zeno composed a *Homeric Problems* in five books and a work *On Listening to Poems* (*SVF* 1.41); Cleanthes composed a work *On Homer* (Diogenes Laertius 7.175); and Chrysippus composed books *On Poems* and *On How One Should Listen to Poems* (*SVF* 2.16). Additionally, in fragments from book 5 of Philodemus's *On Poems* the poetic theory of a Stoic, perhaps Aristo of Chios, is discussed and criticized. Not all of this poetic theoretical and exegetical work is limited to allegorical theory and interpretation, and not all of the Stoics' references to or citations from Hesiod are allegorical—although the bulk of those that survive are (cf. Asmis n.d.; Blank 2011).

Granted the qualification, interpretation of Stoic allegorical interpretation is variously complicated. One fundamental problem concerns the uses of "allegory." In a paper on the Stoics' readings of Homer, Tony Long proposes a distinction between so-called weak and strong allegory (1992). Assume that mythological poetry such as Hesiod's preserves certain cosmological and theological ideas that, unbeknown to the poets themselves, were conceived by primitive humans. In the transmission of these ideas through cultural shifts and turns, the original meanings became obscured and distorted. Interpretation of poetry whose aim is to recover these primitive ideas may be called "allegorical" in the sense that the interpreter gleans information from the text, but not as the poet himself intended his work to be received. Long distinguishes this as "weak" allegory (1992: 43). Contrast this with poets who deliberately compose their works to be interpreted in ways

that “go beyond” their literal meanings. Corresponding interpretations are allegorical in a strong sense.

The ideas motivating Long’s distinction are helpful. But it may be questioned whether weak allegory deserves the name “allegory” at all. Note that the Old Stoics themselves never characterize their reading as “*allēgoria*,” a word that only came to prominence centuries later.

Insofar as the Old Stoics were attempting to exhume early thought embedded in later poetic forms, they were engaged in a kind of textual archaeology. Consequently, it should also be emphasized that their interests in archaic poetry—whatever other interests in poetry the Stoics had—are not interests in poetry per se. In fact, the Stoics’ archaeological exegetical practices extend to other forms of mythological representation, including painting, statuary, and cult ritual.

Granted this, the key premise of the interpretive practice—that certain poetry and other mythological artifacts preserve primitive cosmological and theological ideas—requires justification. I note the point, but cannot discuss the Stoics’ justification for it here.

In the specific case of linguistic archaeological interpretation, etymological interpretation plays a prominent role (cf. Allen 2008)—although, it must be stressed, not an exclusive one. For example, Zeno interprets Hesiod’s Chaos as water on the (dubious) grounds that the word “*chaos*” derives from “*chusis*” or “*cheēsthai*” (SVF 1.103, 104). Observe further that the theoretical significance of etymology vis-à-vis the practice of textual archaeology is consonant with the broader theory of the gradual development and departure of human thought from a primordial conceptual clarity and core.

At the origin of language lies a set of semantic primitives (*prōta onomata*) (SVF 2.146). All other words derive from these by various phonetic and semantic transformations. These linguistic transformations accordingly encode a record of conceptual development, corruption, and obscuration. Etymological techniques thus serve to recover the ideas and meanings of the first speakers. For example—to return to the Zenonian testimonies on *Th*—a central corruption has involved the personalization and anthropomorphization of the primordial elements, key features of Hesiod’s *Th*.

Generalizing from the case of proper and common nouns, similar transformations and corruptions have occurred in early accounts of cosmic or natural events. In view of such cases, textual archaeology may be applied not merely to the names of mythological divinities or to natural kinds, but to historical processes. Even in the case of the Zenonian testimonies, Hesiod’s divinities are not merely identified with cosmic elements; their genetic sequence is identified with the cosmogenesis of the elements.

Observe finally that while the Stoics’ textual archaeological and etymological theories and practices clearly rest on large and controversial ideas, in certain respects they echo a common philosophical theme running from the Pythagoreans to Plato to the Cynics to Epicurus: traditional culture manifests psychological corruptions; philosophy endeavors to purify the mind and to redirect motivation and action.

Cleanthes

Cleanthes engaged with many archaic poets and in fact maintained that poetry is the most appropriate form of theological expression (*SVF* 1.486, 487; Thom 2005: 5–6). Hence it is implausible that he ignored Hesiod. One testimony reports that, like Chrysippus, Cleanthes tried to accommodate (*sunoikeyioun*) Hesiod's account of the gods and his own beliefs (*SVF* I.123.13). However, there is no testimony regarding any specific reading Cleanthes made of Hesiod.

There are, however, several echoes of Hesiod in Cleanthes's *Hymn to Zeus*. For instance, verses 18–19, which characterize Zeus as knowing how to “make the uneven even” and “to put into order the disorderly,” are comparable to Hesiod's description of Zeus's administration of justice at *WD* 5–9. Likewise at verse 12—“you guide straight universal reason”—Cleanthes's use of the verb *kateuthneis* echoes Hesiod's use of *ithunei*, also applied to Zeus, at *WD* 7 (cf. Asmis 2007: 416). Generally speaking, as Johan Thom remarks, “Zeus' ability to level out differences is . . . an ancient motif . . . found in authors like Hesiod and Solon” (2005: 23).

Chrysippus

The evidence for Chrysippus is better. We have about twelve or thirteen testimonies or fragments in which Chrysippus refers to Hesiod's *Th* and *WD*.⁶ Most of these derive from Galen's lengthy discussion of Chrysippus's *On the Soul*, in which the doctor remarks that Chrysippus filled his book with verses from Homer, Hesiod, and Stesichorus, among other poets (*SVF* 2.907.31–34).

In the lengthy fragment from *On the Soul*, Chrysippus cites Hesiod about five times in support of the thesis that the heart is the locus of the mind (*hēgemonikon*) (*SVF* 2.906). Setting aside what Galen regards as the dubious evidential worth of such poetic citations, he treats three of these critically on the grounds that Chrysippus appeals to emotions such as anger “in the breast” (*eni stēthessi*). In this case, the Platonist objects that since the soul is tripartite, the location of the emotions, but not the mind, is the chest or heart. In other words, Chrysippus is simply begging the question. Accordingly, Galen argues that Chrysippus should have limited his citations to those in which Hesiod mentions mind, intelligence, thought, or reason in the heart.

In considering Chrysippus's citations that do appeal in this way, Galen cites and discusses a long passage in which the Stoic interprets Hesiodic verses concerning the birth of Athena.⁷ Note that while the portion of Chrysippus's interpretation that survives is allegorical in the weak sense, it does not explicitly employ etymological interpretation.

Prima facie, the passage actually provides support against Chrysippus's thesis, for the birth of Athena, here explicitly identified with wisdom, is from the head of Zeus. However, Chrysippus interprets the text in defense of his thesis as follows: Zeus first swallowed Metis, here identified as a sort of practical wisdom and craft of living (*SVF*

2.909). This description is treated as symbolic (*symbolou*) of the idea that the crafts must be “swallowed and stored up within us.” Following this acquisition, intelligent speech is produced “through the mouth by way of the head.” In other words, the birth of Athena is symbolic of the generation of intelligent speech. In short, Chrysippus appeals to Hesiod here in defense of a certain psychophysiological thesis.

Most of Chrysippus’s remaining references derive from Plutarch. In *On the Principle of Cold*, Plutarch cites Chrysippus as a proponent of the view that air is the source of cold, hence with regard to a cosmological and specifically elemental thesis. An argument Chrysippus advances for the thesis is that since fire is warm and bright, its opposite must be cold and dark. In support of his claim, he cites passages from both *WD* and *Th* (*SVF* 2.430; cf. 2.429). The latter also makes an etymological appeal: “to shake and shiver with cold is to ‘tartarize’ (*tartarizein*)” (cf. *SVF* 2.563).

In all of his remaining citations from Hesiod, Chrysippus cites from Hesiod’s *WD*. For example, Stobaeus preserves a maxim from Chrysippus in which verses 410 and 413 are cited in support of the view that the wise man does not procrastinate (*SVF* 3.163.29–36). And in *On Stoic Contradictions*, Plutarch has Chrysippus in book 1 of his treatise *On Justice* citing *WD* 242–43 in support of the thesis that Zeus punishes misdeeds in order to warn and dissuade people from committing future infractions (*SVF* 2.337.35–41). Broadly speaking, the contexts of these and all remaining citations (*SVF* 2.31.37–43, 3.33.32) are ethical, even if the details of their original contexts and hence Chrysippus’s intentions are obscure.

The Middle Stoics

Like the Old Stoics, most if not all of the Middle Stoics engaged with the poets. But there is little evidence among them of engagement with Hesiod. For instance, there is nothing in Zeno of Tarsus, Antipater of Tarsus, or Panaetius, let alone even more fragmentary members of the school. Diogenes of Babylon and perhaps Posidonius are exceptions.

In his discussion of Chrysippus’s interpretation of Hesiod’s account of the birth of Athena, Galen mentions that some (*tines*) objectors locate the mind in the head (*SVF* 2.908). Galen does not identify these others. But a passage from Philodemus’s *On Piety* cites a passage from Diogenes of Babylon’s work *On Athena* in which Chrysippus’s interpretation is contrasted with that of other Stoics who locate the mind in the head (*SVF* 3. 33 Diogenes Babylon).

A direct reference to Hesiod by Diogenes occurs in book 4 of Philodemus’s *On Music*, in which Diogenes’s theory of music is Philodemus’s central target of criticism. The context of the reference is a discussion of the value or disvalue of traditional poetry as an accompaniment to music. Philodemus cites Diogenes in favor of the value: “Even the ignorant have professional musicians at their banquets . . . but they fail in their purpose because they do not have Homer, Hesiod and other epic and lyric poets. One should recognize the superiority of those banquets which call on the ornaments of these poets” (131.4–13 Delattre).

The fragments of Posidonius contain a more speculative case. Sextus Empiricus reports that “some of the more recent (*neōterōn*) Stoics say that the first, earth-born humans far exceeded humans of the present day in intelligence . . . and that those heroes, whose mental acuity was like an prodigious sense organ, apprehended the divine nature and grasped certain powers of the gods” (*Against the Mathematicians* 9.28). This testimony appears to raise serious problems for the account offered above regarding the Old Stoics’ justification for their textual archaeology, for it appears to attribute crucial grounds for this practice only to later, that is Middle, Stoics. I note the problem, but do not pursue it here. Instead, I briefly discuss the referent of Sextus’s “more recent Stoics.”

In *Epistle* 90 Seneca attributes to Posidonius a view akin to that expressed in Sextus (fr. 254 Edelstein-Kidd). The context in Seneca’s letter is the role of philosophy in the development of culture. Seneca discusses Posidonius’s view that philosophy existed at the inception of humanity, rejecting this for the view that philosophy arose in response to and as therapy for cultural decline following an initial harmonious period. Observe that for Seneca, as presumably for the Old Stoics, humans of this initial period did not possess, let alone pursue, *sophia* in the strict sense. Instead, true belief governed their lives. In contrast, Posidonius holds that some humans possessed wisdom and that all required philosophy from the beginning. George Boys-Stones, whose account of the development of Stoicism and ancient allegory crucially relies on an interpretation of Posidonius’s influence, stresses the role of Posidonius’s rejection of Chrysippus’s (monistic) psychological theory and with it the idea that “mankind, in its natural, created state, would have no impulse to vice” (2003).

Whether or not we accept Boys-Stones’s interpretation, Posidonius’s view evidently derives from a historical anthropological context and specifically concerns the golden age. As Seneca writes: “In the era that people call ‘golden’ (*aureum*) Posidonius holds that sovereignty was in the power of wise men” (*Epistle* 90.5). Hesiod is not explicitly referred to or cited within Seneca’s discussion. But given the context, there is some reason to think that Posidonius touched upon, if not engaged, Hesiod’s Myth of Ages.

Conclusion to the Stoics

Recall our deferred question above: Why was Zeno—and, we may now add, why were his successors—motivated to engage Hesiod and other poets at all? There cannot be a simple answer to this question, for the Stoics’ engagements with the poets were not uniformly motivated. Even so, we can narrow the question: to the extent that they did, why did the Stoics spend time excavating, that is, performing textual archaeology on, certain mythographic poetry?

Various answers have been proposed, and I confess I cannot find compelling evidence in favor of one. The most common view is that the Stoics were seeking support for their doctrines (cf. van Sijl 2010: 135). Assuming this was so, such support might be construed as authoritative insofar as it was understood ultimately to derive from the pure insights of primitive humanity. Alternatively, it might be construed as merely

persuasive (*pithanon*), that is, corroborating independent philosophical arguments the Stoics adduced.

Ilaria Ramelli grants that this sort of explanation might have been important for the founder of Stoicism, but she argues that if it were the sole justification for Stoic exegesis, the practice should have declined as the school established itself. In fact, the practice of textual archaeology increased (2011: 340). Consequently, Ramelli suggests the following alternative: Chrysippus in particular, and also later Stoics, were attempting to construct a broad cultural synthesis based on the unity of the Logos that providentially governs and orders the cosmos. In support of her proposal, Ramelli cites a passage from book 2 of Chrysippus *On Gods*, which is preserved in a section of Aëtius's *Placita* devoted to the question whence humans derive their conception of gods. Chrysippus claims that the beauty and order of the stars and the cosmos inspired humans with the idea of gods; he continues: "Those who have handed down the worship of the gods have presented it to us in three forms: first in the physical form, second in the mythical form, and third in the form to which laws bear witness. Now the physical form is taught by the philosophers, the mythical by the poets, and the legislative is always established by each city" (*SVF* 2.1009).

To be sure, Chrysippus here states how divinity is variously represented in diverse facets of culture; given the unity of the Logos, these various representations ought to be unified in some way. But Chrysippus does not indicate why philosophers ought to busy themselves with nonphilosophical representations, let alone seek to clarify their consistency with philosophical views.

The basic problem is that while we have some evidence of the Stoics' exegetical practice, we lack anything like direct or explicit evidence regarding the motivation for it. That said, Ramelli's appeal to the unity of the Logos, the synthesis of culture, and—it should be added—the historical anthropology connecting them constitute an attractive explanatory point of departure.

CONCLUSION

The preceding account of the philosophical reception of Hesiod from Aristotle to Posidonius is as much one of reception as of anti-reception and non-reception. I have tried to show how and why the philosophers received Hesiod as well as why they rejected or ignored him.

In the introduction I emphasized the disunity of the account and its specific grounds: evidential and philosophical theoretical. In the wake of the discussion, the degree and character of this disunity should be clear. Such a result may not be aesthetically pleasing or in some respects intellectually satisfying, but insofar as it is a faithful record, it is intellectually responsible.

This is the first study devoted to the philosophical reception of Hesiod from Aristotle to the end of the Hellenistic period. The issues raised here are wide-ranging and

complicated. Almost every paragraph, often each sentence, could be developed into an article or more. Among the loose threads and dangling questions, I hope to have provided some framework or orientation from which further inquiry may fruitfully proceed.

NOTES

1. For Liz Asmis, whose papers on Hellenistic aesthetics (1990a, 1990b, 1991, 1995, 2007, 2017, unpublished manuscript) provided some of the central scaffolding for the present work.
2. Some, e.g., Janko (1987), have thought that book 2 discussed didactic poetry, but cf. Volk (2002: 26–34).
3. *Physics* 208b29, 31; *On the Heavens* 298b28; *Metaphysics* 984b28, 989a10, 1000a9; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095b9; *Politics* 1252b10, 1312b4; *Rhetoric* 1388a17. The reference at *History of Animals* 601b2 is probably a corruption of “*Ἡρόδοτος*.” In his *Constitution of the Orchomenians* (fr. 8.44.565 Rose), Aristotle discusses Hesiod’s exhumation and reburial.
4. I understand Aristotle’s distinctions among *theologos*, *physiologos*, *philosophos*, and poet basically as follows. A *theologos* presents accounts of the traditional Greek gods and their roles in nature and cosmology in traditional (i.e., in anthropomorphic terms). Aristotle principally identifies *theologoï* with archaic poets and explicitly includes Homer and Hesiod among them (*Metaphysics* 983b28–32, 1000a9). A *physiologos* presents natural and cosmological accounts without appealing to traditional Greek gods in anthropomorphic terms. For example, Aristotle explicitly refers to the following as *physiologoï*: Anaximander (*Physics* 203b15), Empedocles (*Eudemian Ethics* 1235a10–11), Anaxagoras (*On the Generation of Animals* 763b31), Democritus, and Leucippus (*Physics* 213b1). Aristotle clearly distinguishes Hesiod from *physiologoï* at *On the Heavens* 298b29. A *philosophos* presents theoretical and practical theses, which he buttresses using proofs and advances for the sake of knowledge and its exercise. A poet presents mimetic accounts, which are typically both in verse and in nonphysiological terms. For example, Aristotle claims that Empedocles, although he versifies, is a *physiologos*, not a poet (*Poetics* 1447b18–20).
5. I note two additional occurrences, in Philodemus’s *On Music*, book 4, fr. 31.39 and fr. 131.10, one of which I discuss below.
6. *SVF* 2.1175 (re *WD* 242), 2.430 (re *WD* 255), 2.100 (re *WD* 348), 2.430 (re *Th* 119), 2.908 (re *Th* 641), 2.908 (re fr. 317, 318 Merkelbach-West, fr. dub. 69 Merkelbach-West), 2.908 (re *Th* 886–929).
7. It is questionable whether the verses were in fact composed by Hesiod or are a later adaptation. Cf. *Th* 886–929.

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