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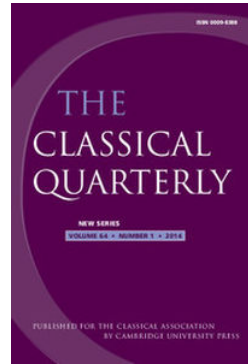
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PROCLUS ON HESIOD'S *WORKS AND DAYS* AND 'DIDACTIC' POETRY

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PROCLUS ON HESIOD'S *WORKS AND DAYS* AND 'DIDACTIC' POETRY

1. INTRODUCTION

In their introduction to the recent excellent volume *Plato & Hesiod*, the editors G.R. Boys-Stones and J.H. Haubold observe that when we think about the problematic relationship between Plato and the poets, we tend to narrow this down to that between Plato and Homer. Hesiod is practically ignored. Unjustly so, the editors argue. Hesiod provides a good opportunity to start thinking more broadly about Plato's interaction with poets and poetry, not in the least because the 'second poet' of Greece represents a different type of poetry from Homer's heroic epics, that of didactic poetry.¹ What goes for Plato and Hesiod goes for Proclus and Hesiod. Proclus (A.D. 410/12–85), the productive head of the Neoplatonic school in Athens, took a great interest in poetry to which he was far more positively disposed than Plato had ever been. He wrote, for example, two lengthy treatises in reaction to Socrates' devastating criticism of poetry in the *Republic* as part of his commentary on that work in which he tries to keep the poets within the Platonic pale. This intriguing aspect of Proclus' thought has, as one might expect, not failed to attract scholarly attention. In Proclus' case too, however, discussions tend to concentrate on his attitude towards Homer (one need only think here of Robert Lamberton's stimulating book *Homer the Theologian*²). To some extent this is only to be expected, since much of the discussion in the *Commentary on the Republic* centres on passages from Homer. Proclus did not, however, disregard Hesiod: we still possess his scholia on the *Works and Days*, now available in a recent edition by Patrizia Marzillo.³

In his discussion of Marzillo's edition in *Phronesis* Peter Adamson wonders why Proclus should have lavished his efforts on the *Works and Days* rather than on the *Theogony*. The *Theogony* would have been of much more interest to an author whose greatest intellectual ambition it was to create a Platonic theology.⁴ Adamson's question will serve as the starting point of my exploration of Proclus' reception of Hesiod in the

¹ G.R. Boys-Stones and J.H. Haubold (edd.), *Plato & Hesiod* (Oxford, 2010), 1.

² On Proclus' discussion of poetry and that of Homer in particular, see, in addition to R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986), A.R.D. Sheppard, *Studies on the 5th and 6th Essays of Proclus' Commentary on the Republic* (Göttingen, 1980); cf. also O. Kuisma, *Proclus' Defence of Homer* (Helsinki, 1996) and S. Stern-Gillet, 'Proclus and the Platonic Muse', *AncPhil* 31 (2011), 363–80.

³ P. Marzillo, *Der Kommentar des Proklos zu Hesiods 'Werken und Tagen'. Edition, Übersetzung und Erläuterung der Fragmente* (Munich, 2010).

⁴ P. Adamson, 'Booknotes', *Phronesis* 56 (2011), 426–40, at 434–5. He rightly rejects the suggestion by Marzillo that a discussion of an ethical work would be more attractive to a Christian public than a poem that was concerned with pagan theology. As Adamson points out, this explanation sits ill with the fact that Proclus discusses in some detail issues like the nature of daemons and the causal influence of the gods. On Proclus' theological project, see §3 below.

first half of this paper. I shall argue that Proclus – rather originally – treats the *Theogony* and *Works and Days* as two parts of one project, or, to put it differently, one *oeuvre*. One should read the *Works and Days* in preparation for the *Theogony*. For this reason, Proclus refers to the *Works and Days* as παιδευτικός, which is sometimes translated as ‘didactic’. In the second part of this paper, I shall use my case study of Proclus’ interpretation of the *Works and Days* to reflect on Proclus’ celebrated tripartite classification of poetry as he develops it in his sixth essay on the *Republic* and on the place of παιδευτικός poetry in it in particular. As we shall find, παιδευτικός poetry is only partially comparable to our category of didactic poetry, hence the scare quotes in the title.

2. BACKGROUND: TWO SETS OF OPPOSITES

Proclus reads Hesiod and other poets through Platonic glasses. Let me therefore start my exploration of Proclus’ Hesiod by briefly summarizing some relevant points about Plato’s reception of Hesiod as they emerge in recent scholarship. I shall be interested especially in two sets of opposites: that of the *Works and Days* versus the *Theogony* and that of inspired poetry versus didactic poetry. As we shall find later on, we may view Proclus’ interpretation of Hesiod as a sort of dialectical movement in which he seeks to unite these Platonic pairs of opposites in a harmonious Neoplatonic synthesis.

2.1 Works and Days versus Theogony: two Hesiods

To Plato Hesiod is solely the poet of the *Works and Days* and the *Theogony*. He does not refer to other poems that the tradition ascribes to our poet.⁵ Interestingly, his appreciation of the two poems differs significantly.⁶ In an infamous passage in the *Republic* Plato launches a frontal attack on Hesiod’s *Theogony*. As part of his construction of an educational system (παιδεία) for Kallipolis, Socrates discusses the role that music and poetry play in its early stages. Since the stories told to infants will have a profound and lasting influence on their souls, he rules out explicitly the stories that ‘Homer, Hesiod and the other poets tell us’, because they paint a false picture of the gods. As an example of such a false myth, Socrates next mentions the tale of the violent succession of Uranus by Cronus, and of Cronus by Zeus from Hesiod’s *Theogony* (Pl. *Resp.* 377a9–378a6; cf. Hes. *Theog.* 154–210; 453–506). It may be that these impious representations of the gods are merely allegorical and that the discerning listener will see the higher truth contained in them. For Socrates, however, this is still no reason to expose children to such myths, for

[T.1] a young person is not capable of discerning allegory from what is not, but the opinions that he takes in at a young age will be difficult to erase and tend to be practically unalterable. Therefore it should evidently be our highest concern that the first myths that they hear are especially designed to promote virtue.⁷

⁵ For an overview of references to Hesiod in Plato, see G.W. Most, ‘Plato’s Hesiod: an acquired taste?’, in Boys-Stones and Haubold (n. 1), 52–67, at 57–61.

⁶ As stressed e.g. by A.L. Ford, ‘Plato’s two Hesiods’, in Boys-Stones and Haubold (n. 1), 133–54 and Most (n. 5).

⁷ Pl. *Resp.* 378d6–e4: ὁ γὰρ νέος οὐχ οἶός τε κρίνειν ὅτι τε ὑπόνοια καὶ ὁ μῆ, ἀλλ’ ἂν ἄν τηλικούτος ἂν λάβῃ ἐν ταῖς δόξαις δυσέκκιπτά τε καὶ ἀμετάστατα φιλεῖ γίγνεσθαι. ὦν δὲ ἴσως

Note that Socrates here distinguishes between myths that belong to the education of the young and which aim at virtue (ἀρετή) and allegorical myths that are perhaps suited to an audience of more mature people. This concept of a type of educational myth that promotes virtue will come to play an important role in Proclus.

Whereas Plato is dismissive of the myths of the *Theogony* and little interested in the divine genealogy that it offers, he is far more positive about the *Works and Days*, which he apparently considered first and foremost as an ethical work, rather than as an agricultural handbook. Even though he finds fault with the consequentialist theory of justice that he ascribes to Hesiod, he happily and frequently quotes verses from it that he believes to be useful.⁸ Interestingly, Plato does not try to square the good Hesiod, the moralist of the *Works and Days*, with the bad Hesiod, the theologian of the *Theogony*, nor, apparently, did any of Plato's contemporaries. As Andrew Ford observes:

[T.2] ... Plato seems to have focused, as we do, principally on the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. Yet our documented 4th-century readings do not treat Hesiod as the author of a coherent and self-explicatory *oeuvre*, and never appeal from one work to another to explicate Hesiod's ideas. We can only guess, of course, at what went on in esoteric interpretative communities, but it is notable that the two Hesiods do not meet even in the well-read Plato.⁹

Ford ascribes the Janus-faced Hesiod of Plato and his contemporaries to the fact that the *Works and Days* and *Theogony* functioned in different contexts: the *Works and Days*, along with other excerpts of wisdom poetry, were commonly taught at school. The *Theogony*, on the other hand, was performed by rhapsodes and was allegorized, etymologized and philosophized in certain circles. In combination with other poems by Homer, Orpheus and Musaeus, it formed a sort of 'summa of ancient wisdom'.¹⁰

2.2 Inspired poetry versus didactic poetry

In the *Phaedrus* (244d4–5) Plato presents his identification of the traditional idea of divine inspiration with a form of madness (μανία) as a piece of age-old wisdom. In fact it had been an invention of his own in order to undermine the authority of the poets. Since the poet composes his poetry in a fit of divine madness, he does not understand what he is doing, nor what he is saying. Poetry thus is not a τέχνη. As Hugo Koning has pointedly observed, it is remarkable that whereas Plato singles out Homer as the ultimate inspired or 'manic' poet, he never explicitly presents Hesiod as such:

[T.3] Hesiod can be called γενναῖος ('worthy'), φρόνιμος ('sensible'), or σοφός ('wise'), but never θεῖος ('divine') or 'inspired' or the like; he is certainly never associated with the 'manic' inspiration in a way that Homer clearly is.¹¹

In the later tradition this implicit opposition between the inspired poet Homer and the sober poet Hesiod is made explicit, when Hesiod is increasingly presented as a technical poet. These two types of poetry, inspired versus sensible, are associated with two

ἔνεκα περὶ παντὸς ποιητέον ἃ πρώτα ἀκούουσιν ὅτι κάλλιστα μεμυθολογημένα πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἀκούειν.

⁸ Cf. Most (n. 5), 63.

⁹ Ford (n. 6), 153–4.

¹⁰ Ibid. 153.

¹¹ H.H. Koning, *Hesiod: The Other Poet. Ancient Reception of a Cultural Icon* (Leiden, 2010), 326.

different styles. Manic, inspired poetry is associated with the pathetic, grand style, which aims at stirring the emotions of the audience. Whereas such a moving style might be appropriate in the case of, for example, the exploits of heroes at war (Homer's *Iliad*), it is far less suitable in the case of didactic poetry, which aims at transmitting knowledge and is therefore far more rational in nature. Ancient literary critics thus associate this genre, and its doyen Hesiod, with the so-called measured style. In contrast to the swollen grand style it is described as 'lean' (λεπτός). Contrary to the Homeric grand style, for example, it is supposed to abstain from metaphors. It aims at clarity instead, for which reason it is compared to a stream of smoothly flowing pure water.¹²

3. PROCLUS' DEFENCE OF THE *THEOGONY*

Let us now turn to Proclus. Proclus, like all Neoplatonists, understands himself as a true follower of Plato. To a modern student of Plato, however, his way of reading Plato often appears to go against the grain owing to his particular assumptions about the nature of (Platonic) philosophy. According to Proclus Plato's philosophy is best characterized as a form of theology, as can be glimpsed from the title of his *opus magnum*, *The Platonic Theology*. In this work Proclus offers a top-down, systematic presentation of his Neoplatonic metaphysics, starting from the One and the Henads and next going all the way down to our material sublunary realm. Proclus calls his exposition 'Platonic' because he believes that he is merely making explicit what is already present in Plato; he calls it a 'theology' because he identifies the various metaphysical principles (for example the One, various types of Intellect and Soul) with the divine entities which he finds in religious texts such as the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the theogonies of Orpheus and Hesiod as well as the divinely inspired poetry of Homer. Proclus believes, not entirely correctly, that all these so-called *theologoi* predate Plato. Part of Proclus' aim is to show that various venerable ancient authorities teach the same things as Plato would later do, albeit in different ways. This harmony between Plato and the ancients should demonstrate beyond any reasonable doubt the truth of Plato's philosophy.¹³

It is against this background that we should understand Proclus' attempts to rescue Hesiod from Plato's attack in the *Republic* in the fifth and sixth of his *Essays on the Republic*. I shall concentrate here on the sixth essay, which is generally supposed to present Proclus' more mature thoughts on the issue. Proclus begins by laying out the accusations that Socrates makes against

[T.4] the sort of myth-making that Homer and Hesiod practised when talking about the gods and before them Orpheus and whosoever else became an interpreter with an inspired mouth of the things that are forever identical and the same.¹⁴

¹² On Hesiod's measured style, see R. Hunter, 'Hesiod's style: towards an ancient analysis', in F. Montanari, A. Rengakos and C. Tsagalis (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Hesiod* (Leiden, 2009), 253–69; for his avoidance of metaphors, see pp. 266–7.

¹³ For Proclus' discussion of the nature of *Platonic Theology*, see *Theol. Plat.* 1.3–7; for a discussion of the theme of the agreement of Platonic philosophy with the *theologoi*, see further H.D. Saffrey, 'Accorder entre elles les traditions théologiques: une caractéristique du néoplatonisme athénien', in E. P. Bos and P.A. Meijer (edd.), *On Proclus and His Influence in Medieval Philosophy* (Leiden, 1992), 35–50.

¹⁴ Procl. in *Remp.* 1.72.2–5: ἐπει δὲ πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἰσότητων ὁ Σωκράτης αἰτιᾶται τὸν τῆς

Proclus subsequently opposes the sort of myths that the poets use to teach about the divine to those composed by Plato, which are free of offensive elements. Since in the present passage he addresses Plato's criticism concerning Hesiod's *Theogony*, we may assume that Proclus here has especially that poem in mind and not so much the *Works and Days*.

From the fact that the poets ascribe all kinds of horrible deeds to the gods, one might be inclined to think that they had simply failed to grasp the truth about divine nature. In a first step to save Homer and the other poets in the face of Socrates' criticism, Proclus denies this. He argues that we should not take these myths at face value, but interpret them allegorically. He next takes it that from Socrates' criticism of poetry in *Republic 2* it follows that there is nothing wrong with allegorical mythology as long as it does not figure in the education of the young (cf. **T.1** above).¹⁵ In fact, allegorical mythology is a superior form of mythology: these allegorical myths are not just the work of divinely inspired poets, they also exercise a special, inspiring influence on their public. Their (allegorical) content constitutes 'a mystagogy and an upward-leading initiation of their listeners'.¹⁶ This special effect, though, will only occur in the case of someone who

[**T.5**] has done away with the childish and juvenile element of the soul, who has calmed down the unlimited impulses of imagination and who has appointed intellect as the ruler of his own life.¹⁷

This is not the case for the young, though, who still need to master their unruly appetites and desires. For this reason, allegorical mythology is unsuitable for them. What they need instead is the sort of myths that Socrates prescribes in the *Republic*. These myths, referred to by Proclus as 'educational' (παιδευτικός), help the young to develop a virtuous character. In Proclus' own words:

[**T.6**] But on the basis of what has been said we have called attention to the fact Socrates too was of the opinion that there exist two types of myths. By two types of myths I mean that the one type is educational, the other mystical. The former prepares for virtue of character, the other results in union with the divine; the one is capable of benefiting the many, the other befits only the smallest minority.¹⁸

Proclus' point is thus that Socrates does not reject Hesiod's *Theogony* and other poetical myths as such, but only bans them from the early stages of the educational curriculum

μυθοποιΐας τρόπον, καθ' ὃν Ὅμηρός τε καὶ Ἡσίοδος τοὺς περὶ θεῶν παρέδωσαν λόγους, καὶ πρὸ τούτων Ὀρφεὺς καὶ εἰ δὴ τις ἄλλος ἐνθέω στόματι γέγονεν τῶν αἰεὶ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἐχόντων ἐξηγητῆς ...

¹⁵ A very curious reading of Plato' indeed, as Stern-Gillet (n. 2) demonstrates at some length (quotation on p. 368).

¹⁶ Procl. in *Remp.* 1.80.20–3. According to Proclus, allegorical poetry may unite us with the divine because it consists of *symbola*. These *symbola* channel the divine energy that lifts us up towards the divine. For this very particular type of symbolic poetry and its relation to Neoplatonic ritual practices (theurgy), see e.g. Sheppard (n. 2), 145–61.

¹⁷ Procl. in *Remp.* 1.80.23–6: ὅστις οὖν ἡμῶν τὸ παιδαριῶδες τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ νεαροπρεπὲς ἀπεσκευάσατο καὶ τὰς τῆς φαντασίας ἀορίστους ὁρμὰς κατεστήσατο καὶ νοῦν ἡγεμόνα προύστήσατο τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ζωῆς ...

¹⁸ Procl. in *Remp.* 1.81.11–17: ὅτι δὲ καὶ τῷ Σωκράτει δέδοκται καὶ τὸ τῶν μύθων εἶδος εἶναι διττόν, ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων υπέμνησται, λέγω δὲ ὡς τὸ μὲν ἐστὶ παιδευτικόν, τὸ δὲ τελεστικόν, καὶ τὸ μὲν πρὸς τὴν ἠθικὴν ἀρετὴν παρασκευάζον, τὸ δὲ τὴν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον συναφὴν παρεχόμενον, καὶ τὸ μὲν τοὺς πολλοὺς ἡμῶν ὠφελεῖν δυνάμενον, τὸ δὲ ἐλαχίστοις συναρμοζόμενον ...

since the young are not yet ready to study and experience these divinely inspired texts. It is not just the case that they are intellectually insufficiently prepared, they should also first make moral progress before they will be capable of receiving the divine illumination that results from the study of these myths. The educational myths contribute towards this moral perfection ('virtue of character'); listening to them prepares the way for studying the mystical ones.

4. PROCLUS' ONE HESIOD

It is this very distinction between educational and inspired texts that allows Proclus to bring together Hesiod the moralist and Hesiod the theologian in his first scholion on *Works and Days*. Because the first part of it is pivotal to my argument, I shall quote it here in full:

[T.7] The *Theogony* was composed by worthy Hesiod, it seems to me, because he wanted to hand down to later generations the principles of the entire providence of the gods towards the cosmic order as the ancestral tradition of the Greeks presents it. He thus composed that work on the basis of the myths that were told in the sanctuaries. As for the *Works and Days*, however, this he wrote as an incentive for people to care for their own household and to lead a private life, away from the public and mundane existence. When writing these verses, he had not just the pleasure of his future readers in mind – that was a mere side-issue to him – but his aim (*skopos*) was rather to benefit their character, in order that by ordering our own lives we also gain possession of the knowledge of the gods. One should, therefore, begin with this work. For it is absolutely impossible for those whose character is without order to know the cosmic order.

The aim (*skopos*) of the book, then, is educational (*paideutikos*). And metre has been added to the expression of this aim as some sort of seasoning that keeps the souls spellbound and their love for it going. For the same reason the poetical style in the book is archaic. For this style is for the most part free of embellishments, adjectival ornaments and metaphors. For simplicity and spontaneity benefit ethical discourses.¹⁹

The first thing to note is that Proclus describes the aim (σκοπός) of the *Works and Days* as 'educational' (παιδευτικός). Ever since Iamblichus Neoplatonic commentators assume that a serious text has one single goal towards the realization of which all its parts contribute. It determines the perspective from which the entire text should be read. Since it is of crucial importance to settle this issue before the actual study of the text is undertaken, a discussion of the *skopos* is one of the standard elements of

¹⁹ Procl. *in Op.* 1.1–18 ed. Marzillo (n. 3): Τὴν μὲν Θεογονίαν ὁ γενναῖος Ἡσίοδος δοκεῖ μοι συνθεῖναι πάσης τῆς περὶ τὸν κόσμον τῶν θεῶν προνοίας τὰς ἀρχὰς ἐθελήσας παραδοῦναι τοῖς μεθ' ἑαυτὸν κατὰ τὴν πάτριον τῶν Ἑλλήνων φήμην ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς θρυλουμένων μύθοις τὸ σύγγραμμα περιεργασάμενος· τὰ δὲ Ἔργα καὶ τὰς Ἡμέρας εἰς τὴν οἰκονομίαν καὶ ἀπράγμονα ζωὴν παρακαλῶν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγοραίου καὶ φορτικῆς, οὐχ ἀπλῶς εἰς ἡδονὴν ἀποβλέπων τῶν ἐντευξομένων, ἀλλὰ ταύτην μὲν πάρεργον θέμενος, τὴν δὲ ἀφέλειαν τὴν εἰς τὸ ἦθος προηγουμένου σκοπὸν ποιησάμενος, ἵνα τὸν ἴδιον βίον κοσμήσαντες, οὕτω καὶ τῆς περὶ τὸ θεῖον γνώσεως ἐπιήβολοι γενώμεθα. Διὸ καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου προσήκει τοῦ συγγράμματος ἄρχεσθαι· τοὺς γὰρ τὸ ἦθος ἀκοσμήτους τὸν κόσμον γινῶναι παντελῶς ἀδύνατον. Ὁ μὲν οὖν σκοπὸς τοῦ βιβλίου παιδευτικός· τὸ δὲ μέτρον ὡσπερ ἥδυσμα τι τῷ σκοπῷ τούτῳ τῆς ἐρμηνείας ἐπιβέβηται, θέλγον τὰς ψυχὰς καὶ κατέχον εἰς τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸ φιλίαν. Διὸ καὶ ἀρχαιοτρόπος ἐστὶν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ τῆς ποιητικῆς ἰδέας τῶν γὰρ καλλωπισμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐπιθέτων κόσμων καὶ μεταφορῶν ὡς τὰ πολλὰ καθαρεύει· τὸ γὰρ ἀπλοῦν καὶ τὸ αὐτοφύες πρέπει τοῖς ἠθικοῖς λόγοις.

the prolegomena of Neoplatonic commentaries.²⁰ The brief remark about the goal of the *Works and Days* thus offers a crucial indication of Proclus' interpretation of the whole poem. The educational character of the *Works and Days* implies that for Proclus it was not an inspired text. As we have seen (§2.2), the notion that Hesiod, especially the poet of the *Works and Days*, is a technical poet as opposed to the inspired Homer is an old one. Already Plato himself had apparently denied Hesiod the status of an inspired poet, given that he refers to him as 'wise', 'worthy' (γενναῖος) and so forth, but never as θεῖος ('divine'). In general, Hesiod's style was supposed to suit the rational nature of his poetry: a simple style without pathetic metaphors, known as the measured style. In keeping with this, Proclus here introduces Hesiod as a γενναῖος ('worthy') poet (cf. Pl. *Resp.* 363a8) and goes on to characterize Hesiod's style in the *Works and Days* as free from 'embellishments, adjectival ornaments and metaphors': 'for simplicity and spontaneity fit ethical discourses'.

The aim of educational texts is to prepare the student for inspired texts. Plato's educational myths, we found, were supposed to prepare the student for inspired myths like those by Homer. Proclus now suggests that in a similar fashion the study of the *Works and Days*, perceived first and foremost as an ethical poem, paves the way for the inspired *Theogony*, the poem about the gods.²¹ This suggestion must have struck an ancient reader as something remarkable. The issue of which poem came first, the *Theogony* or the *Works and Days*, is hardly ever explicitly raised in antiquity. The tacit assumption, to judge from how the poems are listed, seems to have been that the *Theogony* came first followed by the *Works and Days*, perhaps because it is in the *Theogony* that Hesiod meets the Muses, who inspire him to become a poet.²² A remarkable poem, preserved on a papyrus that dates to the third century A.D., provides an exception to this rule: it suggests that Hesiod first composed the *Works and Days* and next, after a bout of inspiration, the *Theogony*. According to Glenn Most, the poem would thus imply a devaluation of the *Works and Days*.²³ One way or another, however, we are dealing with the order of composition. Proclus, on the other hand, is concerned with the order in which the poems should be read. Moreover, if by implication the *Works and Days* turns out to be uninspired poetry, this is not seen as a flaw of that poem, as is the case in the anonymous papyrus. Quite the opposite: it needs to be uninspired if it is to perform its preparatory function well. Proclus thus presents the two poems as being united in a single educational programme, whereas Plato apparently saw them as unrelated. The distinction between educational and inspired texts may have provided Proclus with the concepts that enabled him to construct such a holistic approach to Hesiod; it does not, however, explain why he would try to bring together the two poems

²⁰ On the issue of the σκοπός (or ὑπόθεσις as it also called) as one of the so-called *isagogical* questions, see J. Mansfeld, *Prolegomena: Questions to be Settled Before the Study of an Author, or a Text* (Leiden, 1994), esp. 30–6 with regard to Proclus.

²¹ Already Ch. Faraggina di Sarzana, 'Le commentaire à Hésiode et la paideia encyclopédique de Proclus', in J. Pépin and H.D. Saffrey (edd.), *Proclus lecteur et interprète des anciens* (Paris, 1987), 21–41, at 30–2 has, correctly to my mind, stressed the paideutic function of the *Works and Days*. She did not, however, discuss the relation between the *Works and Days* and the *Theogony*. Marzillo (n. 3), 306–7 rejects this interpretation. She argues that for Proclus the *Works and Days* represents a specimen of superior, inspired poetry. I shall deal with Marzillo's interpretation in §6.

²² I owe this point to Hugo Koning.

²³ G.W. Most, 'Two Hesiodic papyri', in G. Bastianini and A. Casanova (edd.), *Esiodo, cent' anni di papyri* (Florence, 2008), 55–70; cf. Koning (n. 11), 282–3.

in the first place. Plato and many others had, after all, not felt the need to do so. Why, then, did Proclus?

5. THE CONTEXT OF PROCLUS' INTERPRETATION: THE NEOPLATONIC ACADEMY

As we have seen, Plato's two Hesiods probably reflect the two different settings in which Hesiod's poems functioned in Classical Athens, that of primary education in the case of the *Works and Days* and that of rhapsodic performances in the case of the *Theogony*. Proclus, by contrast, discusses both the *Works and Days* and the *Theogony* in the same (educational) setting, that of the Neoplatonic Academy of Athens. In this context the question of the relation between the two works arises almost spontaneously. Let me now elaborate on this, since it will throw additional light on Proclus' interpretation of the relation between the two poems of Hesiod.

Whereas for Plato philosophy had been essentially the *logos* of two people engaged in dialectical discussion, for the Neoplatonists philosophy existed in the reading of and commenting on authoritative texts – in particular, of course, those by Plato. Within this scholarly context the question arose in which order Plato's dialogues had to be read. Iamblichus introduced what was to become the standard curriculum of twelve dialogues that together constitute a sort of gradual initiation into the mysteries of Platonic philosophy and an ascent towards God.²⁴ Of these twelve dialogues, the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides* were believed to be the most important ones. The *Timaeus* was considered to be the ultimate physical dialogue, the *Parmenides* the supreme theological exposition. The other dialogues of the curriculum were supposed to prepare the reader for the revelations contained in them. These preparations included moral perfection: Iamblichus had placed the *Gorgias* at the beginning of the curriculum as the second dialogue to be read – the first one being the *Alcibiades* – since according to his interpretation the *Gorgias* was about the so-called political virtues (πολιτικά ἀρεταί). They are so named because the Neoplatonists derived the conception of these from Plato's *Republic*. They allow us to master the unruly irrational part of the soul that harbours the passions and that distract us from turning our attention towards the divine.²⁵ Porphyry describes the goal of the political virtues as *metriopatheia*, the moderation of the passions.²⁶

With this information about the Platonic curriculum in mind, let us take another look at Proclus' interpretation of the relation between the *Works and Days* and the *Theogony*. According to Proclus, the *Theogony* is about the cosmic order in the universe as the result of divine providence. This recalls Plato's *Timaeus* in which the cosmic order is presented as the result of the thoughtfulness of the divine Demiurge. In fact, modern scholars assume that the *Timaeus* is meant to recall the *Theogony*, if only to establish the superiority of the Platonic account in comparison to the traditional one.²⁷ Proclus

²⁴ On Iamblichus' reading order of Plato's dialogues, see the anonymous *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* 24–6; cf. R. Sorabji (ed.), *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600 AD. A Sourcebook* (London, 2004), 1.319–22 for an English translation and secondary literature.

²⁵ The idea that some form of preliminary purification of the passions was indispensable for a student may be traced back to Middle Platonists such as Albinus and Galen, as Mansfeld (n. 20), 94–5 and 164–5 points out.

²⁶ Porph. *Sent.* 32; cf. Sorabji (n. 24), 1.337–41.

²⁷ See e.g. E.E. Pender, 'Chaos corrected: Hesiod in Plato's creation myth', in Boys-Stones and Haubold (n. 1), 219–54. Especially relevant in the context of the present paper is Pender's discussion

too is well aware of the connection between the *Theogony* and the *Timaeus*; to his mind, however, the latter was not intended to replace the former, but to supplement it. So, if the *Theogony* is a poetic sort of *Timaeus*, and if in the Platonic curriculum one has first to study a work like the *Gorgias* in order to acquire the so-called political virtues before turning to such works as the *Timaeus*, it makes sense for Proclus to assume that the *Works and Days*, with its moralizing overtones, was intended by Hesiod to perform a similar function. Proclus does not explicitly refer to the political virtues in relation to the *Works and Days*. Note, however, that the *Works and Days*, like the political virtues, is supposed to promote moral order within us and to steer our actions in the outside world by stimulating us to care for our household and to lead a private life.²⁸

6. PROCLUS' EDUCATIONAL READING OF THE *WORKS AND DAYS*

Proclus' ideas about the *skopos* of the *Works and Days* that he develops in the first scholion inform much of the subsequent discussion. When, for example, Hesiod refers to the deceased golden generation as judges and 'givers of wealth' (πλουτοδόται, v. 126), Proclus comments that Hesiod says this to kings with educational intentions (τοῦτο παιδευτικῶς εἶπεν) in order to urge them to control their vices in general and their greed in particular, and to give wealth to their subjects rather than taking it away from them.²⁹ Hesiod's claim that those who judge strangers fairly will flourish (lines 225–9) is interpreted as a similar educational appeal to judges to be just (ταῦτα παιδευτικῶς σωφρονίζει τοὺς δικαστὰς εἰς τὸ δίκαιον ὄραν).³⁰

Interestingly, Proclus brings up the educational *skopos* of the *Works and Days* not only when commenting on individual verses, but also when discussing the larger structure of the poem. Lines 381–2, for example, mark a turning point in the poem: Hesiod arrives at the end of a series of *gnōmai* that are intended to foster prudent behaviour and next turns to practical advice about agriculture. Proclus comments:

[T.8] Everything that has been said so far were general lessons aimed at promoting the *politikē* life by recalling both the causes of evil and the variety of lives and by shaping the character (of the audience) by means of certain *gnōmai*. What will now be said, on the other hand, leads the audience away from evil practices towards the life of a farmer and the just profits that come from it.³¹

of the teleological role of the Muses according to *Timaeus* (pp. 242–5). As we have seen, Proclus denies that Hesiod was interested in providing aesthetical pleasure (ἡδονή) to his public; his only aim was to order the souls of his audience. Pender calls attention to *Ti.* 47d32–7: the utility of poetry is not, as it is now thought to be, irrational pleasure (ἡδονὴν ἄλογον), 'but an ally against inward discord that has come into the revolution of the soul, to bring order (κατακόσμησιν) and consonance with itself'. Pender comments: 'for Plato ... the gifts of the Muses ... offer human beings the chance to transcend entirely their physical limitations and thus become divine'.

²⁸ It may be objected that the private life that the *Works and Days* advocates is precisely the opposite of a public, political life. Here we hit on a paradox of Neoplatonic ethics. Since the political virtues are about the care for the soul, the acquisition of these virtues may well result in a withdrawal from the public life. Proclus' biographer Marinus (*Proclus* 14–15) reports that Proclus possessed all the political virtues to the highest degree, yet did not himself enter the political arena. Instead he practised the Pythagorean maxim 'Live unnoticed!'

²⁹ Procl. *in Op.* 76 ed. Marzillo.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 102.

³¹ *Ibid.* 161.1–6: τὰ μὲν ἐμπροσθεν ῥηθέντα πάντα κοινὰ παιδεύματα ἦν εἰς πολιτικὴν τεύοντα ζωὴν, ἀναμνησκοντα τῶν τῆς κακίας αἰτιῶν καὶ τῆς ποικιλίας τῶν βίων καὶ τυποῦντα γνώμῃαισι τισὶ τὸ ἦθος, τὰ δὲ ῥηθησόμενα τῶν μὲν κακοπραγιῶν ἀπάγει τὸν ἀκροατὴν, ἀγει δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν γεωργικὸν βίον καὶ τὸν ἐκ τούτου δίκαιον πόρον.

This comment about the improvement of character and the political virtues clearly echoes the first scholion. Lines 760–4 mark another turning point. Hesiod, before proceeding to discuss the days of the month, admonishes his public to act in accordance with the (religious) precepts that he has just given them in order to avoid a bad reputation. Proclus comments:

[T.9] The instruction to educate our own character while paying attention to what others say about us is an appropriate conclusion of these precepts.³²

Finally, Proclus explicitly appeals to the educational *skopos* of the *Works and Days* when dealing with issues of textual criticism. As part of the first scholion, Proclus discusses the question whether one should delete the first ten verses, as Aristarchus and others had suggested. One of their reasons for doing so was the fact that Hesiod here invokes the Muses of Pieria and not those of the Helicon, as he does in the *Theogony* and as one would expect from an inhabitant of Boeotia. Proclus rejects this argument, for ‘this too may perhaps be some educational element’ (τάχα δ’ ἂν εἴη καὶ τοῦτο παιδευτικόν), since it reminds us that we should always prefer what is best, regardless of whether it is something familiar or something foreign.³³ The precept not to relieve oneself in rivers and springs (lines 757–9) was another contested passage. Proclus explains that Plutarch wanted to delete these verses presumably because he considered these unworthy of ‘the educational Muse’ (παιδευτικὴ Μοῦσα).³⁴ According to Proclus, however, these verses are instructive – they supposedly teach us that *hoi polloi* have little sense since they do not observe even this rule – and should therefore be maintained.

In short, the educational theme runs like a red thread through Proclus’ scholia on the *Works and Days*. For this reason, I do not believe that Patrizia Marzillo is right when, in the introduction to her edition, she argues that for Proclus the *Works and Days* is a specimen of inspired, symbolical poetry, as opposed to educational poetry.³⁵ Marzillo’s main argument is that Proclus associates symbolism with inspired poetry in the sixth essay on the *Republic*. Since Proclus interprets some passages from the *Works and Days* symbolically, it would follow that for him the *Works and Days* is a symbolical and therefore an inspired poem. Admittedly the scholia on the *Works and Days* contain a limited number of symbolical interpretations. These symbolic interpretations serve, however, an educational function, as T.8 illustrates. In her commentary, Marzillo rightly remarks that the ‘causes of evil’ probably refer to the story of Prometheus and Pandora (47–105), whereas ‘variety of lives’ refers to the Myth of Ages (106–201), two passages for which Proclus offers an allegorizing interpretation.³⁶ Note, however, that in T.8 Proclus presents these stories as part of Hesiod’s attempts to promote the virtues of character, the aim of educational poetry. It need not worry us that educational poetry contains some measure of symbolic poetry. Given the fact that Proclus regards Homer as primarily an inspired, symbolical poet, yet explicitly allows for the presence of other types of poetry – including educational poetry – in Homer’s epics,³⁷ it seems to me

³² Ibid. 259.2–3: τοῦτο τὸ τέλος ἐστὶ τῶν παραγγελμάτων ἰκανόν, εἰς τὸ παιδεῦσαι ἡμᾶς τὸ ἐαυτῶν ἥθος εὐλαβουμένους τὴν φήμη.

³³ Ibid. 1.27–35.

³⁴ Ibid. 158.2–3.

³⁵ Marzillo (n. 3), XXII–XXXII and 306–7.

³⁶ Cf. Procl. *in Op.* 53–93 ed. Marzillo.

³⁷ Cf. Procl. *in Remp.* 1.192.6–195.12.

quite reasonable to suppose that in a similar way a text that is primarily educational may contain bits of other forms of poetry as well.³⁸

7. PROCLUS' CONCEPT OF DIDACTIC POETRY REVISITED

So far we have occupied ourselves with Proclus' interpretation of one particular instance of (so-called) didactic poetry, the *Works and Days*. We shall now proceed to Proclus' ideas about didactic poetry and its relation to other types of poetry in more general terms. In the sixth essay of his *Commentary on the Republic*, Proclus arrives at the following division of poetry:

- (1) superior, divinely inspired poetry;
- (2) a middle class of so-called 'didactic' poetry;
- (3) inferior, mimetic poetry.³⁹

The inferior uninspired, mimetic poetry obviously goes back on Plato's criticism of poetry in *Republic* 10, whereas Proclus associates divinely inspired poetry with the *μανία* of the *Phaedrus*.⁴⁰ The latter is the type of poetry that by means of inspired myths unites us to the gods. Since the gods transcend discursive rationality, this implies that the poet and his audience transcend human rationality as well and enter into a state of inspired frenzy.

Rationality is the hallmark of the middle class of poetry. It is the sort of poetry that the soul produces when she is her rational self. Its subject matter is knowledge 'of the essence of things, and good and beautiful deeds and words'.⁴¹ We should think especially of poetry that 'is full of admonitions and the best advice, brimming with intelligent good measure, and which allows those with the right natural disposition to participate in practical intelligence and the rest of virtue'.⁴² In other words, it is the sort of poetry that makes us virtuous. As an example of this sort of poetry, Proclus refers, among others, to Theognis, who is mentioned in Plato's *Laws* 630a3–6 as a poet who teaches complete virtue. Proclus does not give an example of a poem that teaches us about the 'essence of things'. It has been suggested that we should perhaps think of the poems of some Presocratic philosophers such as Parmenides and Empedocles. It is not very difficult to see where Hesiod's poems fit in. His inspired *Theogony* obviously belongs to the first class of poetry, whereas his moralizing *Works and Days* seems a good example of the second class of poetry.

Anne Sheppard in her seminal study on Proclus' theory of poetry refers, as do other scholars, to this middle class of poetry as 'didactic', even though, as Sheppard is aware, Proclus himself does not use the term 'didactic' as such.⁴³ This may seem

³⁸ As Anne Sheppard has kindly pointed out to me.

³⁹ Cf. Procl. in *Remp.* 1.177.7–179.32.

⁴⁰ As already Sheppard (n. 2), 162–3 observes.

⁴¹ Procl. in *Remp.* 1.179.6–7: τὴν οὐσίαν τῶν ὄντων καὶ τῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν ἔργων τε καὶ λόγων.

⁴² Ibid. 1.179.9–13: οἷα δὴ πολλὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ποιητῶν εὐροις ἂν γεννήματα, ζηλωτὰ τοῖς εὖ φρονουσίῃσι, νουθεσίᾳς καὶ συμβουλῶν ἀρίστων πλήρη καὶ νοεράς εὐμετρίας ἀνάμεστα φρονήσεώς τε καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς προτεινοντα τὴν μετουσίαν τοῖς εὖ πεφυκόσιν ...

⁴³ Sheppard (n. 2), 184; cf. W. Beierwaltes, 'Suche und 'Denke' des Einen als Prinzip der Literatur', in id., *Denken des Einen. Studien zur neuplatonischen Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), 296–318, at 304 and Kuisma (n. 2), 126–7, who

inconsequential, but it is, I believe, important. Sheppard complains that Proclus' didactic poetry is 'something of an oddity'.⁴⁴ While in ancient discussions about poetry didactic is commonly regarded as a subgenre of epic poetry, Proclus here mentions Theognis, a composer of elegies, as an example of poet of this type of poetry. She furthermore suggests that part of the oddity of this category of didactic poetry may be explained from the fact that this category is Proclus' own invention.⁴⁵

My suggestion is that much of the oddity concerning this middle category of poetry disappears once we drop the predicate 'didactic' and replace it with a term that Proclus actually does use, *paideutikos*. As we have seen, Proclus uses the term παιδευτικός to characterize the *Works and Days*, a poem that he would probably consider as an example of the middle category of poetry. In corroboration of the identification of so-called didactic poetry with *paideutikos* poetry, it may furthermore be pointed out, as Anne Sheppard has done, that elsewhere in the sixth essay, Proclus says about *paideutikos* mythology that

[T.10] it regards nature and interprets the natural powers and is established to educate (*paideuein*) the characters of the souls.⁴⁶

In other words, the subject matter of *paideutikos* mythology is that of the middle type of poetry.

What, then, would follow if we consider Proclus' so-called didactic poetry as *paideutikos* poetry? In that case it becomes much clearer how Proclus arrives at his tripartite division of poetry. In *Republic 2*, Socrates distinguishes between (possibly) allegorical poetry that (perhaps) the mature may read to their profit and poetry that contributes to the *paideia* of the young by teaching them virtue and improving their character. Proclus derives his distinction between inspired mythology/poetry and *paideutikos* mythology/poetry from this Platonic passage (cf. T.6 above). The beneficial *paideutikos* poetry of *Republic 2* is not the same as the mimetic poetry that Socrates severely criticizes in *Republic 10*, for whereas the poetry of *Republic 2* promotes virtues of character in the case of the young (T.1), the poetry of *Republic 10* 'corrupts even the best characters', because it stimulates the irrational part of the soul and thus triggers immoral behaviour.⁴⁷ In this way, then, the *Republic* provided Proclus with three types of poetry. We need not worry, finally, that *paideutikos* poetry does not always take the form of epic verse. For as Socrates remarks explicitly, it does not matter whether *paideutikos* poetry is epic, lyric or tragic; the only thing that really matters is whether it is truthful.⁴⁸

both prefer the term 'epistemic' poetry in order to bring out that this poetry appeals to the rational part of the soul.

⁴⁴ Sheppard (n. 2), 97 and 182; cf. Lambertson (n. 2), 191: 'his concept of didactic or instructional poetry is something of an anomaly'.

⁴⁵ I am not sure whether this is correct; cf. R.M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns. Essays, Translations, Commentary* (Leiden, 2001), 141–2.

⁴⁶ Procl. in *Resp.* 1.86.21–3: τῆς τε εἰς τὴν φύσιν βλεπούσης καὶ τὰς φυσικὰς δυνάμεις ἀφερμηνεύουσας, καὶ τῆς τὰ ἦθη τῶν ψυχῶν παιδεύειν προστησαμένης; on this phrase, cf. Sheppard (n. 2), 193.

⁴⁷ Cf. Pl. *Resp.* 605c5–8 for the 'most serious accusation' against poetry – that it corrupts even the best characters. Note that even in this passage, though, Socrates acknowledges the existence of good, healthy poetry, 'hymns to the gods and paeans in praise of good men' (*Resp.* 607a3–5).

⁴⁸ See Pl. *Resp.* 379a7–9. Talking about God, one of the possible subjects of educational poetry, Socrates remarks: 'God must, obviously, always be depicted as he is, be it that someone represents him in epic, lyric or tragic poetry'.

8. *PAIDEUTIKOS* POETRY: KNOWLEDGE AND CORRECT OPINION

In this paragraph we shall take a closer look at the way in which *paideutikos* poetry, the *Works and Days* included, supposedly functions. How does it promote virtue? As we have seen, the distinguishing quality of *paideutikos* poetry is that it is the product of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). In his discussion of an example of *paideutikos* poetry from Plato, *Alcibiades 2* (142e1–3), Proclus drives home this point. The poem is a prayer to Zeus in which the poet, called φρονίμος (sensible) by Socrates, asks Zeus that the latter may give him what is good and keep him away from bad things, even if he prays for them. Proclus explains that Socrates calls the poet φρονίμος, because the latter distinguishes between the various natures of the things one may pray for (it is truly good things as opposed to seemingly good things), ‘neither on the basis of divine inspiration nor on the basis of correct opinion, but on the basis of knowledge’.⁴⁹ In other words, the middle type of poetry is different both from the superior type of inspired poetry, and from the lowest type of mimetic poetry, associated by Proclus with opinion (δόξα), which may either be correct or incorrect.⁵⁰ The distinction that Proclus makes between *paideutikos* poetry and mimetic poetry seems clear enough: it is the traditional Platonic opposition of knowledge and opinion. It is, therefore, somewhat puzzling to find that A.J. Festugière remarks in a note to his superb translation that one should not insist too much on this opposition ὀρθή δόξα–ἐπιστήμη.⁵¹ His comment is prompted by the fact that some lines later Proclus summarizes the upshot of the foregoing discussion of the passage from *Alcibiades 2* as follows:

[T.11] It is with good reason, it may be concluded, that we say that this kind of poetry is ‘sensible’ and the product of knowledge; for it is capable of defining the correct opinions (ὀρθαὶ δόξαι) for those souls who are in between [*sc.* the divine and the irrational life] while it itself has been composed in conformity with perfect knowledge.⁵²

I do not think that in this passage Proclus conflates knowledge and correct opinion. Proclus’ point is that the poet of *paideutikos* poetry has real knowledge about the (ethical) subjects that he treats in his poetry. If not, he would after all be nothing more than a composer of mimetic poetry. As we have seen, however, *paideutikos* poetry is not so much about transferring knowledge, but rather about promoting the so-called political virtues and *metriopatheia*. This moral improvement is a necessary preparation for the actual acquisition of knowledge, hence Proclus’ students had first to study the *Works and Days* before they were allowed to embark upon the *Theogony*. Therefore, when a public of youngsters listens to a sensible poet what they derive from his performance

⁴⁹ Procl. *in Remp.* 1.188.13–14: οὔτε δι’ ἐνθουσιασμόν οὔτε δι’ ὀρθὴν δόξαν, ἀλλὰ δι’ ἐπιστήμην κρίνοντα. One is reminded again of Koning’s observation (T.3 above) that in the Greek tradition after Plato Hesiod is called γενναῖος, φρονίμος etc. because he was not considered to be an inspired poet.

⁵⁰ Cf. Procl. *in Remp.* 1.179.15–16: ‘the third type of poetry in addition to these (i.e. inspired poetry and *paideutikos* poetry) is a mixture of opinions and imagination (ἡ δόξαις καὶ φαντασίαις συμμιγνυμένη)’. For an example of mimetic poetry based on correct opinion, see Procl. *in Remp.* 1.194.18–27, where he describes the bard who prevented Clytemnestra, at least for the time being, from committing crimes (allusion to *Od.* 3.267–8) as a singer ‘capable of mimicking things as they appear to him while using correct opinion’ (μιμητικός τις ὡς ἔοικεν καὶ ὀρθῆ δόξῃ χρώμενος).

⁵¹ A.J. Festugière, *Proclus: Commentaire sur la République. Traduction et Notes* (Paris, 1970), 1.206 n. 3: ‘il ne faut pas trop urger cette opposition ὀρθῆ δόξα–ἐπιστήμη’.

⁵² Procl. *in Remp.* 1.188.24–7: εἰκότως δὴ οὖν τὴν τοιαύτην ποιητικὴν ἔμφορα καὶ ἐπιστήμονα φαμεν ὑπάρχειν· ἡ γὰρ ταῖς μέσαις ἔξεσιν τὰς ὀρθὰς ἀφορίζειν δυναμένη δόξας αὐτὴ δὴ ποῦ κατὰ τὴν τελείαν ἐπιστήμην ὑφέστηκεν.

– which itself is based on ethical knowledge – is not ethical knowledge, but correct ethical opinions that enable them to improve their morals.

The point that moral improvement on the basis of correct opinion precedes the acquisition of knowledge proper is explicitly made by various Neoplatonic authors, for example by Simplicius:

[T.12] We first require the training which comes from the ethical works, in which we receive ethical teachings not demonstratively, but in conformity with correct opinion in accordance with the innate concepts we have concerning being.⁵³

The ‘ethical works’ to which Simplicius refers are not Aristotle’s *Ethics*, for in these Aristotle proceeds ‘by means of the most scientific of divisions and demonstrations’, but the ‘hortatory and undemonstrated catechisms, of the kind that used often to be uttered by the Pythagoreans’. Simplicius is thinking here of, for example, the Pythagorean poem *The Golden Verses*, on which Hierocles of Alexandria produced a commentary. Hierocles too insists that before we can turn to the study of philosophy proper, we have to banish the immoderation of the passions from our soul (i.e. acquire *metriopatheia*). For this ‘we need certain briefly defined rules, technical aphorisms’. ‘The aim and arrangement of the verses is precisely this, to impress upon the students a philosophic character before other readings.’⁵⁴ For the same reason, Simplicius himself wrote a commentary on Epictetus’ *Encheiridion*, another example of a set of aphorism-like exhortations to pursue virtue without too much technical demonstration.⁵⁵ Ilsetraut Hadot comments:

[T.13] Le rôle attribué par les néoplatoniciens aux sentences pythagoriciennes, aux parénèses d’Isocrate et au *Manuel* d’Épictète confirme aussi la permanence, à l’époque de la fin du paganisme, de la valeur accordée, pendant toute l’Antiquité gréco-romaine, aux vers, sentences et maxims pour l’éducation morale.⁵⁶

This observation takes us back to Hesiod’s *Works and Days*. For, as we have seen already, Plato considered the *Works and Days* first and foremost as a collection of morally edifying verses from which he frequently quotes, and some 800 years later this is still how Proclus approaches the *Works and Days*. To him the poem is comparable to Epictetus’ *Encheiridion* and the Pythagorean *Golden Verses*. Thus, when Hesiod warns against ‘putting the jug upon the mixing bowl’ (*Works and Days* 744), Proclus

⁵³ Simpl. in *Cat.* 5.21–3: δεῖ οὖν πρώτης τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ἠθικῶν καταρτύσεως, οὐκ ἀποδεικτικῶς, ἀλλ’ ὀρθοδοξαστικῶς τὰ ἠθικὰ παραλαμβάνοντων ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς αὐτοφρεῖς περὶ τῶν ὄντων ἐννοίας. Translation of this passage and subsequent quotes from Simplicius, *On the Categories* (5.25–6: μετὰ διατρέσεων καὶ ἀποδείξεων τῶν ἐπιστημονικωτάτων; 5.24–5: κατηγήσεις ... παραινετικά καὶ ἀναπόδεικτοι, οἵα πολλὰ παρὰ τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις ἐλέγοντο) are by M. Chase, *Simplicius. On Aristotle’s ‘Categories 1–4’* (Ithaca, NY, 2003); see his instructive n. 70 (at 101) on the phrase ‘οὐκ ἀποδεικτικῶς, ἀλλ’ ὀρθοδοξαστικῶς’. According to Chase the idea of ‘correct opinion first, knowledge later’ goes back on Porphyry.

⁵⁴ Hierocles in *Aur. Carm.* 2.3–4: τινὰς ἔχειν ἐν βραχεῖ διωρισμένους οἷον ἀφορισμούς τινας τεχνικούς; 4.8–10: καὶ οὗτος μὲν ὁ σκοπὸς τῶν ἐπῶν καὶ ἡ τάξις, χαρακτῆρα φιλόσοφον πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἀναγνωσμάτων ἐνθεῖναι τοῖς ἀκροασταῖς. Translation taken from H.S. Schibli, *Hierocles of Alexandria* (Oxford, 2002), 170–3, who also provides a useful running commentary on this passage.

⁵⁵ On Simplicius’ pedagogical motives for writing a commentary on Epictetus’ *Encheiridion*, see I. Hadot, *Simplicius. Commentaire sur le Manuel d’Épictète* (Paris, 2001), 1, xcii–xcvii; cf. I. Hadot and P. Hadot, *Apprendre à philosopher dans l’Antiquité* (Paris, 2004), 48–54.

⁵⁶ I. Hadot and P. Hadot (n. 55), 52.

comments that the Pythagoreans have similar maxims such as 'do not step over the balance', 'do not receive a swallow' and 'do not stir the fire with a dagger'.⁵⁷ Just as these Pythagorean maxims admonish us in a symbolic manner not to transgress justice, nor to invite foolish chatterboxes to the house, nor to kindle the emotions of angry people with bitter words, in the same way Hesiod here presents us with a symbolic lesson (παίδευμα) not to let private interests prevail over public ones.⁵⁸

9. CONCLUSION: HOW TO READ PROCLUS' SCHOLIA ON THE *WORKS AND DAYS*

To return, then, to our initial question of why Proclus took the trouble of commenting on Hesiod's *Works and Days*: the aim of the *Works and Days* is to prepare the students morally for the study of the *Theogony*. As such, it is part of the category of *paideutikos* poetry, a category that Proclus derives from Plato's educational programme in *Republic* 2. According to Plato, poetry can be used to ingrain in the minds of very young children correct ethical opinions and thus to promote virtue, provided that the poet is not of the type that it is later on criticized in *Republic* 10 as a brainless imitator. Hence, Proclus argues, to instil correct ethical opinions in the minds of the young, the poet needs to have ethical knowledge, as was the case with the 'worthy', 'sensible' Hesiod. Proclus explicitly distinguishes this *paideutikos* poetry from the inspired poetry produced by manic poets such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Hesiod's *Theogony*. I thus reject the claim made by Patrizia Marzillo in the introduction to her edition that Proclus read the *Works and Days* as a specimen of inspired poetry, comparable to Homer's poems. She can only advance this interpretation at the price of neglecting Proclus' explicit statement about the aim (σκοπός) of this work in the first scholion and its application in the rest of the commentary. Her thesis that for Proclus the *Works and Days* is an inspired, symbolic poem is not without consequences for the discussions of individual passages in her commentary. Even though Marzillo has much to say that is of interest, I would maintain that Proclus' scholia on the *Works and Days* are best discussed on the assumption that they have a paideutic function and against the backdrop of the commentaries by Hierocles on the *Golden Verses* and Simplicius on Epictetus' *Encheiridion*.⁵⁹

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⁵⁷ Procl. *in Op.* 252.1–7 ed. Marzillo.

⁵⁸ I fail to see how one could read this scholion as an attempt to defend Plato and Neoplatonism against Christianity, as Marzillo (n. 3), XLVIII does.

⁵⁹ A previous version of this paper was read at the conference 'La Poética de Platón y su recepción en la antigüedad' (Bogotá, 2011); I thank the participants for their comments. I am especially grateful to Frans de Haas, Hugo Koning, Anne Sheppard and the anonymous reader of *CQ* for their useful observations and stimulating suggestions.