THE KINGS AND THE MUSES IN HESIOD'S *THEOGONY*

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Κλειώ τ' Εὐτέρπη τε Θάλειά τε Μελπομένη τε
Τερψιχόρη τ' Ἐρατώ τε Πολύμνιά τ' Οὐρανίη τε
Καλλιόπη θ'· ἡ δὲ προφερεστάτη ἐστιν ἁπασέων.
ἡ γὰρ καὶ βασιλεῦσιν ἅμ' αἰδοίοισιν ὀπηδεῖ.
ὅντινα τιμήσουσι Διὸς κοῦραι μεγάλοιο
γεινόμενόν τε ἴδωσι διοτρεφέων βασιλήων,
τῷ μὲν ἐπὶ γλώσσῃ γλυκερὴν χείουσιν ἐέρσην,
τοῦ δ' ἔπε' ἐκ στόματος ῥεῖ μείλιχα· οἱ δέ νυ λαοὶ
πάντες ἐς αὐτὸν ὁρῶσι διακρίνοντα θέμιστας
ἰθείῃσι δίκῃσιν· ὁ δ' ἀσφαλέως ἀγορεύων
αἶψά τι καὶ μέγα νεῖκος ἐπισταμένως κατέπαυσε·
τούνεκα γὰρ βασιλῆες ἐχέφρονες, οὔνεκα λαοῖς
βλαπτομένοις ἀγορῇφι μετάτροπα ἔργα τελεῦσι
ῥηιδίως, μαλακοῖσι παραιφάμενοι ἐπέεσσιν·
ἐρχόμενον δ' ἀν' ἀγῶνα θεὸν ὡς ἱλάσκονται
αἰδοῖ μειλιχίῃ, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγρομένοισι.
τοίη Μουσάων ἱερὴ δόσις ἀνθρώποισιν.

ἐκ γάρ τοι Μουσέων καὶ ἑκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος
ἄνδρες ἀοιδοὶ ἔασιν ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ κιθαρισταί,
ἐκ δὲ Διὸς βασιλῆες· ὁ δ' ὄλβιος, ὅντινα Μοῦσαι
φίλωνται· γλυκερή οἱ ἀπὸ στόματος ῥέει αὐδή.
εἰ γάρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδέι θυμῷ
ἄζηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὸς
Μουσάων θεράπων κλεῖα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων
ὑμνήσει μάκαράς τε θεοὺς οἳ Ὄλυμπον ἔχουσιν,
αἶψ' ὅ γε δυσφροσυνέων ἐπιλήθεται οὐδέ τι κηδέων
μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων.

Hesiod introduces his *Theogony* with a hymn to the Muses.[1] In the course of this hymn, after naming the nine Muses, he adds that Calliope is the attendant of kings (80). He continues for the next dozen lines by describing the benefits which the Muses confer on kings. This seems rather surprising, for, as Martin West says in his commentary, kings "are not usually regarded by the Greeks as being dependent upon the Muses, except for the celebration of their renown."[2] The immortalizing function does not seem to be Hesiod's concern at this point. West, following van Groningen, suggests that Hesiod has brought in this passage in order to flatter a royal audience.[3] This might explain the difference between his laudatory attitude to the kings here and his more critical attitude in the *Works and Days*. But if the mention of kings was motivated by a particular audience, the question still remains what the connection is between Muses and kings.

How do the Muses assist a king? They pour "sweet dew" (honey or mead) on the king's tongue, so that his words may flow sweetly (83–84). That is, they confer eloquence. It is plausible enough that eloquent speech should be given by the goddesses of poetry. That this is the nature of their aid seems to be the generally accepted interpretation; Combellack suggests that Hesiod has included the king's speeches as an example of prose artistry in antithesis to artistry in verse. The Muses would be presiding over both poetry and prose.[4] The next two verses show the king administering justice: "deciding rights with straight judgments." There does not at first seem to be a connection between the eloquent speech and the straight judgment. Soon, however, it appears that the king is persuading the antagonists to accept his decisions. His unerring speech (86) and gentle words (90) are an integral part of his work as an arbitrator. The king's judicial function is actually at least as prominent in this passage as his oratorical performance. What, after all, is a "king" (*βασιλεύς*) in early Greek?

[1] A preliminary version of this paper was delivered at the annual meeting of the Classical Association of the Pacific Northwest, held in Seattle on 5 April 1975. I have benefited from discussion with my colleagues, especially Professors Daniel Harmon and Colin Edmonson, and from the comments of the referees for *TAPA*.

[2] Hesiod, *Theogony*, ed. M. L. West (Oxford 1966) 182.

[3] West (above, note 2) 44; B. A. van Groningen, *La composition littéraire archaique grecque* (Amsterdam 1958) 260, 262. Other recent opinions are summarized by W. J. Verdenius in "Notes on the Proem of Hesiod's *Theogony*," *Mnemosyne* 4.25 (1972) 251.

[4] F. M. Combellack, "Hesiod's Kings and Nicarchus' Nestor," *CP* 69 (1974) 124.

In Homer, the kings are local leaders, no one of them with a very wide jurisdiction. In Hesiod, the kings seem to belong to an even smaller territory. There are several in Hesiod's neighborhood. They are called upon to settle disputes, for example the dispute between Hesiod and his brother Perses (*Works and Days* 248). Perhaps one should think of the "kings" here in the *Theogony* also as more judicial than royal. Then if one considers how early Indo-European judges worked, it may be possible to shed new light on the function of the Muses.

A discussion of early Greek judicial process must concern itself with the meaning of the word δίκη. The etymology and semantic development of this word have been much discussed.[5] It appears to be a noun derived from the root of the verb δεικνύναι, which in turn is probably cognate with Latin *dīcere*. Other Latin cognates would be *dix* (in the phrase *dicis causa* "for form's sake") and *iudex* "judge." Scholars disagree over the basic meaning of this group of words: whether the sense of "show, point out" in the Greek δεικνύναι or the sense of "say" in the Latin *dicere* is more central. L. R. Palmer argues that the sense of "show" is primary, as in German *Zeichen* and Latin *indicare*.[6] From "show" the idea of "mark" or "boundary" would have developed, and δίκη would be a boundary set between disputing parties. Michael Gagarin accepts "boundary, dividing line" as the basic meaning of δίκη.[7] Émile Benveniste, on the other hand, argues that "say" is primary, but that a particular kind of speech is meant.[8] He finds that δεικνύναι regularly means "point out by speech," and that Latin *dicere* often means "state authoritatively." The formula for the praetor's official action was *do dico addico* "I grant, I pronounce, I adjudge." The *iudex* is one who *dicit ius*: he does not merely tell people what is right, but he effectively declares the right in the case at hand. In Homer also, the judge's action is referred to a

[5] For example, by J. Gonda, *ΔΕΙΚΝΥΜΙ: Semantische Studie over den Indo-Germanische Wortel DEIK* (Amsterdam 1929); L. R. Palmer, "The Indo-European Origins of Greek Justice," *TPhS* (Oxford 1950) 149–68; É. Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris 1969) II, 107–10; M. Gagarin, "*Dikê* in the *Works and Days*," *CP* 68 (1973) 81–94.

[6] Palmer (above, note 5) 157–61.

[7] Gagarin (above, note 5) 83.

[8] Benveniste (above, note 5) 108.

speaking: the phrase is δίκην εἰπεῖν (Σ 508). In both *ius dicere* and δίκην εἰπεῖν the notion of authoritative pronouncement is combined with the root **dik-*. Benveniste, therefore, is probably right to include speech along with demonstration in the basic range of meaning of the root. Then a *dikê* would be an authoritative pronouncement.

Benveniste discusses further what the nature of a *dikê* might have been.[9] A judge in Homer can be called δικασπόλος (A 238, λ 186). This compound is formed from the root **k^{w}ol-*, like βουκόλος "cowherd" and αἰπόλος "goatherd." A *dikaspolos* is somebody who watches over *dikai*. So *dikai* must be something which can be collected and guarded. When a dispute occurs, the judge has to produce an appropriate *dikê*. In the scene of Achilles' shield (Σ 498–508), two men are disputing over the blood-price for a man who has been killed, and the elders compete to see who can speak the best *dikê*. The right *dikê* is called "straight" (like a rule or norm); a wrong *dikê* is "crooked" (Σ 508; *Theogony* 86; *Works and Days* 219, 230; *Hymn to Demeter* 152). Benveniste concludes that *dikai* are a collection of legal rules. They must, of course, be oral rules in a preliterate society. Judges are those whose duty it is to remember these rules, to choose the right rule to apply in each case, and to hand down the collection of rules to the next generation.

We have some idea of what an early Indo-European collection of oral laws was like, although obviously we have only written examples. The Latin "Law of the Twelve Tables," early Greek legal inscriptions such as the law code of Gortyn in Crete, the Hittite law codes, and early Hindu, Germanic, and Slavic laws are very similar in style and content. The usual style is a condensed prose which omits every inessential word. Typically there is an if-clause stating the relevant features of a situation, followed by an injunction (imperative or the equivalent) telling what should be done under the given circumstances. The subject and object of the sentence are regularly omitted unless the status of a person is relevant (e.g., whether male or female, slave or free, etc.). The most familiar example is probably the beginning of the Twelve Tables: *si in ius uocat, ito*; *ni it, antestamino. igitur em capito.*[10]

[9] Benveniste (above, note 5) 110.

[10] The uncertainty of the text does not affect this argument.

"If (somebody) calls (somebody) to trial, let him (the defendant) go; if he (the defendant) does not go, let him (the plaintiff) call a witness. Then let him (the plaintiff) arrest him (the defendant)." Law codes of this type from different early Indo-European societies are so similar that they are generally assumed to have a common origin. Although the earliest law codes are in condensed prose, some also, at various times and places, are found in verse.[11] Verse is a mnemonic aid, as Plutarch observed (*Moralia* 407f). Poetry is easier to memorize than prose, because the meter or other poetic devices help the reciter to fill in missing words. In the Irish law tracts, there are old parts in verse (and in an archaic form of the language). Legend has it that the chief poet of Ireland, Dubhthach, helped St. Patrick record the old Irish law code and "put a thread of poetry around it." Caesar tells us that the Druids "were said to memorize a great number of verses"—*magnum numerum uersuum ediscere dicuntur* (*Gallic War* 6.14). Did he mean metrical verses? In old Germanic laws, Jakob Grimm and other scholars have detected alliteration, which is the usual feature of early Germanic poetry.[12] The Laws of Manu are in Sanskrit verse. So it is not impossible that the Greeks also might have put their laws in verse at some time. If they did, the laws would have sounded like some of Hesiod's maxims, such as *Works and Days* 707–713:

> μηδὲ κασιγνήτῳ ἶσον ποιεῖσθαι ἑταῖρον·
> εἰ δέ κε ποιήσῃς, μή μιν πρότερος κακὸν ἔρξῃς.
> μηδὲ ψεύδεσθαι γλώσσης χάριν· εἰ δέ σέ γ' ἄρχῃ
> ἤ τι ἔπος εἰπὼν ἀποθύμιον ἠὲ καὶ ἔρξας,
> δὶς τόσα τείνυσθαι μεμνημένος· εἰ δὲ σέ γ' αὖτις
> ἡγῆτ' ἐς φιλότητα, δίκην δ' ἐθέλῃσι παρασχεῖν,
> δέξασθαι·

Do not put some friend on equal terms with your brother;
but if you do, never be the first to do him an injury.
Do not tell lies for the sake of talking. If your friend begins it
by speaking some disagreeable word, or doing some injury,
remember, and pay him back twice over. Then, if he would bring you

[11] Information on the forms of ancient law codes was supplied by Professor Calvert Watkins, who is however not responsible for the use made of it.

[12] S. P. Schwartz, "Comparative Legal Reconstruction in Germanic," *Myth and Law Among the Indo-Europeans*, ed. J. Puhvel (Berkeley 1970) 51.

back into his friendship, and propose to give reparation,
take him back.[13]

The syntactical structure here corresponds to that which is regularly observed in law codes: if-clauses in the subjunctive, followed by injunctions in the infinitive or by prohibitions with infinitive or subjunctive.

Whether or not an early law code was in verse, it must have been orally transmitted before the introduction of writing. In pre-Christian Ireland there was a special class of men, the brehons, who were trained to remember the laws. Even when writing was available, Caesar reports that the Druids, who had responsibility for settling disputes, refused to put their traditional knowledge into writing (*Gallic War* 6.13–14). The Romans themselves made their school-children memorize and chant the Twelve Tables, as Cicero informs us: he calls them a *carmen necessarium* (*Laws* 2.59). The Greeks also carried their laws in memory even after the introduction of writing. Lycurgus, like the Druids, forbade the recording of laws, on the grounds that the laws would be more secure if they were implanted in every citizen's memory and way of life (Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus* 13). If every citizen was obliged to remember the laws, a judge must have had a more specific obligation to remember them accurately.

Memory, then, was an essential faculty for an early Greek judge. Memory, or Mnemosyne, has a prominent place in archaic Greek poetry.[14] For Hesiod, she is the mother of the Muses (*Theogony* 54, 915). Hermes praises her first among the gods (*Hymn to Hermes* 429). Solon invokes the Muses as her daughters (1.1). The filial relationship expresses in mythological form a close dependence of poetry upon memory.[15] The Muses are invoked to provide the poet with information.[16] They teach Hesiod how to tell of things past, present, and

[13] Hesiod, *Works and Days, Theogony, Shield of Herakles*, trans. R. Lattimore (Ann Arbor 1959).

[14] See, for example, J. A. Notopoulos, "Mnemosyne in Oral Literature," *TAPA* 69 (1938) 465–93; W. W. Minton, "Invocation and Catalogue in Hesiod and Homer," *TAPA* 93 (1962) 188–212.

[15] It has been suggested that the name *Μοῦσα* and its dialectal variants contain the root **mon-* which in another form occurs in *μνήμη* etc.; but this is highly doubtful: H. J. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg 1960–1972) 2.260–61.

[16] Minton (above, note 14) 188.

future (*Theogony* 32, 38). Homer appeals to them to remind him of facts which are hard for mere mortals to know (B 484–92):

> Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on Olympos.
> For you, who are goddesses, are there, and you know all things,
> and we have heard only the rumour of it and know nothing.
> Who then of those were the chief men and lords of the Danaans?
> I could not tell over the multitude of them nor name them . . .
> not unless the Muses of Olympia, daughters
> of Zeus of the aegis, remembered all those who came beneath Ilion.[17]

The poet Phemios in the *Odyssey* claims to be self-taught but to have learned the songs (οἶμαι) from a god (χ 347). That god must have been the Muse, who also taught Demodokos οἶμαι (θ 481). The word οἴμη is probably related to οἶμος "way" or "road," and so would refer to the course or plot of the song. Phemios seems to be saying that he taught himself how to make verses, but that he considers the Muse to be the source of stories. For Homer, it is the Muse who knows about the versatile Odysseus and the wrathful Achilles, and therefore is invoked at the beginning of an epic. The Muse who knows catalogues of ships and plots of stories seems to be a personification of the oral tradition, which preserves the people's knowledge. As such, she could also remember the oral laws. A judge as well as a poet might invoke her to aid his memory. Perhaps this is why the Muses are important to Hesiod's judge-kings. Furthermore, if the laws happened to be in verse form, to say that the Muses helped the judge remember could be another way of saying that verse helped to fix the laws in his memory. Perhaps the Muses are the daughters of Mnemosyne primarily because verse aids memory.

There is another poet who invokes the Muses when discussing justice. Solon begins his first elegy with a prayer to the Muses to grant him well-being, good reputation, and justly-gained wealth—not ordinarily considered to be gifts of the Muses. Fränkel suggests that he does so because the Muses are the divine powers of his particular art, namely poetry.[18] If the Muses were traditionally connected not only with poetry but also with justice, then there would be better reason to say, as Linforth does, that Solon considered himself in a special way to

[17] Homer, *Iliad*, trans. R. Lattimore (Chicago 1951).

[18] H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums* (New York 1951) 309.

live under their patronage and protection.[19] Their patronage of law codes would be especially relevant to a poem dealing with justice, composed by the reformer of Athens.

The poems of both Hesiod and Solon may thus be illuminated by the hypothesis of an old association between the Muses, as the personification of oral tradition, and the rulers, as the administrators of justice. This association helps to account for Hesiod's mention of the kings during his hymn to the Muses. Hesiod himself, however, seems not to have understood the relationship between kings and Muses, and so has reinterpreted it as the gift of persuasive eloquence. Solon's elegy, nevertheless, shows the survival of a sense that the Muses had a more basic function in the judicial process.

[19] I. M. Linforth, *Solon the Athenian* (Berkeley 1919) 106.