

The Works and Days of Hesiod

Lines 11-41 – The Two Strifes

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"Let him hear the advice of Hesiod. . . . The advice of Hesiod is good." — Aristotle

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—Pindar

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The Two Strifes

Lines 11-41

SO, THERE WAS not one kind of Strife (Eris), after all, but upon the earth there are two kinds of strife.¹ The one is praised once a man comes to know her, while the other is found blameworthy. The spirit of each is quite different. The one, being cruel, multiplies evil war and battle. No mortal man loves her. Even so they honor the oppressive Strife by necessity, by the plans of the immortals.

But dark Night (Nyx) gave birth to the other Strife first. And Zeus, Kronos' high-throned son, who dwells in the brightest and purest sky, planted her in the roots of the earth. She is much better for men. [20] She rouses even the helpless man to work. Such a one will long for work when he sees a wealthy man hurrying to plow and plant and put his house in good order. And so the one neighbor jealously vies with the other who is speeding on toward riches. This Strife is good for mortal men. And potter bears a grudge against potter, and craftsman against craftsman. And one beggar is jealous of another, just as singers envy one another.

Perses, lay up these things in your spirit. Don't let the Strife that is gladdened by the misfortune of others hamper your desire for work while you stare at and closely follow the disputes in the assembly place. [30] Whoever doesn't have enough of what it takes to live—Demeter's grain produced by the earth—stored up at the right time within his barns, that man hardly cares about disputes and assemblies. Satisfied with that, then you can multiply disputes and battles for another man's possessions.

You will not have a second opportunity to do as you should, but let us settle the dispute with straight justice, those judgments that come from Zeus and are noble—the best. For we had already divided our land and possessions among ourselves, but snatching much of it, you repeatedly carried it off to the gift-greedy kings, honoring them greatly, the ones who wish to judge this case. [40] They are fools! They neither know how the half is fuller than the whole nor how mallow and asphodel bring great help.

So ends Reading 2, “The Two Strifes.” **See you in Reading 3**, “The Hidden Means of Life.”

NOTES

¹ For Hesiod’s original account of the birth of Strife, see *Theogony* 225: “And Night brought strong-hearted Strife (Eris) into the world.”

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