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Claremont McKenna College

**The Knife Between Despair and Delusion:
Tragically Beautiful Hope Living on the Blade in
Hesiod's *Works and Days***

submitted to

Professor Benjamin Keim

and

Professor Shane Bjornlie

by

Grant A. Braught

For

Senior Thesis

Spring 2022

April 24, 2022

Dedication

To my home: Poppa Computer Lab,

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Abstract

Hope's interpretation within *Works and Days* is a nuanced and particular issue on whether Hesiod portrays Hope as good or evil. This paper examines the arguments from the ongoing scholarly debate on whether Hope should be interpreted as good or bad and introduces why Hesiod's portrayal of Hope is a lesson on its use for his audience. The previous scholarship argues for both interpretations of Hope but does not dive further into why Hesiod discusses it nor how he wanted humankind to interact with it. In short, the importance of Hope to a reader of *Works and Days*. While Hesiod does not explicitly state an example of good Hope in his letter to Perses, only of evil Hope, he implies good Hope is attached to work. Thus, the portrayal of Hope in *Works and Days* is nuanced between good and evil since Hesiod explicitly warns against the despair and delusion that evil Hope can bring but portrays good Hope as work that humans can use to make the future better. This paper concludes that Hesiod displays Hope as very precarious and thus should interpret Hope as nuanced between good and evil. The use of Hesiodic Hope is an incentive to work for a better future but to be very vigilant against false Hope that can lead to despair and delude expectations about the future.

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Introduction

Hesiod's *Works and Days* has been a culturally relevant text for centuries,¹ especially the myth of Pandora's Jar that was first written down in the text. Within Pandora's story, and talked about later within the text is the personified and abstract idea of Ἔλπις, which popularly translates as "Hope" but Ἔλπις can also be thought of as "expectations toward the future". This personified and abstract idea of Hope within *Works and Days* has been subject to a scholarly debate on whether to be interpreted as good or bad for humankind. While Hesiod's audience was the Greek speaking world, it does not matter whether a reader is Greek or a barbarian. Hesiod's lesson on the use of Hope and the understanding of its nature is prevalent for any reader of *Works and Days*. Expanding on the previous research on Hesiodic Hope, this paper intends to add to the debate another interpretation of Hope being good or evil and discuss what Hesiod tried to impart as the importance of the use of Hope for humankind to include it in *Works and Days*.

Hope is used five times in *Works and Days*. Two of the times it is used as a verb: "Hope for an only son to nourish his father's house..." (Hesiod, West lines 376-377) and "...hope that Zeus may rain on the third day without intermission..." (*W&D*, 488-489). These uses of hope as a verb are not the

¹ West's introduction in his translation of *Works and Days* emphasizes the cultural relevancy of the text on pages xx and xxi

context of Hope as a personified and abstract ideal as studied in this paper. Personified and abstract Hope is used only a few times in the text, thus giving an opportunity to solely focus on the passages where this Hope is used and not be stretched throughout the poem. The other three times that Hope appears in *Works and Days* the words are nouns that personify Hope as an abstract ideal:

“For formerly the tribes of men on earth lived remote from ills, without harsh toil and the grievous sicknesses that are deadly to men. But the woman unstopped the jar and let it all out, and brought grim care upon mankind. Only Hope remained there inside in her secure dwelling, under the lip of the jar, and did not fly out, because the woman put the lid back in time by the providence of Zeus the cloud gatherer who bears the aegis.” (*W&D*, 92-99)

And

“Many are the ills that a workshy man, waiting on empty hope, in want of livelihood, complains of to his heart. Hope is no good provider for a needy man sitting in the parlour without substance to depend on. Point out to your labourers while it is still midsummer: 'It will not always be summer. Build your huts.’” (*W&D*, 498-504)

The former quotation is from the famous story of Pandora’s Jar showing how the ills of the world were released onto humankind. There is no explicit

connotation on how Hope should be interpreted in relation to humankind in the passage. However, while this is the passage where Hope is mentioned, Pandora's story begins almost 30 lines prior and should be taken into account as Hope and Pandora are intertwined within the story. Whereas, the latter quotation is part of the letter Hesiod writes to his brother in *Works and Days* warning him of false Hope which can entrap humans to not act. The latter quotation gives Hope a negative connotation as it is described as empty, but the former is more nuanced. Thus, the reason why there has been a scholarly debate over whether Hope in *Works and Days* is a good or bad thing for humankind is due to the more nuanced presentation of Hope in the Pandora story of lines 92-99 in.

Due to the ambiguity of Hope within Pandora's story, the scholarly debate has been argued for either side with scholars using the text itself, other ancient texts from roughly the same period, and other knowledge of the ancient Greeks, such as archeology, to try to interpret how humankind should think of Hope. Using previous scholarship on the interpretation of Hope and *Works and Days* itself, this paper adds to the conversation of the scholarly debate by arguing that Hope is innate to humankind because in every decision Hope is present, thus humankind always is using Hope, and that Hesiod imparts to the reader a Hope that is more nuanced to humans,

rather than a black and white² understanding of Hope being more beneficial to humankind.

The use of Hope in *Works and Days* is to show why Hesiod thought Hope was important enough to discuss within the poem to impart it to his audience. Hesiodic Hope being understood as nuanced between good and evil is more useful to humankind rather than a strict Hope of good or bad interpretation. Hesiod alludes that a nuanced understanding allows for humankind to have a good sense of Hope that incentivizes and motivates humans to believe and work for a tomorrow that could be better than today.³ However, Hesiod also understood the evils of Hope is the prospect of humans being in despair or deluded from reality.⁴ This despair and delusion could lead to inaction and disconnection from reality due to the belief that tomorrow could never be better, the Hope for the future could never become true because the necessary actions are not taken, and that the Hope for the future could never come true even if one works as hard as possible.⁵

The next section of the paper is a literature review and will go into a more detailed description of different scholars' interpretations of whether Hope should be considered good or bad for humankind. The next section

² Good and Evil

³ Lines 302-318 in *Works and Days*

⁴ Lines 498-500 in *Works and Days*

⁵ Lines 688-684 in *Works and Days*

considers the implications of these interpretations of Hope on our actions based on what is learned from the previous sections about the nature of Hope and how humans are supposed to interact with Hope. This paper concludes with the interpretation that Hesiod imparted that Hope needs to be nuanced in its relationship to humans due it being necessary to work for any kind of better future, which is implied in the text with advice to Perses about work,⁶ while the text is explicit, and Hesiod cannot emphasize it more, to be very vigilant against any kind of false Hope.

⁶ Lines 302-318 and 382-383 of *Works and Days*

Literature Review

The contentious nature of this debate has led to various interpretations of Hope in *Works and Days* by scholars. Due to language limitations the works focused on in this paper will be in English, and while several scholars make passing references to their interpretation of Hope in the myth of Pandora, papers with a sole focus on such interpretation yield a better understanding of how ancient Greeks would have interpreted Hope and thus how Hesiod might have intended Hope to be understood. M. L. West being the authority in interpreting the poems of Hesiod is where this review will start. Followed by Walcot who, as a contemporary of West, gives a different and more in-depth perspective than West. Next will be Beall who, twenty years after Walcot and West, gave a counter-example from both of the previous scholars by arguing that not just Hope is good for humankind but the contents of the jar are good as well. After this, there will be a jump to relatively more modern scholarship that has even more in-depth analyses of this problem of interpreting Hope. This will start with an interpretative commentary of *Works and Days*, specifically on the passages of interest, by Canevaro based on West's translation and interpretation. Canevaro is followed by Warman arguing that Hope in this context is evil based on archeology evidence and other examples within the text. The review of previous literature will end with Ferguson who gives another detailed

analysis concluding that the Hope in the text is false hope. Through these research papers, the goal is to give a general understanding of the debate over Hope in Hesiod's *Works and Days*.

M. L. West Translation Commentary

M.L. West's standard edition in 1966 and translated in 1978 are commonly held to be the standard texts in which to read *Works and Days* in English.⁷ In his scholarship, West has given Hope in *Works and Days* a gracious and positive interpretation. In his commentary section of *Works and Days*, West states, "Hesiod has not given his jar a consistent symbolic meaning. He means that hope remains among men as the one antidote to suffering." (West, 75). His answer, simply put, is that Hope according to Hesiod is the solution to suffering. The suffering that West is alluding to is that "work is man's lot" (West, xiii). While West does give an answer, that Hope is Hesiod's answer to suffering, he does not give any commentary on the next time he uses Hope as a translation in lines 488, 499, and 500, and so West leaves a lot to be desired in regards to this scholarly debate of whether Hope is good or evil for humans. However, West does create an interesting connection between the idea of hope and work. Hope being the antidote to the suffering of humankind having to work is one of the main themes of later

⁷Warman page 107 cites West as the editor of the standard text of *Works and Days*

scholars used in this paper try to connect their arguments for interpreting Hope and Hesiod's use of Hope for humankind. This being said, based on the comments in the introduction and the notes at the end, West is of the opinion that Hesiod wrote of Hope as a good thing for humankind.

Pandora's Jar by P. Walcot

Walcot wrote *Pandora's Jar* as a contemporary of West in 1961, before West's standard translations. Therefore, his paper is a good source to understand the scholarly research and debate before the standard texts that are commonly used. Walcot begins his illustration of Pandora's Jar by comparing Hesiod and his brother Perses to the brother Titans Prometheus and Epimetheus, beginning with the *Theogony* before diving into more detail with Pandora in *Works and Days*. Walcot explains that Hesiod uses this allusion to the deities to explain "the presence of evil in a world governed by a supposedly benevolent deity" and "the folly of disregarding sound advice" (Walcot, 249). While this does not directly point to the moral stance of Hope in the jar, it is important to understand the underlying story of how the jar ended up in Pandora's possession. By writing about Prometheus Walcot digs deeper into the meaning of "man's lot", as mentioned by West on page xiii.

Work being "man's lot" is further highlighted by Walcot when he states, "even the sorry state of contemporary society and the necessity of toil can ultimately be traced back to just the kind of reluctance to take warning

that Perses now displays” (Walcot, 249). As an emphasis on his argument to heed his advice, the myth of Prometheus shows the consequences of not heeding his advice. This is shown in *Works and Days* when Zeus describes the misfortune he will bring upon humans for Prometheus’s disobedience, “To set against the fire I shall give them an affliction in which they will all delight as they embrace their own misfortune” (*W&D*, 57-59). Immediately after these lines the gods and goddesses create Pandora. However, Pandora alone is not what gave humankind ills, but it was through her actions of unleashing troubles into the world by unstopping the jar, in which only Hope remained.⁸ The importance of understanding Pandora’s creation in relation to what remained in the jar is how Zeus describes humankind’s response to the afflictions that are released from the jar. An affliction that a person will delight in as they embrace their misfortune sounds like a person who is hoping despite despairs in their life, and will embrace the idea that tomorrow will be better.

Walcot then brings the debate of Hope being beneficial or evil into the conversation of the paper. He first describes how the jar is not a “storage jar like the giant pithoi” (Walcot, 250), but rather a prison by alluding to the Homeric epics and how the jar is described as unbreakable and made by the

⁸ Allusion to *Works and Days* line 96, the first mention of Hope, and it quoted throughout this paper

gods. After this illustration of what the actual jar should be described as Walcot explains what the Greeks who listened and read this poem would have thought about Hope, “It would seem that the Greeks were indifferent to this distinction between a good and a bad form of Hope, and were capable of regarding Hope as either one or the other.” (Walcot, 250). The ancient Greeks understood a more nuanced Hope within this poem than what present-day scholars, including Walcot, argue for. Walcot expands on this that similarly to strife, work, or toil Hesiod could argue for a good or bad Hope and this is visible in Hope’s second appearance in the poem. Walcot describes Hesiod’s understanding of Hope in these lines, “Certainly Hesiod had no illusions about the dangers of an empty hope, if there were insufficient food in the cupboard...” (Walcot, 250-251). This more nuanced understanding that Walcot argues the Greeks understood about Hope is important because it helps those who try to learn from the poems have a more nuanced understanding of the topics such as Hope. This also emphasizes how much Hesiod wanted impart to people to stay vigilant against an evil Hope.

The ending of Walcot’s paper brings in his interpretation of Hope within the text. While he conceded Hesiod and the Greeks understood both sides of Hope, Walcot is still curious as to why there were evils within the jar. Walcot’s understanding is that the evils were in the jar as a representation that they were under humankind’s control, which before being unleashed did

not afflict them, and that “Only Hope was left behind, and it is only with Hope that we retain a degree of control so that we can make either a good or a bad thing of it.” (Walcot, 251). Hope from Walcot’s perspective would have positive utility, as the connotation, he brings with it helps humans have a “degree of control”. However, Walcot argues this distinction between good Hope and the evils is not the most important lesson to be learned, but instead “...one between Hope, left for man to make what he will of it, and the remainder of the jar's contents, which became evils once they had evaded the controlling hand of mankind...” (Walcot, 251). Walcot argues that the important lesson to take from this myth is not whether Hope is good or bad for humankind, which he argues is mostly good but has a bad side, but instead the dynamic of control that is left for humans in a world that is not in humankind’s control.

Overall, Walcot gives a good understanding of what Hesiod meant by Hope in that abstract way it is used within *Works and Days*. He argues that the history of Pandora is important in heeding the lesson Hesiod is trying to give in the myth, and that Hesiod and the Greeks that read and listened to the poem understood that there were two sides to Hope. In the end, the important thing about his debate over the interpretation of how Hesiod portrayed Hope is not whether it is benevolent or malicious, but the control over life that Hope gives humans.

The contents of Hesiod's Pandora Jar by E. F. Beall

Beall wrote his interpretation of Hope in his paper *the contents of Hesiod's Pandora Jar* in 1989 and provides a different take, arguing that the common conception that the jar was full of evils is false and that the contents were not in fact evil but good for humankind. He begins his paper with the argument, "Hesiod and his audience construed his jar to contain, not evil, but beneficial spirits, which had kept the evil in the world away from men..." (Beall, 227). This is an interesting and different conception about the content of the jar and is worth exploring, but Beall prior to this statement does not make any sort of argument as to why these contents should be construed as beneficial, as he even concedes that the standard reading is that they are evils, but instead asks the reader to assume this then go into the argument of his interpretation. His argument seems to say in summary that there were evils, but the contents in the jar kept them at bay, and when the jar was unstopped those beneficial spirits went to Olympus away from humans. After the good spirits left, only Hope remained, which was wholly inadequate to fight against the evil of the world.⁹

The rest of the paper explains his reasoning for his aforementioned non-standard interpretation of Hope. The first reason is that the texts were

⁹Beall 227-228 is where the argument is for good spirits in the jar

rewritten after Hesiod by other authors who changed the story. For example, Beall writes that one variant of the poem by Bibirus has the jar unstopped by a man, not Pandora, (Beall, 228). Thus, Beall argues that when later writers changed the myth from Hesiod's original poem, the conception of the contents within the jar shifted from beneficial to malicious. While there could have been changes by the later authors, Beall's claim of what Hesiod wrote does not cite any support of whose version of the contents within jar the original poem contained.

The second reason is that his interpretation is more consistent with other myths around the same time. This rationale mainly comes from Hesiod's *Theogony*. For example, Beall states:

“Theognis (1135f.) says all the >>noble<< gods, save only (μόνη) Ἐλπίς, have forsaken men for Olympus, albeit he stresses the social values Πίστις, Σωφροσύνη, and the Χάρμιτες as having departed (1137 f.). To say that evil was in the world prior to Pandora makes the *Erga*'s Hesiod sound more like the *Theogony*'s, who implies that such forces as πονος (v. 226, cf. *Erga* 91) are primordial” (Beall, 228).¹⁰

¹⁰The Greek word and their meanings: μόνη = only, Ἐλπίς = hope, Πίστις = good faith, Σωφροσύνη = excellence of character and soundness of mind, Χάρμιτες = grace, πονος = toil

By bringing the *Theogony* into the conversation in a more detailed manner, Beall builds upon the work of Walcot, who only mentions how the story of Prometheus and Pandora is told in both works and how her story stops at her creation.¹¹ Beall argues from the position that both works should be taken in tandem when it comes to the story of Pandora's Jar, whereas Walcot shows separation between the two works in regards to Hope. Walcot would agree that both stories being in both poems shows that it was important in Hesiod's mind,¹² but there is a difference in the stories that Beall does not mention. This difference is what these stories are about, for instance, the *Theogony* is about how the gods and the titans came to be and their history, whereas *Works and Days* discusses the ages of humankind, shown through the metals of the golden age, bronze age, etc..., and thus the former is about the gods and the latter is about humans and their relation to the gods.

The third reason Beall argues the contents within Pandora's jar are benevolent spirits is because there is a more nuanced understanding of good and evil, which Hesiod and the Greeks understood,⁷ that has devolved into the good vs evil duality. Beal states, "the issue we now call good versus evil is portrayed in utilitarian terms in part, and, further, according to the

¹¹ Walcot pg. 249 is about the *Theogony* version of the story of Prometheus and Epimetheus and does not talk about the Jar, but rather the situation leading up to the jar, combining both texts

¹² Walcot pg. 249-250

structural principle that what is good is, not something seen in isolation, but that which combats what is evil.” (Beall, 229). This perception of good and evil within Hesiod is not one of the moral absolutes that Beall argues has become the common idea of good and evil. Good and evil are two things that must exist together, according to Beall, and that good is not just simply good for the sake of being good, but good because there is an evil to differentiate it. Beall brings this to terms about Hesiod by suggesting he was “an author who would acknowledge that the evil member of each good/evil polarity was once relatively weaker, but not one who saw it as ever having been entirely absent.” (Beall, 229). This statement is reminiscent of Walcott stating that Greeks would understand that there would be a good and evil side to Hope. Beal is saying that Hesiod understood that there is both good and evil in humankind’s Hope, and that neither aspect can stand alone, but that they need each other to differentiate between the beneficial and the detrimental. This perspective of interpreting the contents of the jar as a more nuanced understanding of good or evil is how Beall tries to create the contents of the jar as beneficial, but it seems that his third point creates more of a distinction that there are good and evil aspects in the jar rather than just one or the other.

Beall’s final argument is where he tries to drive home his interpretation of whether Hope is good or evil. He cites the prominent

position of the jar being a prison and Hope being evil since it is imprisoned to show his counterargument. Beall criticizes this position stating, “Against this, that expectation (or hope) could be thought an evil on a par with drudgery or disease is implausible; to not be a property of humans, even more so.” (Beall, 230). He goes further saying that Hesiod must mean “Hope is a benefit for men even if this violates logic” (Beall, 230). Beall argues that Hope is not on par as evil as diseases and that even if logic says that Hope is evil it is not true. Beall does not use any of the texts of Hesiod to stake this claim, and while it could be argued that Hope is not as bad as diseases, he seems to forget his previous arguments of a nuanced understanding of good or evil. By not arguing that Hope could be thought of as both good and evil, there seems to be a lack of logic that Beall mentions in his argument for a beneficial Hope as the interpretation for the text. He even goes as far as to dismiss the debate of Hope being thought of as good or evil: “whatever may be meant by leaving specifically Ἐλπίς, to men via the jar, we avoid all this confusion by relinquishing the assumption that the vessel ever contained evils in the first place.” (Beall, 230). He dismisses the debate by saying if the contents of the jar are assumed to be good in the first place then Hope must be good. This still leaves out the question of why Hope remained while the rest of the contents went to Olympus. Beall stated earlier that Hope is to be implied to

be inadequate to fight off evil¹³ as the good has flown off to Olympus, but this still leaves a lot about Hope unanswered. For instance, If Hope is one of the goods then why did it not fly off with the rest of the goods?

Beal then ends his paper conceding that Hesiod does not make the nature of Hope explicit,¹⁴ which after the whole paper seems to be the only logical conclusion that he could make, as his interpretation was all over the place. For example, Beall argued (Beall, 229) that there needs to be good and evil to understand evil and that there are these aspects in everything, but does not make that leap to Hope. Also, if he were to make that leap to Hope then he would not argue that Hope is to be thought of as beneficial, if Hope is to be thought of as having a good and evil aspect, albeit the good aspect being stronger, then Beall would have an understanding, like he argues Hesiod does, of a Hope that has a bad nature to itself. Finally, since Beall brought into the conversation of Pandora's story in the *Theogony* then it would have made sense for him to comment on Hope in lines 498 and 500 of *Works and Days* to help make a point over the interpretation of Hope, which he does not. However, in the end, Beall argues that Hesiod portrays Hope as beneficial to humans, even if there is little support for this argument from the text and other scholarly work in his paper.

¹³ Beal pg. 227-228 is where he writes that Hope is inadequate, but does not speak about why it was Hope that remained

¹⁴ Beal pg. 230 last sentence of the paper

Hesiod's Works and Days: An Interpretative Commentary
Lilah-Grace Canevaro

Canevaro's interpretative commentary on *Works and Days* goes into much detail, specifically about the different interpretations of Hope in the Pandora's Jar story, and the other personifications of Hope in the text.

Canevaro states that Hope should be translated more accurately as expectation or anticipation.¹⁵ Interestingly she does not comment on Hope in the Pandora story first, but instead describes first how it is being used in lines 498 and 500: "it is vain at 498 (the idle man has nothing but empty *elpis*) and 500 (*elpis* is not good when it accompanies a man in want)..."

(Canevaro, 115). These statements describing Hope are more matter of fact in and are to be thought of as something with a negative connotation in these instances of *Works and Days*. From this Canevaro's perspective, the main debate on the interpretation of Hope is in Pandora's story, not in the latter examples of Hope.

Canevaro next gives her preferred interpretive possibilities of Hope in Pandora's story, which focus on whether the contents of the jar and Hope should be thought of as good or evil, not only Hope. The first possibility is Pandora's jar held evil contents and supports two different ways to interpret

¹⁵ Canevaro cites Beall 1989, and Most 2006 for these more accurate translations of Hope

Hope. One of the ways to perceive Hope with the jar holding evils is that Hope remained for humankind. Thus, “Elpis [Hope] is good: it can help mankind understand their own human condition... the fact that it appears elsewhere in Op. (498, 500) shows that it is indeed accessible to men.” (Canevaro, 115-116).¹⁶ This interpretation of Hope is that it is good, and not being kept away from humans so that they can use it. However, this interpretation does not bring in the latter times Hope is used within the poem. For example, when humans use Hope in the latter lines, 498 and 500, it is being used with a negative connotation, as false hope. So, there is a logical inconsistency¹⁷ with the perception that Hope is good and accessible, but where it was accessible was bad, according to this interpretive possibility.

The other interpretation where the contents of the jar are still evil is that the jar is a prison and Hope is being kept away from humankind. This interpretation has the logic of “Elpis being kept away from men is the logical progression that if evils are present for men because they leave the jar, Elpis being in the jar must mean it is kept away from men. For her imprisonment to be positive, she herself would have to be negative...” (Canevaro, 116).

Canevaro continues this argument with the story of the two jars in the

¹⁶ Canevaro cites Vernant 1980 as the source for the argument that Hope helps humans understand their condition.

¹⁷ “The narrative supports all of these interpretative possibilities to a certain extent, though all have their logical inconsistencies.” (Canevaro, 117)

Iliad.¹⁸ This argument states that there were evils in the jar, that the jar is to be thought of as a prison, and therefore since only Hope remains in the jar, Hope must be a negative for humankind. Canevaro does not describe this possible interpretation as strong as the previous by not giving an example of what this means for humankind. For instance, Canevaro brings up the interpretation that bad contents in the jar and good Hope is part of human nature to distinguish humans from gods and beasts, (Canevaro, 115). She does not interpret what bad contents and bad Hope mean for humans,¹⁹ which would be a very discouraging way to look at the future if taken as the use of Hope's for humans from the poem.

The counter way to interpret the contents in the jar and Hope in Pandora's story as described by Canevaro is that the jar held goods. Canevaro's interpretation brings up two ways that Hope could be construed. Canevaro's first description of good contents of the jar is similar to Beall argument: "the jar contained good spirits or daimones, which before Pandora were present as protectors against evil but which were driven away by her..."

¹⁸ Iliad book 24 lines 527-528

¹⁹ It may be a good thing that Canevaro does not speak on the impact of evil contents of the jar and an evil Hope. This could lead to the same conclusion that Friedrich Nietzsche came to about Hope in Pandora's story in *Human, All-Too-Human*, "Zeus did not wish man, however much he might be tormented by the other evils, to fling away his life, but to go on letting himself be tormented again and again. Therefore, he gives man hope, — in reality it is the worst of all evils, because it prolongs the torments of man." (pg. 82), which is a very despairing way to look at the future.

(Canevaro, 117). This interpretation gives Hope a distinction of being noble from the other goods, as Hope remained to help humans fight against the evils that plagued humankind. This interpretation has the same tone as the contents of the jar being evil, that being evil did not plague humans before the contents were released. While Hope remains to help humankind, it is inadequate,²⁰ but if Hope is not enough to combat the rising evil, however noble it may be to remain, what good is its use? Canevaro again in this example does not give an example of how this is beneficial, or not to humankind. Therefore, there may be a lack of credibility to this interpretation as the arguments for this position do not offer any interpretation on why Hesiod thought Hope was important to humankind.

The second possibility if the contents of the jar are good is that “the jar contained material provisions, which Pandora scattered and thus initiated the need for work...” (Canevaro, 117). This interpretation is more conducive to one of the main themes of *Works and Days*, toil, as it argues that the jar contained what was needed for humans to not have to toil, but once the substances within the jar escaped humans had to work for life. However, this interpretation of the contents of the jar does not have an interpretation of Hope in Canevaro’s description. While this may be a good interpretation of the jar, there is not an interpretation on whether Hope is good or evil for

²⁰ This is similar to Beall’s argument previously discussed

humankind, much less the use of Hope for humans. Thus, Canevaro does not answer as to the utility of Hope within this context.

Canevaro does not take a stance on any of the four aforementioned main interpretations of Hope in Pandora's story, just describing her preferred interpretations of the overall scholarly debate. She concedes that all of the possibilities have their flaws, but any of the interpretations are plausible from within the text and thus could be valid. However, Canevaro's own interpretation on Hope does not reference any of the four previously discussed possibilities: "That Elpis remains in the jar is ambiguous. In fact, this whole myth hinges on ambiguity, uncertainty and deceit..." (Canevaro, 117). Canevaro goes the route to which Walcot and Beall state the Greeks and Hesiod would have thought about Hope respectively. Hope can be either good or bad, and the text, according to Canevaro, supports both interpretations. However, her descriptions of the arguments for why the contents of the jar are good leave out the reason why Hope remains, and so the first argument for the contents being evil has more validity when it comes to interpreting Hope. Canevaro's opinion on the interpretation of Hope in *Works and Days* is ambiguous in whether Hesiod intended to portray Hope is good or evil for his audience in the Pandora story, but concedes that in the later lines, 498 and 500, Hope is ambivalent toward humankind.

Hope in a Jar by Liz Warman

Liz Warman in her paper *Hope in a Jar* analyzes *Works and Days* to discuss the debate on whether Hope is good or bad in Pandora's story. She begins by offering a general definition of Hope, "as emotion-tinged uncertainty about the future" (Warman, 107), and then describes her process of analyzing Hesiodic Hope. She states that her interpretation sees of Hope being evil for humankind.²¹

Warman's argument toward the good or evil nature of Hesiodic Hope can be summarized as: "Ἐλπίς in the jar as a compellingly lovely but nonetheless undeniably bad thing, a delusive 'hope'," (Warman, 112-113). Her argument stems from the previously mentioned lines in *Works and Days*, 57-59, in which Zeus's punishment for Prometheus bringing fire is to afflict humankind with something that they will embrace despite his misfortune.²²

She expresses this argument of a "delusive Hope"²³ in more detail from an analogy between Pandora and Hope. Warman states "Diseases, Ἐλπίς and Pandora are all divine gifts and therefore cannot be avoided. They are part

²¹ While a review is not presented in this paper on Vernant (1980), Warman builds upon Vernant's interpretation which in Warman's words is: "Vernant recognizes that Pandora-like Ἐλπίς must be evil, yet understands Ἐλπίς to be at the same time a good, a "saving illusion" that makes men blissfully unaware of impending misfortune" (Warman, 114).

²² *Works and Days* translated by West lines 57-59

²³ Warman 113

and parcel of the human condition. But whereas diseases are known evils, never willingly accepted, Ἐλπίς is, like Pandora, an evil that men will embrace...” (Warman, 112).²⁴ Warman is showing a more detailed argument of the contents of the jar being evil and Hope being evil as well compared to Canevaro’s discussion of the interpretations. Warman builds upon this argument of evil Hope by writing in more detail about the Hope and Pandora analogy. The connection between Pandora and Hope is important to understand, because within *Works and Days* Hesiod brings Hope into the world of humankind through the actions of Pandora,²⁵ as they were both gifts to Prometheus’s brother. Warman argues that Hope is an uncertainty of the future that is bad for humans to have and that those who miss the analogy of Pandora and Hope interpreted it as a good thing.²⁶

Warman furthers the interpretation of Hesiodic Hope being construed as evil by discussing what in archeology the jar would have contained. She argues that storage jars²⁷ found by modern scholars suggest that they were

²⁴ Warman parallels Pandora and Hope by stating that men will always embrace women such as Pandora and in the same way will always embrace Hope

²⁵ Warman (2004) page 112 states, “As Pandora is taken to wife by heedless Epimetheus, so, as Hesiod's image implies, Ἐλπίς is admitted into Epimetheus' house. Ἐλπίς, like a bride, lives with a man, becomes part of his household.

²⁶ Warman (2004) pages 112-113

²⁷ In Greek called πίθος

homogeneous in contents.²⁸ Thus, all the content within the jar must be evil, including Hope. Warman uses many different angles, from within the text and using other knowledge about the ancient Greek world, to bolster her argument of Hope in Pandora's story being evil for humankind.

She also discusses in the later lines of Hope, 498 and 500, to emphasize her argument of an evil Hope that men will embrace. "In dismal poverty, pondering his misery and plotting injustice. a lazy man waits for the promise of the Ἐλπίς which attends him to unfold. This Ἐλπίς is, as Vernant rightly says, 'hollow illusion'." (Warman, 115).²⁹ By bringing in these lines Warman is showing a more holistic understanding of Hope than some of the previous interpretations. Hope in this situation furthers her claim that it is evil to humankind. It seems that since a lazy human's hope is explicitly an illusion then there must be a better hope for a human who works, creating separation of when Hope, although in Warman's opinion still bad, is better than other Hopes.

Warman addresses that there can be no real good Hope for a human who heeds Hesiod's advice, "But for men there can be no 'legitimate confidence' in what is to come. The possibility of error, of delusion, is always there" (Warman, 115-116). This aspect of Hope where there is no way to

²⁸ Warman (2004) page 113

²⁹ Warman cites Vernant 1980 here

escape evil is engrained in how humans negotiate with the future. For example, a farmer who practices good farming techniques can still have a bad harvest no matter how hard he works. The sense of failure and the future not keeping its side of the bargain is always there. The Hope of a farmer who works hard will have a higher probability of having a better future than a farmer who does not work hard, but the point that Warman is trying to make is that no human knows exactly what the future holds, thus there can be no such thing as good Hope. This is emphasized by Warman, “Hesiod expresses himself in terms of Ἐλπίς... to show how deeply the world has plunged into uncertainty. Inspiration offers little security to the poet facing the future.” (Warman, 116). The understanding of the uncertainty of the future is very important in regards to the interpretation of Hope because as the previous quote states, even if humans were to work his hardest for a better future, the possibility of failure is always present. Therefore, even if Hope was good for humankind, Warman’s would argue that there is still evil in that Hope due to the uncertainty of the future.

Warman’s interpretation of how Hesiod intended to portray Hope to his audience can be summarized as a feeling of uncertainty about the future that is bad for humans to fully embrace, because it is not helpful in creating a better future. For a lazy human will cling to Hope for a better tomorrow and do nothing to reach what he hopes for, while a human who works for a better

future will still not know whether what he is working for will bring prosperity or ruin. While Warman gives an excellent account as to her interpretation of Hesiodic Hope being a bane to humankind, she does not go to the next step as to what humankind is to do if this is the truth. The logic of only an evil Hope exists, as shown in the discussion of Canevaro's descriptions of the interpretations of Hope, can lead to a very dark ending.

***“τόφρα οἱ ἐλπὶς ἔθελγε”*: *The Elusive Nature of Imprisoned Hope* by
J. LaRae Ferguson**

Ferguson began his paper *“τόφρα οἱ ἐλπὶς ἔθελγε”*: *The Elusive Nature of Imprisoned Hope* about Hope in *Works and Days* with a summary from Jenifer Neils³⁰ of four major interpretations in the debate over whether Hope is good or bad. The first option is a Hope that is positive and stored for humankind, although is un-Hesiodic. The next argument is a good Hope, but it is kept from humankind as additional punishment. The third and fourth options are a false Hope for humankind, where the former is a false Hope reserved just for humans, and the latter is a false Hope being kept from humans.³¹ These four interpretations differ from Canevaro's four interpretations by focusing on Hope and why it is in the jar,³² rather than Canevaro discussing the contents of the jar and Hope. Ferguson concludes

³⁰ Neils (2005)

³¹ This is from Ferguson (2016) but is cited from Neils (2005) in that paper

³² In the jar as in “reserved for humans” or “kept from humans”

that Hope is best interpreted as the third option from Neil, false Hope reserved for humankind.

Ferguson argues against the first and second interpretation of Hesiodic Hope by citing its second personification in lines 498 and 500. Since lines 498 and 500 are the only times Hope is used in this manner, Hesiod may have thought of the connection between the two. As Ferguson writes, “Although editors rarely capitalize ἐλπίς in this passage, it must be taken into consideration whether Hesiod might not be working with the same personified ἐλπίς that he portrayed earlier in the myth” (Ferguson, 8). Lines 498 and 500 are said to represent a bad sense of Hope, which Canevaro and Warman allude to as well. It would be logical that if Hope is used in a negative connotation in one part of the text that it would be used the same in another. Ferguson furthers this argument by observing that Hesiod makes no positively connotated aspect of Hope, and therefore “she [Hope] is in no way out of place in the jar of humankind’s evils” (Ferguson, 9). Ferguson continues this argument by citing other works such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* which also do not contain a very explicit positive connotation of Hope.³³ Therefore, Hope must be thought of as evil for humankind.

Ferguson then writes about what differentiates Hope from the other evils by agreeing with Warman (2004) that the difference lies in how it

³³ Ferguson (2016) pg. 9-14

associates with humankind,³⁴ and the analogy of Hope with Pandora.³⁵

However, Ferguson expands on Warman's interpretation of Hope as evil by stating what is to be learned from Hesiod's portrayal of Hope. In this way, by stating that Hope associates with humankind, Ferguson argues against option four that Hope is being kept away from humans, yet is reserved for humankind. Ferguson page eighteen states,

“This focus on the tasks of the present will in turn produce a more secure future and better chances that one's hopeful expectations will be fulfilled. Instead of dreaming about possible goods that the future may bring, Hesiod enjoins Perses to prepare himself now for the evils that are inevitable. Ironically, this 'pessimistic' viewpoint provides human beings with their only secure hope for the future.”

Here Ferguson expands on the previously mentioned notion that a human working for the future will have a better Hope than a lazy human as mentioned in lines 498 and 500, differing from Warman's interpretation. The lesson in *Works and Days* from Ferguson's paper is that Hope is useless from Hesiod's perspective, and will only delude those who embrace it, but if a

³⁴ The other evils within *Works and Days* differ from Hope in that “Sicknesses visit men by day, and others by night, uninvited, bringing ill to mortals, silently...” (*Works and Days*, lines 101-102).

³⁵ See discussion on the Hope in a Jar section previously discussed.

human were to focus on the tasks at hand, and understands that there will always be evils that arrive, then there could be a better future.

Ferguson argues there is a connection between Hope and toil, or strife, within *Works and Days* since Hesiod's remedy for Hope as evil is to work on the tasks at hand.³⁶ Ferguson notices this connection in the previously mentioned quotation, but expands upon it further by stating,

“...when this outward focus (on goods that one does not currently possess himself) is counterbalanced by a full recognition of the evils both near at hand and certain to come will one begin actively to engage in the work (or good Strife) that can ultimately bring about a more positive future.” (Ferguson, 19)

Ferguson has now almost shifted the interpretation of Hesiodic Hope that she previously argued for by stating that there must be some sort of understanding that evil is present and will come, but work can help create a better future. It would seem that based on the previous quote that there is an amount of hope that is helpful for a human to begin working for a better future, and that amount of Hope seems to be shown in the later lines 498 and 500. The amount of Hope that is helpful for humans is the amount that incentivizes humans, but anything more than that is deluding humans. This

³⁶ West makes this same argument as previously shown in the analysis of his paper

conclusion that Ferguson arrives at with a combination of work and Hope as Hesiod's portrayal of Hope's use for his audience does not fall in line with Ferguson stating that Hesiod depicts Hope as false Hope in Pandora's Jar. All this being said, even though Ferguson brings, in the end, a connotation of Hesiod's Hope being positive in some respect, this is inconsistent with her conclusion that Hesiodic Hope should be thought of negatively as false Hope.

Summary

These papers have provided a review of the arguments of Hope in Hesiod's *Works and Days* being good or evil. West argues for a simplistic good Hope being the antidote for Suffering. Walcot argues for a good sense of Hope because it offers humans some degree of control. Beall offers a good sense of Hope, but does not provide substantial evidence to support the claim that all the contents in the jar are in actuality good not evil. Canevaro gives a good overview of the many arguments and where they stem from for the interpretation of Hope, and in the end, argues that Hope is to be interpreted in a nuanced way of having aspects of good and evil. Warman's argument for Hope to be interpreted as evil for humankind is very good and detailed concerning evidence from the text. Ferguson's argument for Hope to be considered false Hope is good, but falters in the end by conceding that there is a positive sort of Hope that allows humans to toil for a better tomorrow.

While there are good arguments on either side as to how to interpret Hesiod's intentions for Hope in the poem, the arguments for Hope to be seen as only evil within *Works and Days* have a better argument with more textual evidence to support their claim. Warman and Ferguson go into more detail than the other researchers as to why Hesiodic Hope should be interpreted as evil for humankind, but do not successfully argue for what use Hesiod was imparting in regards to Hope. If Hesiodic Hope and its use for humans were only evil, then the future would be bleak as there would be no reason to work for a better tomorrow. The use of Hope that Hesiod is wanting to impart and has survived centuries cannot be one of doom and gloom for the future there needs to be some sort of good Hope for a better future. Thus, an interpretation similar to Canevaro's but expanded on makes sense by making Hesiodic Hope ambiguous. However, this does not explain why the only explicit examples of Hope that Hesiod depicts in context with humans are of evil Hope. The next section will dive into an extrapolation from these scholarly papers into a new interpretation of how Hesiod and the ancient Greeks thought of Hope, and how this is useful to humankind.

Analysis

The papers analyzed thus far have shown the general arguments on how to interpret Hope within Hesiod's *Works and Days*. In the previous scholarship, there were three ways for Hope to be seen from the reader's perspective, good, bad, or a mixture of both.³⁷ There are many ways to reach these conclusions by adding different passages from *Works and Days* itself, other texts which may have influenced the work, and other scholarly research on the ancient Greek world. This section hopes to build upon the previous scholarship to add a new interpretation of Hope into the conversation of the debate and expand on what use Hesiod was portraying Hope to be for his audience.

While the previous research papers interpret whether Hope is good or evil for humans, none except for Ferguson, and Canevaro to a lesser extent citing Vernant (1980), allude to how Hesiod in *Works and Days* wanted humans to use Hope. Interpreting the use of Hope would help in understanding why Hesiod thought Hope was important enough for his audience to include in the poem. This aspect of the use of Hope in the

³⁷ This differs from Canevaro and Ferguson's four part takes, because this interpretation is focusing solely on Hope then deciding the usefulness for either good, evil, or both, and not taking into account the other factors that the previous authors used to create their four buckets to look at Hope through.

scholarship is lacking and is where this section will try to build upon the conversation, along with giving an argument that Hesiodic Hope is nuanced not just only good or only evil.

Ferguson argues that there needs to be a lesson learned from *Works and Days*. “If we are to accept that the *Works and Days* is a didactic poem, then he must have some lesson in mind that he wants to impart.” (Ferguson, 17). Ferguson agrees with West that this is a didactic poem. West states, “...it is highly probable that Hesiod knew and established tradition of moral-didactic poetry...” (West, xvi). If we are to take West as the standard authority for *Works and Days*,³⁸ then it is logical to concur with Ferguson that there are lessons to be learned in *Works and Days*, which includes what Hesiod thought use of Hope is for humankind. While there were allusions that the use of Hope has to do with strife and toil, as they are some of the main themes in the story, the scholarly debate over the interpretation of Hope shows the scholarly community trying to understand whether Hope is good or evil, not what Hesiod wanted his audience to learn about why Hope matters and its use for humans. Therefore, it is worth exploring the use of Hope in *Works and Days* and how Hesiod wanted his audience to interact with Hope.

³⁸ See footnote 7

Canevaro and Ferguson's research each highlight a use that is to be learned about Hope from *Works and Days*. Canevaro does this by citing Vernant (1980) in an interpretation of Hope being good for humankind: Hope "can help mankind understand their own human condition as it distinguishes men from omniscient gods who have no need for expectation, and men from beasts which are unaware of their own mortality" (Canevaro, 115).³⁹ While Canevaro uses this argument to say that good Hope helps humans understand themselves from an existential perspective being different from other animals, she does not give a reason as to how this is the case, nor what humans are supposed to do with this understanding.⁴⁰ If the definition of Hope is emotional uncertainty of the future,⁴¹ then this use of Hope that only creates a difference between humans, gods, and beasts is not useful to humans in their negotiation with the future because it does not help humans understand whether Hope will help him lead to a better tomorrow. Therefore, Canevaro does not add to the conversation of what Hesiod's use for Hope or why this would be important to a reader of *Works and Days*.

Ferguson argues that the importance of Hope and how it is to be used ties in with one of the main themes, toil or work, as the solution to alleviate her interpretation of Hesiodic Hope being evil. The use of Hesiodic Hope in

³⁹ Canevaro cites this from Vernant 1980

⁴⁰ Perhaps Vernant (1980) goes into this detail

⁴¹ Warman (2004)

Ferguson's interpretation is, "in a turning of one's eyes from future hopes and possibilities to the difficulties of the present, to the work at hand that requires immediate engagement. This focus on the tasks of the present will in turn produce a more secure future and better chances that one's hopeful expectations will be fulfilled." (Ferguson, 18). This conclusion makes sense as the logical conclusion for Ferguson, the idea of Hope being evil to humankind and in order to try to save humans from this false Hope, Hesiod entreats humans to focus on the present trials instead of the uncertain future. However, in this conclusion Hope does not seem to be entirely evil as Ferguson argues, because focusing on present work will give a better chance for success in achieving a better future.

Ferguson's argument on the use of Hope in *Works and Days* does not explicitly use Hope in a human's life to make it better or worse nor in any thinking of the future and focuses on present work to achieve a better future, discarding Hope entirely. However, this is not consistent with humankind's relationship with Hope because when humans make a decision the results of that decision are in the uncertain future, thus there is a sense of Hope in every decision a human makes. Ferguson does not make this connection, she instead argues that work, without Hope or any thought of the future, will combat the evil of Hope. However, Warman, who Ferguson cites extensively, argues that even a human who works is subject to the evil of Hope and that

all the hard work a human does could be for nothing. Warman states, “But for men there can be no “legitimate confidence” in what is to come. The possibility of error, of delusion, is always there.” (Warman, 115-116).

Ferguson is arguing that if one focuses on the work that needs to be done in the present then the future will be better, but Warman refutes that claim because the future is so uncertain.

Ferguson’s argument does not consider the relationship between humankind, work, and Hope in the sense that humans work for results that will lead to a better life in the future.⁴² For example, a farmer can work as hard as possible at farming but still is reliant on the future bringing a harvest that will be beneficial even before deciding to plow. The farmer is negotiating through his Hope with the future that there will be a beneficial harvest, but he can never truly know the outcome beforehand. Thus, Ferguson’s lesson tells the reader to just focus on the present and not to think about the future as Hope leads to thinking of the future not working for it. This conclusion is the same as West’s, yet West and Ferguson interpret Hope differently as the solution to suffering and as an evil to humans, respectively. However, work is done in the present with the Hope of a beneficial future

⁴² The word “Work” is used in the argument against Ferguson’s lesson as to give it in the context of Hesiod and Ferguson’s work, however this can be replaced with the word “Decision”. The idea is that humankind is always living in the ever-present future, that a decision now is reflected in a future action, as actions can not come before the decision to take that action.

that no one can be certain of in mind. Therefore, Ferguson does not provide an example of how Hesiod wanted his audience to use Hope, as work is inherently related to the future because the decision to work is made with the future in mind and so Hope is involved in every decision and cannot be ignored, and thus, Ferguson missed Hesiod's objective trying to impart to his audience how to use Hope.

To summarize, Canevaro's interpretation on Hesiod's intentions toward the relation of how man is to use the good Hope she argues for falls short of describing Hesiod's description of this relationship. Ferguson's evil Hesiodic Hope does not seem so evil, and thus cannot be separated from decisions as they inherently are about the future, and thus, there must be a good Hope in Ferguson's interpretation of Hesiod's use of Hope that is not mentioned.

Hope and the future must be invariably intertwined because any decision that humans make will create a result which lies in the uncertain future since time works linearly. Whenever a human makes a decision, he hopes that the result for which he made the decision comes true in the uncertain future. Thus, Hope is innate in every human as all humans make a decision to which results will come after the decision due to the linearity of time. This connection between Hope and the future is what Ferguson did not see in her interpretation on Hesiod's use for Hope. While Warman defines

Hope as emotionally tinged uncertainty about the future, she does not speak on how humans are to use Hope in decisions. Therefore, it is important to look into what usefulness Hope is to bring to humankind as it is present in all decisions.

To understand why Hesiod thought Hope was important in human decisions, it is important to consider the history of Hope in *Works and Days*, and thus, why Hope was created in Pandora's story. Warman⁴³ and Walcot⁴⁴ allude that the reason why Pandora was created is important to Hesiod, and so Pandora is important to understand the purpose of Hope. As Walcot's emphasizes, the reason that Pandora was created was as punishment for humankind due to Prometheus's indiscretion against Zeus.⁴⁵ However, the poem's description of the beginning of the evils alludes more to the association of the punishment with the ills Pandora unleashes rather than women. The poem states "To set against the fire I shall give them an affliction in which they will all delight as they embrace their own misfortune"

⁴³ "The comparison of Ἔλπις to Pandora, taken together with the contrast between Ἔλπις and diseases, permits the inference that Hesiod regards Ἔλπις as an attractive evil" (Warman, 108).

⁴⁴ "The occurrence of the story of Prometheus and Pandora in both the *Erga* (*Works and Days*) and the *Theogony* suggests that this theme had a particular attraction for their author Hesiod" (Walcot, 249).

⁴⁵ In the *Erga* (*Works and Days*) we learn that after her creation Pandora was brought by Hermes to the Titan Epimetheus. He received her, and ignored the warning of his brother Prometheus, who had told him to accept no gift from Zeus" (Walcot, 249).

(*W&D*, 57-59). If Hesiod spoke of Pandora as someone that all men embrace despite their misery then it would make sense that Pandora is the evil that Zeus spoke of, but after Pandora puts the lid back on the jar she is not mentioned again. However, the ills that threaten humankind are mentioned after this event, especially the strife that afflicts humans.⁴⁶ Therefore, an affliction that humans will delight in when there is the despair of life seems to be more associated with the Hope that is left in the jar and not that of Pandora.

When using West's aforementioned argument that Hesiod believes the lot of humankind is to toil,⁴⁷ and Walcot's mentioning of Prometheus as symbolic for Perses to heed Hesiod's advice,⁴⁸ then it would make sense that Hesiod wrote of an "empty Hope" as in lines 498-502 and was giving a warning of the consequences that this Hope can give, such as ills and lack of sustenance. This Hope can be defined by how Warman describes Hope, as "deceptive expectations" (Warman), as humans are being deceived by Hope (the affliction) and thus is taking delight in it in their misfortunes (their expectations).

⁴⁶ Lines 498-500 of *Works and Days* when Hope is mentioned again

⁴⁷ West page xiii

⁴⁸ "If he pays no heed to Hesiod's admonition, his position will be the same as that of Epimetheus, when he too spurned a brother's counsel" (Walcot, 249)

By understanding why Zeus, according to Hesiod, has given Hope as an affliction to humankind, the use of Hope can be that it gives humans too optimistic of a viewpoint when making decisions. This is consistent with Warman and Ferguson's arguments that Hope is evil for humans, and the false Hope shown in lines 498 and 500 of *Works and Days* is the warning that Hesiod is trying to teach. Even if the interpretation of Hope is that Hope is evil, then there must be a use of Hope in decision making by thinking of Hope in this negative light. Ferguson alludes to Hesiod's use of Hope if it is seen as evil, "This fundamental belief that misfortune is never far from anyone underlies what I see to be Hesiod's persistent mistrust of ἐλπίς, 'hopeful expectation'" (Ferguson, 3).⁴⁹ The use of Hope from Hesiod in Ferguson's paper is to be skeptical of one's view of the future when making decisions, and trying to understand where one is being unrealistic. Thus, the usefulness of Hope is to be a gauge to help understand what the future may foretell.

Lines 498 and 500 are used to show the skeptical nature of what it does to the decisions humans makes. For instance, the workshy man is making the decision to be workshy and is deluded due to the emotional belief that the uncertain future will be good without doing anything to make it better.⁵⁰ Hesiod's imparts to be skeptical of this belief that any decision will

⁴⁹ This is in reference 4 on the page

⁵⁰ Hesiod lines 498-500

be good in the future, this skepticism of good Hope and the future is emphasized by the aforementioned Warman quote on the future of the human who works when Hope is believed to be evil, where hard work can still lead to nothing. This, however, still leads to the problem with Ferguson, that a human still has to act with the future in mind, thus there has to be some good sort of Hope, this is not mentioned in lines 498 and 500, because if the future is just full of evil, then there is no incentive to create a better future, which is where Warman and Ferguson's arguments would have led.

Even though the argument that Hope is evil is strong, the argument of a good Hope should be looked into for usefulness as well, because even though the previous argument cited Pandora's Hope is evil, there is still some ambiguity to this claim. Canevaro states, "That Elpis remains in the jar is ambiguous" (Canevaro, 117). Taken within Canevaro's context which is a full interpretative translation of *Works and Days* the idea that Hope could be either good or bad is still an option. West's opinion that Hope is the cure for suffering is of a positive connotation for Hope, and he specifically relates this to Pandora's jar. The usefulness of a belief in a good Hope is the optimism that tomorrow will be better than today and that a decision is made with that belief. This argument is alluded to by Beall: "...what is good is, not something seen in isolation, but that which combats what is evil." (Beal, 229). This belief and quotation intertwine with the idea that Hope remained to help combat

evil, as Beall's interpretation was that of a good Hope. This creates the idea that if one were to believe in a good expectation (Hope) of the uncertain future then evils of the world can be combatted. Walcot expresses this idea, "Only Hope was left behind, and it is only with Hope that we retain a degree of control so that we can make either a good or a bad thing of it." (Walcot, 251). Hope as a good for humankind is used to retain a sense of control of the future, and to help humans combat evils and the uncertainty of the future. This argument is only from the interpretation of Hope in Pandora's jar, whereas lines 498 and 500 are associated with false Hope. As such, there is an ambiguity and duality that both Canevaro and Beall speak of, respectively, but the only example that Hesiod gives as a warning is of the evil false Hope.

As the previous arguments from Warman and Ferguson have given strong support for humans to believe that Hope is bad for them when making decisions based on how Hesiod wanted his audience to perceive Hope, there seems to be, as Beall alludes, both a good and bad form of Hope. Hesiod, however, only gives an example of the negative aspects of Hope in lines 498 and 500, but within the story of *Works and Days*, he alludes to a good Hope when one works. West translation of an example states, "Work is no reproach, but not working is a reproach; and if you work, it will readily come about that a workshy man will envy you..." (*W&D*, 309-311). In this example,

Hesiod is telling the reader what happens when a human believes in a good hope in their decisions, which is that if one believes in a beneficial Hope and works for it then the human can become better. This differs from Ferguson's argument because Ferguson completely discounted Hope from the steps of becoming better.

While there is still the possibility of Warman's argument of failure always being there (Warman, 115-116), which is supported further by Hesiod: "And do not put all your substance in ships' holds, but leave the greater part and ship the lesser; for it is a fearful thing to meet with disaster among the waves of the sea..." (*W&D*, 688-691). Yet, Hesiod gives a reason as to why a good Hope is needed for humans to carry to counter his example of what an evil Hope can do to humans in lines 498 and 500. A good Hope must be present in humankind as an incentive to "work, work upon work" (*W&D*, 383), and give a reason why humans should work toward and believe in a better future. This sense of a good Hope in lines 302-318 and lines 382-383 of *Works and Days* is implied in Hesiod's advice to Perses. However, Hesiod understood the dark side of Hope⁵¹ that could lead to inaction due to despair and deceptive expectations about the future and wanted humans to vigilant against false Hope.

⁵¹ Shown in lines 498-500

Thus, the use of Hope Hesiod imparts within the text of *Works and Days* is to be skeptical of the Hope that one believes in for an uncertain future, for Hope can incentivize humans to act, but also delude humans into an unrealistic expectation of what the uncertain future could hold. Therefore, the usefulness of Hope Hesiod imparts within the text is to be used as an understanding of a human's forecast into what the uncertain future holds, but Hesiod cautions his audience to heed his warning of false Hope that creates inaction and to focus on the present work, which will bring a better chance for good Hope to be realized in the future.⁵²

In short, humans hope for the results of his decision to come true in the uncertain future, or he would not make that decision. Thus, Hope is present either before or simultaneously with the decision. Therefore, Hope is innate in every human as all humans must make a decision to do anything, and the results will come after the decision due to the linearity of time. Because the explicit examples of Hope in *Works and Days* are evil⁵³, this implies Hesiod thought humankind's innate expectation about the future when making decisions is false Hope. However, if all Hope was false Hope and evil to humans, this would make the future futile due to a lack of belief that tomorrow could be better, yet Hesiod tells Perses that to have a better

⁵² Lines 302-318 in *Works and Days*

⁵³ Lines 498 and 500

tomorrow he needs to work⁵⁴. This would imply that Hesiod thinks that there can be a better tomorrow, ergo a good Hope, which is shown in lines 302-318 of *Works and Days*. Thus, a more nuanced understanding of Hope is needed in order to understand the use of Hope Hesiod is trying to impart.

A nuanced understanding and belief of Hesiod's Hope allows for the possibility of a good Hope that incentivizes a human to work for a better tomorrow, but also the false Hope that deludes a human into inaction or unrealistic expectations. Therefore, Hesiod is trying to impart to his audience to Hope for a better tomorrow only if it is backed by work and action,⁵⁵ and if the expectations are realistic and pragmatic Hope will not delude oneself to attain a better future,⁵⁶ but even then, there is a false hope that the actions will not be fruitful.⁵⁷ It would make sense why Hesiod explicitly warns his audience to be vigilant against false Hope as there is always this chance of failure, as false Hope could lead to despair or delusion in reality and this sense of failure is always present.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ "If your spirit in your breast yearns for riches, do as follows, and work, work upon work" (*Works and Days*, 382-383)

⁵⁵ "Gods and men disapprove of that man who lives without working..." (*Works and Days*, 302-303)

⁵⁶ "It is from work that men are rich in flocks and wealthy, and a working man is much dearer to the immortals" (*Works and Days*, 307-309)

⁵⁷ Warman (2004)

⁵⁸ "And do not put all your substance in ships' holds, but leave the greater part and ship the lesser; for it is a fearful thing to meet with disaster among the waves of the sea..." (*Works and Days*, 688-691)

Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the major arguments concerning the scholarly debate on the interpretation of Hope within Hesiod's poem *Works and Days*, constructed another interpretation of Hesiodic Hope from within the text, and considered the use of Hope for humans. Beginning with an introduction to the parts of the text in question, the story of Pandora's jar, specifically line 96, and Hesiod's example of what false Hope does to humans in lines 498 and 500.

The literature review section discussed past research on whether Hesiod's portrayal of Hope should be considered good or evil. Starting with West's commentary and translation of *Works and Days*, West argues that the Hope presented in Pandora's story is Hesiod's antidote to suffering for humankind. Thus, Hope is good for humans. Walcot's argument describes Hesiod's work in connection with other works of his own and other authors around his time. Walcot concludes that, while the Greeks understood Hope could be both good and bad, Hope should be interpreted as a good thing left for humans to have some control over what the uncertain future may hold. Beall's argument, while useful, was not as straightforward as the others, but in the end, he held that not only did the jar contain good spirits, but that Hope was good as well because the argument over Hope does not matter if all the contents are initially stated as good. Canevaro's interpretation of West's

translation of *Works and Days* gave good insight into the meaning of Hope in Pandora's story as being ambiguous, but the example in lines 498 and 500 shows false Hope. Also, Canevaro gave a good oversight into what some of the main ways to think about the interpretation, even if she did not go into the same detail for all of them equally. In her well detailed paper Warman explained why Hope in *Works in Days* should be thought of as evil for humankind because it deludes humans into false expectations about what the future holds. However, Warman does not expand upon this to interpret how Hesiod entailed his audience to use Hope. Lastly, Ferguson, building upon many of the previous works, gives another good example of how Hesiod portrays Hope as evil for humankind and tries to explain the lessons which Hesiod tries to give the readers in regards to how to use Hope as connected to work and toil.

An analysis Hesiod's portrayal of Hope in *Works and Days* and the arguments of the scholarly debate on how to interpret Hesiodic Hope were the main objectives of the "Analysis" section. It began with an explanation as to what it was trying to add to the conversation of the debate on Hesiodic Hope, which was an interpretation on Hesiodic Hope and the usefulness of Hope whether it is good or bad along. Hesiod's imparting of the usefulness of Hope and how it affects humans is not clearly shown in Ferguson who gives the best example of trying to explain this Hesiod's guidance. Then a

discussion of bad Hope and good Hope follows and explains why Hope cannot be thought of as only one or the other, along with the prevalence of each in the text, as it seems that Hope as evil is more explicitly apparent within *Works and Days*. However, the argument is made that good Hope was implied through the text.⁵⁹ Therefore, the use of Hesiodic Hope in *Works and Days* that Hesiod wanted to impart upon his audience is that a good Hope is needed and inherent for humans to be incentivized to pursue a better future, but Hesiod heeds a warning to be skeptical of this Hope and guard against it as Hope can delude a human's expectations toward the future as it leads to inaction and wishful thinking.

Even though, there is a never-ending sense of failure in Hesiodic Hope,⁶⁰ humans must believe that there is going to be a better tomorrow even in the direst of circumstances. Because if humankind believed the future would never get better then the logic would lead to death,⁶¹ but humans would not want to spend life suffering with no chance of relief, and due to the abundance of humans, death does not seem to be the end of logical thinking. Something within humans keeps them from believing the future is absolutely desolate. This could be seen as a curse put upon humankind to always believe

⁵⁹ Lines 302-318 and 382-383 of *Works and Days*

⁶⁰ "And do not put all your substance in ships' holds, but leave the greater part and ship the lesser; for it is a fearful thing to meet with disaster among the waves of the sea..." (*Works and Days*, 688-691)

⁶¹ See footnote 19 on Nietzsche in the Canervaro section

that tomorrow could be better, against all logic, when giving up would be so much easier. Yet, even with all the suffering throughout history that humans have experienced, humankind has carried on and fought against the despair of a nonexistent future. So, it seems that Hesiod was correct in his story of Pandora, through all the suffering humans encounter, all of the uncertainty that the future holds, all the despair that humans could feel in their current predicament, all of the delusions that could separate humans from reality, all of the banes and evils that transpire through life, Hope remains.⁶²

As a result, this paper has argued that Hesiod's Hope can be seen in different ways through *Works and Days*, and due to this the usefulness of a nuanced Hope is better suited to help Hesiod's audience. Hesiod teaches to be very wary of one's expectations of the future because of the evil Hope can bring to life. However, that does not mean that a human should abandon all Hope, for Hope is present in every decision due to the results of these decisions being in the future. Hope always being present is why Hesiod wrote that Hope remained, for humans need to embrace the Hope that the future will be better even if it is detrimental to himself, less he loses his life to the bleakness of the future.

⁶² Allusion to the Pandora story where "Hope Remains" (*Works and Days*, 96), where even though there are ills and evils throughout the world affecting humans, they still have Hope against these ills

Hesiod wrote Hope as a necessary evil needed as some sort of good for humankind to work for a better future, even if that future never appears, or the logic will lead to death.⁶³ Humankind, according to Hesiod, is living on an edge where on either side is evil Hope. Too much Hope can lead to a delusion that disconnects a human from reality, and too little Hope can lead a human to despair about a future that will never become better. Thus, Hesiod cautions his audience to be very vigilant against this evil Hope. He advises living on the edge where there is a good Hope, one that incentivizes and motivates a human to take action for a better future and connects him with reality. Tragically this good Hope could still lead to disappointment and failure, which explains Hesiod's vigorous explicit examples of guarding against false Hope. Yet, Hesiod understood that Hope remains as a tragically beautiful necessity for humans to keep on living.

⁶³ See footnote 19 on Nietzsche in the Canervaro section

Author's Note

I'd like to thank everyone who helped me through my undergraduate education and my work with this thesis. It was interesting to write about Hope for my undergraduate thesis. I analyzed a literary symbol in the poem from a historical perspective, trying to find a more economic frame to understand Hope, and argued for a more philosophical lesson for Hope on action and skepticism, which is pretty cool.

I spent many afternoons outside the Hub at CMC's campus discussing the subject with my friends, trying to understand why man always seemed to Hope for a better future, even if Hope itself was bad as is easy to believe in Hesiod's *Works and Days*. Its timing was impeccable, to come to a college senior about to head into the world full of aspirations, to a time when many expectations about college were realized and many were not realized. It puts a new perspective on how to think about the future. It is quite amazing that man triumphed over man of the obstacles that have come up through life, and never give up, but at the same time, there have been many who have experienced ruin due to being deluded about the future. It is a fine line that we walk between despair and delusion, and the ancients seem to have understood this to the extent that they were able to write about it. On one side of the line, there is despair, the evil of Hope which leads to the belief that the future can never be better, and on the other is delusion where the belief of the future is too unrealistic that it is not helpful. We must walk the line to have a fruitful future and believe that it can happen, but we must remember how uncertain the future is and that even if we work for this future it could still lead to disappointment. My argument for there to be an implied Hope in *Works and Days* came from after reading the arguments and the texts thinking, if Hope is so explicitly evil to man, then why should I care about the future becoming better? There had to be something more that was missing but presumably understood.

After studying the text, it seemed that Hope in relation to man rested on a knife's blade, thus the reason for the title. One side of the knife is despair which comes from a bad Hope in the form of too little Hope that the future will be better or no Hope at all. The other side is delusion which comes from too much Hope and gives man unrealistic expectations about the future that will never come true. Hope resting on the knife blade represents the fact that even if man has the correct amount of Hope for motivation to keep striving, but not too much to be delusional, man can still fail, thus the knife cutting into Hope. Hesiod warns us about the many pitfalls that can come from Hope and that Hope can even be malicious to man. Yet, he still teaches us that in a world full of uncertainties and evils that "work, work upon work" is the only way we can Hope to have a chance at keeping the evils of the world at bay and achieve a better future, even if it never works out, but whether good or evil, Hope remains.

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