

The Children of Night and of Strife: Hesiod, *Theogony*, 211–232

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1. This is a shorter version of the one which will be published in *Philologica*, 20 (2025), in full. It argues that the list of the children of Night and of Strife is not so haphazardly catalogued by Hesiod as H. J. Rose remarks: ‘Hesiod gives also a whole list of abstractions mostly unconnected with myth and cult alike, and their relations to one another’. Genealogy is a simple method to describe the world in order.

2. A true god (1) has his/her own precinct (and shrine) in a special location where the rites have been held in strict manners from ancient times, and (2) his/her power can be felt directly so that it is crystalised in myth, and (3) his/her name is a proper noun. But the names are occasionally analysed into common nouns to seek the nature of the god because etymology has not lost its force till the age of Empedocles or Aeschylus. The abstractions have some characteristics in common with the true gods.

3. An ‘abstract’ god, especially the one which denotes ‘to desire’ or ‘to detest’, like Ἴμερος or Νέυκος, is able to connote four meanings: (1) the feeling which a person conceives (2) the object which the person desires/detests (3) the force, or impulse, which drives him to accomplish/reject it (4) the action which he desires/detests to acquire. They can be applied to other gods. Λήθη, for example, is not only forgetfulness but also the force which makes a person forget and the objects which he forgets.

4. Some of the ‘abstract’ gods are related to each other in myth, like Μῶμος or Ἔρις. Some others are associated with the social situation of Hesiod’s age: Ἀπάτη, Φιλότης, Γῆρας. Two principles, mythical narrative and the natures of the gods, are not separated in the catalogue. The confusion between them is not strange once the abstract, being treated as a god, is imagined to be personal, free to feel or act. Another confusion is observed in the genealogical catalogue: parent as the cause of children and the resemblance of the children born from the same parent.

5. Hesiod does not intend to show his original view of the world. Rather he seeks the true classification of the components of the world.