

The Mekone Scene in the *Theogony*: Prometheus as Prankster

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AN INTERESTING CRUX of Hesiodic scholarship has been the interpretation of the banquet scene at Mekone (*Theogony* 535ff). One of its problematic points is Prometheus' division of the sacrificial ox into two unequal and deceptive portions and the subsequent distribution of these portions:

535 Καὶ γὰρ ὄτ' ἐκρίνοντο θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ' ἄνθρωποι
Μηκώνῃ, τότε ἔπειτα μέγαν βούν πρόφροσι θυμῶ
δασσάμενος προὔθηκε, Διὸς νόον ἐξαπαφίσκων.
τῶ μὲν γὰρ σάρκας τε καὶ ἔγκατα πίονα δημῶ
ἐν ῥίνῳ κατέθηκε καλύψας γαστρὶ βοείῃ,
540 τῶ δ' αὐτ' ὅστέα λευκὰ βοὸς δολίῃ ἐπὶ τέχνῃ
εὐθεισας κατέθηκε καλύψας ἀργέτι δημῶ.

According to the manuscripts, Prometheus gives a fair-seeming but worthless portion τῶ μὲν (538) and an inferior-seeming but desirable portion τῶ δ' αὐτ' (540). To whom do these pronouns refer?

First, it is necessary to consider who is present at Mekone. Hesiod himself tells us: θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ' ἄνθρωποι (535). This immediately suggests a logical inconsistency: why use datives *singular* when gods and men are present and no individual representative of either group has been designated, at least through the completed division of the meat (541)? Half of an answer is suggested as soon as Zeus steps in (542), accounting for one τῶ, but in the absence of a corresponding participant specified as representing mankind and receiving its portion, the text leaves us at a loss whom to understand by the other τῶ.

Editors have solved the difficulty by emending the text. Beginning with Gerhard, many editors have read τοῖς instead of τῶ at line 538, on the reasoning that it is to mortals that this first-described portion ultimately goes.¹ M. L. West shrewdly perceived, however, that such

¹ E. Gerhard, *Hesiodi Theogonia* (Berlin 1856); G. F. Schoemann, *Die hesiodische Theogonie* (Berlin 1868); J. Flach's rev. ed. of C. Goettling's *Hesiodi Carmina* (Leipzig 1878); F. A. Paley, *The Epics of Hesiod* (London 1883); A. Rzach, *Hesiodi Carmina*

an emendation, which has Prometheus presenting mankind with what appears to be the worse portion and Zeus with the seemingly better portion, fails adequately to motivate Zeus' dissatisfaction with the division, as expressed in line 544: West argues that if Zeus had initially received what looked like the better serving, the god would have had no occasion for complaint.² Accordingly, in his edition of the *Theogony*, West retained τῶ μέν at 538 but emended 540 to τοῖς δ' αὐτ'.³ In this he has been approved and followed by Friedrich Solmsen.⁴ Thus Zeus brings down on the gods forever the consequence of his willful choosing of what only appears to be the better portion.

Since West's alteration, there has been an attempt to defend the τῶ μέν . . . τῶ δ' of the manuscripts. Werner Kohl⁵ cites as a parallel passage *Iliad* 4.415–17, where Diomedes upbraids Sthenelos for being disrespectful to Agamemnon: Agamemnon has every right to urge us to fight, says Diomedes,

τούτῳ μὲν γὰρ κῦδος ἄμ' ἔψεται, εἴ κεν Ἀχαιοὶ
 Τρῶας δηλώσωσιν ἔλωσί τε Ἴλιον ἱρήν,
 τούτῳ δ' αὖ μέγα πένθος Ἀχαιῶν δηωθέντων.

Just as each τούτῳ here refers anaphorically to Agamemnon, so would Kohl take each τῶ in the *Theogony* passage to refer to Zeus. This identification requires, however, a wholly new interpretation of the Mekone-scene, which Kohl supplies: the action is to be understood as played out entirely between Zeus and Prometheus alone. Men and all the rest of the gods, according to Kohl, remain in the background and never take part in the actual banquet; mortals, by virtue of their special connection with Prometheus, become the beneficiaries of the portion which falls to him as a result of Zeus' choice.

(Leipzig 1884); H. G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homeric* (London 1914).

² "Hesiodea," *CQ* n.s. 11 (1961) 137–38. Of course, West is forced to dismiss as mere "comment" Hesiod's statement at lines 550–51 that Zeus saw through the trick.

³ *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford 1966). This interpretation reconciles the inconsistency of an undecivable yet deceived Zeus by positing an earlier version of the story, in which a not-yet-omniscient Zeus "was thoroughly deceived" (West *ad* 551). E. Schwartz seems to have first suggested this, "Prometheus bei Hesiod," *SitzBerlin* 1915, 143 (*Gesammelte Schriften* II [Berlin 1956] 55). Cf. also K. von Fritz, "Das Hesiodische in den Werken Hesiods," in *Entretiens Hardt* VII (Geneva 1962) 30.

⁴ *Gnomon* 40 (1968) 323; *Theogonia, Opera et Dies, Scutum* (Oxford 1970). Cf. also W. J. Verdenius, who seems *e silentio* to approve West's emendation, in "Hesiod, *Theogony* 507–616: Some Comments on a Commentary," *Mnemosyne* IV.24 (1971) 1–10.

⁵ "Der Opferbetrug des Prometheus," *Glotta* 48 (1970) 31–36.

This suggestion by Kohl is praiseworthy for its attempt to make sense of the transmitted text, but the novelty of its interpretation of the feast as a whole makes it unpersuasive. For unless the scene at Mekone is anomalous—*i.e.*, a feast featuring a sole banqueter and a private carver—we ought to be entitled to envisage it as more or less patterned after actual practice at formal dinners, where some suitably invested person or persons make a division of the slain animal, laying aside one serving for the gods, the other for mortal consumption. After this apportionment, the participants may help themselves (so *e.g.* *Il.* 9.206–21). Furthermore, the presence of mortals at Mekone, denied by Kohl, is obliquely indicated by Hesiod in the crucial and controversial term ἐκρίνοντο (535). Verdenius contends that the best way to construe ἐκρίνοντο is “they were separating.”⁶ With this view I agree: it is one of the aims of the myth to illustrate how mankind got to its present condition. Before the chain of events initiated by Prometheus’ fateful act, the great distinction between men and gods had not yet come about.⁷ That is, until this moment in cosmic history, the only difference between the two groups was their disparate life spans.⁸ The separation initiated at Mekone thus implies a union thitherto, the type of union which makes a common banquet possible in the first place. Finally, just before the ultimate degradation of man by the introduction of the first woman, men and gods are *still* regarded as together (586),⁹ just as most readers have considered them to be at Mekone.

It is of course Hesiod himself and his often tantalizingly incomplete descriptions which force us in our various ways to reconstruct the

⁶ Verdenius (*supra* n.4) 3.

⁷ As a scholiast also suggested, *θυνητός γὰρ θεός ὁ ἄνθρωπος. καὶ γὰρ ὅτε ἐκρίνοντο θεοί, ἐκρίνοντο τί θεός καὶ τί ἄνθρωπος*: H. Flach, *Glossen und Scholien zur hesiodischen Theogonie* (Leipzig 1876) 262.

⁸ So too a scholiast (405 Flach): *κατὰ τὰ μὲν τὰ ἄλλα ὅμοιοι [ἄνθρωποι] τοῖς θεοῖς ἦσαν, κατὰ δὲ τὸ μῆκος τοῦ χρόνου διήλλαττον* (unless these last words refer to the points at which gods and men were created). The more common interpretation is that ἐκρίνοντο here carries the judicial sense of ‘came for arbitration’, Prometheus serving as arbitrator in a dispute between gods and men over division of the victim. So K. Bapp, Roscher *Lex.* 3.2 3054; A. W. Mair, *Hesiod, the Poems and Fragments* (Oxford 1908) 50; Evelyn-White (*supra* n.1); P. Mazon, *Hésiode* (Paris 1928); N. O. Brown, *Hesiod’s Theogony* (New York 1953) 68; G. S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths* (Woodstock [N.Y.] 1974) 137; Joseph Fontenrose (personal communication); West is ambiguous (“a ‘settlement’ in a legal sense, though not necessarily in a legal context”). Yet how, if a golden age is not to be assumed, do men presume to dispute cases with gods? How is a banquet arranged between the two parties? Thus neither this interpretation nor that of the scholiast and Verdenius is without difficulties. The obscurity is due to Hesiod’s own failure to present the situation clearly, and no interpretation resting on the solitary word ἐκρίνοντο can stand secure.

⁹ But *cf.* West *ad loc.*: “I see no reason to suppose that Hesiod is still thinking of the assembly at Mecone.”

framework of his total meaning. It is especially in passages involving dichotomies that the greatest ambiguity lies—witness the notorious difficulties involved in deducing the referents in the fable of the hawk and the nightingale, or in unraveling the precise valuations to be assigned to hope and the evils, containment and freedom, in the story of Pandora's jar. Here, too, in the Mekone scene, we are dealing with a similar case, where the differences between polar opposites (the two portions) are blurred by disguise, hedging (Zeus' alleged penetration of the disguise yet rage upon actual discovery, 550–55), and recipients designated by an enigmatic τῶ μὲν . . . τῶ δ'. Small wonder students of Hesiod have sought a way out of the involuted obscurity by emendation.

But not all editors since Gerhard have thought it necessary to alter a τῶ to a τοῖς. Aly, Jacoby,¹⁰ and Mazon retained τῶ . . . τῶ, Mazon translating “pour l'un . . . pour l'autre.” In other words, some have thought that the text offers a possible meaning as it stands and that that meaning is not specific as to the recipients of the two portions.¹¹ Kohl remarks that this was how most editors prior to 1850 understood the scene, but in the absence of an exact parallel, where an imprecise *hic . . . illic*, ‘here . . . there’ sense of τῶ μὲν . . . τῶ δέ could be shown, such an interpretation of the words has come to be rejected for the passage in the *Theogony*.¹² I shall argue that Hesiod himself can have sung τῶ . . . τῶ, as the MSS. report, that he need have had no specific referent in mind for each τῶ, and that such a reading compels us to a new understanding of the whole scene at Mekone.

What is required to support the possibility that Hesiod intended no precise referent for each τῶ in the lines at issue are passages in archaic hexameter poetry where a pair of characters referred to in ὁ μὲν . . . ὁ δέ clauses cannot be distinguished from each other. There are several such examples in Homer, at least one in Hesiod.

During his *aristeia* Diomedes meets a series of paired fighters (*Il.* 5.144ff). The first pair, Astynooos and Hypeiron, are killed within three lines of their introduction, the one (τὸν μὲν) by a spear-thrust

¹⁰ W. Aly, *Hesiods Theogonie* (Heidelberg 1913); F. Jacoby, *Hesiodi Theogonia* (Berlin 1930).

¹¹ This was also Paley's (*supra* n.1) understanding of the text, though he thought τοῖς μὲν . . . τῶ δ' “a safer and better reading.”

¹² Kohl (*supra* n.5) 32. F. Guyet, called by West (*supra* n. 2) 137 “the most brilliant textual critic ever to approach Hesiod,” suggested τῆ μὲν . . . τῆ δ', undaunted by the ambiguity of the MSS. reading and determined to preserve the then-accepted non-specifying sense by a familiar adverbial phrase (in J. G. Graevius, *Hesiodi Ascræi quae extant* [Amsterdam 1667]).

above the breast, the other (τὸν δ') by a sword-swipe between shoulder and neck. The poet has brought them on only to serve as easy victims for the rampaging Diomedes; he has taken no interest in characterizing them. The mode of death of each is unknowable because it is not important to the poet. Similarly, at 20.460–62, Achilles attacks two brothers and quickly disposes of them, τὸν μὲν δουρὶ βαλὼν, τὸν δὲ σχεδὸν ἄορι τύψας. Again, we cannot determine who dies in which way, the poet's focus being merely the speed with which the hero dispatches all who meet him. Nor is it easily-vanquished warriors alone who share the ignominy of an indistinct lot in Homer: in his youth, the only event in which Nestor suffered defeat at the funeral games of Amaryngkeus was in the chariot-race, where the twin sons of Aktor shared the charioteer's duties (23.638–42). Which brother (or which half of the Siamese twins) held the reins and which lashed the horses cannot be determined and is immaterial; all that we are to know is that one performed one function, the other the other (ὁ μὲν . . . ὁ δέ). In the same way, the two men involved in a legal dispute on the shield of Achilles (18.497ff) are to be visualized in whatever way we please, the essential thing for Homer being only the opposition embodied by the pair, not their individuality.

An objection must be anticipated here, the rule that the referents in a ὁ μὲν . . . ὁ δέ clause can be determined by the distance of the pronouns from their antecedents. This rule is not hard and fast, however: West claims, in support of his contention that the first τῶ is authentic and must refer to Zeus, that the pronouns function as *hic* and *ille*, the nearer antecedent picked up by the first τῶ; Denniston formulates the supposed rule in exactly contrary terms. LSJ gives both possibilities.¹³ Various examples in Homer attest to the unpredictable functioning of demonstratives so used.¹⁴ Amid such variability, it is impossible to say that an ancient audience would associate a particular one of two antecedents with either element of a ὁ μὲν . . . ὁ δέ clause, unless there were some clear contextual reason to do so.

The most pertinent example in Hesiod where two creatures are characterized as complementary, but where it remains impossible and unnecessary to try to decide which description applies to which crea-

¹³ " . . . it is characteristic for the first pronoun to refer to the last person named" (West *ad* 538). "ὁ μὲν normally refers to the first, ὁ δέ to the second substantive," J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*² (Oxford 1954) 370–71. LSJ *s.v.* ὁ, ἡ, τό A.VI.

¹⁴ ὁ μὲν referring to nearer person: *Il.* 4.439, 4.537, 15.329–31 (*cf.* 2.494–95, 13.195); to farther person: 2.620–21, (*cf.* 13.185–86), 13.581–85, 20.105–07. *Cf.* also *Theog.* 632–33 and 702–04, which exemplify the latter behavior, contrary to West's generalization.

ture, is at *Theogony* 750f, where Night and Day are thus described with respect to their passage over the heavenly threshold: ἡ μὲν ἔσω καταβήσεται, ἡ δὲ θύραζε ἔρχεται. Here of course the actions are interchangeable, but it is important to accept that this is a passage where we cannot decide which divinity is designated by each pronoun. As with the instances in Homer, a pair of demonstratives used in conjunction with μὲν . . . δέ does not always point to particular persons or things. Often the poet appears solely to have intended to depict a complementary relationship; where the author himself has not troubled to pin down a referent for each pronoun, our own attempt must be fruitless. I am suggesting that in the Mekone scene of the *Theogony* the emphasis is entirely on the unequal portions rather than on who specifically gets which portion.

Another, stronger objection to the thesis presented thus far is that the examples adduced above as proof that early epic poets did not always clarify unimportant distinctions each involve only two individuals as antecedents, whereas in the passage of the *Theogony* under discussion we have two groups, gods and men, from which the referents in τῷ μὲν . . . τῷ δ' must be deduced. Though the argument which follows will attempt to show why Hesiod can have meant pronouns in the dative singular masculine to signify almost 'to the one side . . . to the other', intentionally avoiding specificity, logic requires that there be some individual who can stand as referent, along with Zeus and as the chief god's opposite number, for either τῷ equally well. I suggest as the most likely candidate for this role Epimetheus: that he is present at the banquet is deducible from 511–14, where he is said to have received the first woman, from 535, where the gathering of gods and men is mentioned, and from 586–88, at which point gods and men are still regarded as together when the first woman is brought out for presentation to Epimetheus.¹⁵ This time, of course, Zeus sees to it that the representative of mankind has a καλὸν κακόν—the first woman—to counterbalance the καλὸν κακόν which Zeus himself received at the feast.¹⁶

What is the consequence of the possibility that we are not meant to understand a specific recipient for each portion of meat? Nothing less than a new conception of the motivation and character of Prometheus. Scholars assume that Prometheus aims to benefit mankind by

¹⁵ West (*ad* 586) questions this interpretation.

¹⁶ Kohl (*supra* n.5) 33 n.9 suggests Prometheus as the recipient of the good portion. This view coincides with a scholiastic comment (405 Flach): [Prometheus] προσέθηκε δύο μερίδας, ἑαυτῷ μὲν σάρκας καταθείς . . .

his meat-division.¹⁷ This is an importation from *Prometheus Bound*, for there is nothing in the *Theogony* to suggest such an interpretation. Characterization in Hesiod is certainly problematic, but the words used to describe Prometheus may suggest an alternative reason for his action.

What we know about Hesiod's Prometheus is that his intelligence is of a darting, shifty sort (ποικίλον αἰολόμητιν, 511), his planning ability quick (ποικιλόβουλον, 521), that he is possessed of a wily shrewdness (ἀγκυλομήτης, 546)¹⁸ and a deceiving mind (δολοφρονέων, 550). The emphasis is on a changeable, capricious cleverness employed in no obviously philanthropic cause. Hermes of the *Homeric Hymn* may be compared, where the lyre and fire are invented in the course of random self-expression. It is difficult to speak of Hermes as in any way 'motivated' to create these momentous items; his actions are the mere expressions of his rascally nature.¹⁹ Perhaps then Prometheus is not motivated by any far-sighted plan to aid mankind, but is simply following impish impulse and aiming at causing a disturbance. There is interesting corroboration of this suggestion in non-Greek sources.

The traditional tales of many cultures feature a trickster-figure. This character may be variously described from culture to culture, but is recognizable as one who continually deludes others and rather often has the tables turned and suffers himself. If generalization about such a widespread type is possible, it may be said that tricksters seem above all to be occupied with flouting the most hallowed strictures of their societies. The results are sometimes positive, sometimes negative.

¹⁷ Even West (p.306), after cautiously averring "We do not know precisely why Prometheus . . . was so friendly towards mankind," speaks of the god's "philanthropy."

¹⁸ On this word see West *ad* 18.

¹⁹ *Hymn to Hermes* 24ff, 108ff (inventions); 261ff, 368ff (lies). *Cf.* in this connection Prometheus' innocent and flattering reply to Zeus, *Theog.* 548–49. Other attributes of Hermes paralleling Prometheus': Hermes is πολύτροπον and αἰμυλομήτην (13), his thought is quick-glancing (43ff), his mother addresses him as ποικιλομήτην (155), he cares for δολοφροσύνην (361). See also West (p.336) on ἀκάκητα. Prometheus' response to Zeus' incipient delusion over the choice of portion is partly expressed in the word ἐπιμειδήσας (547). This term is used several times in Homer, always when a powerful character, after getting his way, somewhat smugly or self-confidently reacts to an inferior's capitulation: so Agamemnon, when he realizes that his taunts have pricked Odysseus into a vow to fight among the foremost (*Il.* 4.356); Zeus in response to Athena, when she has capitulated to his threats (8.38); Odysseus, in connection with Dolon's yielding to fear and beginning to reveal Trojan intelligence (10.400); Odysseus, after his slaughter of the suitors, in response to the herald Medon's meek emergence from his hiding-place (*Od.* 22.391). *Cf.* also *Hymn to Apollo* 531, where Apollo replies to the Cretan sailors' fearful request for reassurance. The participle thus seems to intimate a certain confidence in the efficacy of one's plan.

Ugo Bianchi has demonstrated with many examples from other cultures the affinities Prometheus has with this familiar figure of world mythology.²⁰ Though Bianchi's elucidation of Prometheus as a trickster-figure is painstaking and suggestive of the motive forces behind the actions of tricksters as an aggregate, he stops short of addressing himself to the specific problem of the motivation of Prometheus' behavior at Mekone. His insights, however, coupled with a distinction made by Franz Boas, provide a solution to our inquiry.

In analyzing American Indian mythology, Boas distinguished between the selfish acts of the trickster, which may accidentally benefit man, and the purposeful acts of the culture-hero, which are expressly *designed* to improve man's lot.²¹ Although the deeds of each figure may have a similar result, the first agent is entirely "prompted by . . . the desire to satisfy his own needs The prime motive is . . . a purely egotistical one, and . . . the changes which actually benefit mankind are only incidentally beneficial." The culture-hero, in contrast, is "a beneficial being of great power whose object it is to advance the interests of mankind."²² The tales collected by Paul Radin show that the trickster-figures of several American Indian tribes seem dedicated above all to violating taboos, with little regard for consequences, which are sometimes good, sometimes bad.²³ Finally, Karl Kerényi, comparing the Winnebago trickster with the Greek Hermes, finds that they have in common a disregard of boundaries, a tendency to transgress social norms.²⁴

The implication of this comparative evidence is that in Hesiod's *Theogony* Prometheus is not at all the culture-hero he is to become in *Prometheus Bound*.²⁵ For our immediate purpose, to explain how τῶ

²⁰ "Der demiurgische Trickster und die Religionsethnologie" and "Prometheus, der titanische Trickster," *Paideuma* 7 (1961) 335-44, 414-37.

²¹ *Race, Language and Culture* (New York 1940) 407-09, 474.

²² Boas (*supra* n.21) 409, 411. For further cross-cultural generalizations concerning trickster-figures see R. D. Abrahams, "Trickster, the Outrageous Hero," in T. P. Coffin, ed., *Our Living Traditions: An Introduction to American Folklore* (New York 1968) 170-78.

²³ *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York 1958) 3-108.

²⁴ "The Trickster in Relation to Greek Mythology," in Radin (*supra* n.23) 189.

²⁵ E. Vandvik, *The Prometheus of Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Oslo 1943) 9-11, makes a distinction on other grounds: Prometheus desires to be a benefactor to mankind, but he is "short-sighted" and cannot appreciate the wisdom of Zeus' plan. Similarly F. Wehrli, "Hesiod's Prometheus," *Navicula Chilonensis: Festschrift Felix Jacoby* (Leiden 1956) 35. N. O. Brown points to the trickster-aspect of Prometheus, but does not recognize Boas' distinction (*Hermes the Thief: The Evolution of a Myth* [New York 1969] 22, 24; *cf.* also his "The Birth of Athena," *TAPA* 83 [1952] 132). Bianchi (*supra* n.20) 423-25 does point to some of the differences between the Hesiodic and the [Aeschylean] Prometheus, but he concludes that the two are not dissimilar.

μέν . . . τῷ δ' αὐτ' are to be taken in light of the suggestion that Prometheus is but a mischievous disrupter, I offer the following interpretation of the scene at Mekone.²⁶ Something like a golden age must be understood to exist at the time of the banquet described at 535ff.²⁷ There is an easy conversance between gods and men, to the point of their both sharing in a common feast. What interrupts this pristine calm is Prometheus' act: he introduces inequality into an existence where all were sharing things equally. Zeus' reaction, ὡς ἑτεροζήλως διεδάσσαι μοίρας (544), testifies to the likelihood of this observation; West's rendering of ἑτεροζήλως, 'in a partisan way', well captures the non-committal nature of Prometheus' innovation. For what shocks Zeus is not that Prometheus, in order to aid mankind, has insultingly presented him and the other gods with what looks like an inferior portion; had the gods been accustomed to receive a superior portion at feasts, Zeus would have seized the better-looking serving without comment, since the two shares were merely set out for the taking, with no particular recipient intended for either. Instead, Zeus reacts to the unequal division itself,²⁸ which is without precedent and which constitutes a violation of a norm of the golden age, the equality of gods and men. Prometheus' partisanship consists not in his championing the cause of mankind, but rather in his introduction of a new element—inequality—into a hitherto harmonious,

²⁶ Ambiguities in Prometheus' nature have been explained otherwise than in the way offered here. Bapp (*supra* n.8) 3049 sees Prometheus as the embodiment of a dual nature which must oscillate continually between *Trotz* and *Trug* on the one hand and *Rat* and *Hilfe* on the other. J.-P. Vernant, "Prométhée et la fonction technique," in *Mythe et pensée chez les grecs: études de psychologie historique*² (Paris 1966) 188–89, sees the god as simultaneously beneficent and maleficent. He explains this contradictory personality by reference to the precarious position of early Greek metalworkers, who were both feared and despised. Wilamowitz, *Aischylos Interpretationen* (Berlin 1914) 138f, thought that there were originally two Prometheuses, one Ionian-Attic, who presided over pottery and metallurgy, the other Boeotian-Locrian, who was the rebellious god (*cf.* L. Séchan, *Le myth de Prométhée* [Paris 1951] 13). Wehrli (*supra* n.25) sees Prometheus as only later taking on the character of man's benefactor, a view consonant with Boas' framework.

²⁷ Though strictly speaking the myth of the golden age (when men lived as gods, *cf.* *Erga* 112 and scholia cited *supra* nn.7–8) is incompatible with the myths of the theft of fire and the creation of woman (see West, *Hesiod, Works and Days* [Oxford 1978] 172), perhaps, with Kirk, we may understand the banquet at Mekone as taking place at the end of the golden age/beginning of the silver age (*Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* [Berkeley 1970] 228). One scholiast (404 Flach) identified the Mekone scene with the golden age of the *Works and Days*. West (p.318) neatly bypasses the difficulty by placing the banquet "at the end of the period when men and gods lived and ate together."

²⁸ Kohl's interpretation of the scene is in accord with this view: he stresses that Zeus' response to the unequal division does not imply that Prometheus has favored one side or the other. His rendering of ἑτεροζήλως is 'parteiisch', (*supra* n.5) 34.

hardly differentiated world. His purpose, though such a term may be too committal for a trickster-figure, is to upset an established pattern, the balance of an equal feast.

It is possible, thus, to retain the $\tau\hat{\omega} \dots \tau\hat{\omega}$ of the manuscripts. Such a reading involves a change in the way we view Prometheus, for a setting-out of unequal portions with no recipient intended for each implies a solitary rogue rather than a protector of mankind. It is only later, when altruistic motives come to be assigned to him in an effort to account for his significant actions, that Prometheus takes on the character we mistakenly claim to find in the Mekone scene, that of culture-hero. The career of Prometheus is thus an example of the development a mythic figure can undergo when successive mythographers explore its latent meanings.²⁹

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