

Natural Law in Hesiod's *Works and Days*

Scholars of the the Natural Law tend to point to Plato's Socrates as the author of Natural Law doctrine. Although Socrates never systematically lays out what we would call The Natural Law, as Strauss puts it, “[he] is said to have been the first who called philosophy down from heaven and forced it to make inquiries about life and manners and good and bad things.” Strauss also goes on to claim that this is the foundation for the Natural Law tradition, which is later developed by Aristotle, Aquinas, and later Christian thinkers (Strauss 1965).

Michael Gagarin has done work on Hesiod's *Works and Days*, the Greek law, and its roots in an oral tradition, specifically focusing on the concept of *dikē*. He argues that *dikē* is, in essence, “legal process” or perhaps “law” in the context of dispute resolution; it is not “law” in the sense of a moral standard. Gagarin argues that this idea of *dikē* is what Hesiod appeals to in the *Works and Days*. I intend to show that Hesiod's appeal to Perses may be seen not only as an appeal to the Natural Law but also as an appeal to a legal process (Gagarin 1973).

The purpose of this paper is to show that Natural Law tradition, which I argue are appeals to normative justice, is the crux of Hesiod's plea to Perses in the *Works and Days*. This paper will systematically examine Hesiod's claims, exhortations to Perses, and prescriptions of behavior in the *Works and Days* to demonstrate its place in the Natural Law tradition.

Works Cited

Gagarin, Michael. “Dikē in the Works and Days.” *Classical Philology* 68, no. 2 (April 1, 1973): 81–94.

Strauss, L. *Natural Right and History*. Phoenix Books, 1965.