

Elpis: a Blessing or a curse?
Exploring the concept of hope in
Hesiod's Pandora's Box and
Euripides Hecuba.

BY

DEANNA CLEOPATRA AMELIA RADCLIFFE

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UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID

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Abstract

Elpis is a topic not explored vastly by scholars nor is it a topic that is often seen in Ancient Greek literature either. However, there is one myth in which Elpis is mentioned that causes a list of questions to those who read it and that is Hesiod's Pandora's Box. Pandora's Box was an object to hold all evil in the world therefore it makes little sense for Elpis to be there. The project is to not only find out why Elpis was in the Box but how Elpis was viewed through the Archaic and Classical period by looking at iconography and Euripides Hecuba and Hesiod's Pandora. There are issues in this debate stretching from what Elpis means to lack of information, wrong translations, consistent back tracking to other areas of the essay and an issue of the scholars both ancient and modern not clearly stating their own opinions especially in the case of Hesiod. However, despite such issues stretching across the essay there are areas which help to shed light on the matter that is Elpis and through close analysis by the end of the essay and through exploring the two main case studies, the answer to whether Elpis was a blessing or a curse should have been explored to a reasonable degree. Though it is highly likely that the answer found in this essay will lead to it not being so simple as one option or the other as there is a recurring theme of Elpis being highlighted as both a blessing or a curse.

Introduction

Hope. It is a word that even on its own can have lasting impact on the people or person it is directed at. In everyday life hope is used by politicians for votes, doctors to their patients and teachers to their students. But what exactly does hope mean? In the modern day era it is defined as ‘a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen’¹ but that does not mean that our ancestors or those of the ancient world had the same view on the word, used it in the same manner or even called it “hope”. For example, the Ancient Greeks referred to hope as Elpis² and the Ancient Romans referred to hope as Spes³. By addressing it by a different name it is a fair assessment to believe that the definition may have also been different for these ancient civilizations as well. Whether or not the name or the definition was something different is not what the essay is trying to explore. The true focus of this essay is how hope was viewed and whether it was seen a blessing to have, or a curse.

It is difficult for the modern-day scholar to decide what they view hope to be, even in today’s era. Some scholars, such as Robert Anthony⁴ and Michael Cromwell⁵ view it to be a positive influence on society; some like Jeremy Snyder⁶ and J.J. Godfrey⁷ write about it being a risk, something negative, a curse, or what is known as false hope. Others contradict themselves, unable to decide between the two, such as F. Walton Avery⁸ and Brenda Walker⁹. This can also be seen in the ancient Greeks’ own opinions on the matter of hope. Just as today’s scholars have diverse thoughts on hope, so too did the Ancient Greeks such as Aristotle, Plato, Thucydides and Hesiod. The subject of hope being a blessing or curse is a complicated matter that to this day can confuse and cause writers to

¹ Stevenson, 2010, p.44.

² Kazantzidis and Spatharas, 2018, p.2 and 5.

³ Dixon-Kennedy, 1998, p.283

⁴ Anthony, 2009, p.212

⁵ Cromwell, 2004, p.113

⁶ Snyder, USA, 2020, p.92.

⁷ Godfrey, 2012, p.221

⁸ Walton F. Avery. *My Hope Is Built...: Christian Perspectives on Decisions at the End of Life*. (iUniverse, 2011.) P.65.

⁹ Brenda Walker and Karen Ring. *How to Be a Compassionate Human Being* (Xulon Press, 2008) P.186.

contradict themselves when discussing the subject. When adding to this issue the need to explore an ancient timeline with limited evidence due to loss of ancient scholarship or an incorrect translation, it becomes more complicated to find an answer. Therefore, instead of seeking to find a definite answer to whether hope is a blessing or curse it is better to explore the subject.

The exploration of hope being a blessing or a curse is still too big a subject area to delve into. There are many different areas and opinions to research, not to mention the opinions and portrayal of hope from many different religions across history to also explore. This would take a lot of time and too many words to manage. As such it is a better option to focus on one area of the time period. The ancient Greeks' opinion of hope will be the explored time period for this essay. Of course, even with narrowing it down to a time period the ancient Greek timeline is vast, there are still too many possible sources of literature that would use or mention hope and too many opinions from ancient scholarship that cannot all be covered. Therefore, it is best to narrow down the search to two very specific case studies that will have a direct correlation to the question: was elpis a blessing or curse?

The ancient Greeks wrote many myths and plays in which hope would play a prominent feature and can be used to analyse whether hope was seen as a blessing or a curse, myths such as: Hecuba, Heracles, Pandora's Box and Trojan Women. As stated, it would be difficult to analyse all these tales in a justifiable way. There is too much information and too many ways to analyse one story alone which is why it is easier to address only two. The first chosen case study is Hecuba, a tale of a Trojan Queen who loses everything after the battle of Troy: her position, her freedom, her family, and who only ends up clinging to grief and revenge by the end, a story which will be studied in depth within Chapter One. The second and most prominent tale chosen for this essay was picked due to the entire hypothesis of this paper originating from thinking about this myth: Hesiod's literary version of *Pandora's Box*. Wondering why hope (something usually depicted as good) was trapped within a box of evil in the first place, led to the very question now explored in this essay.

Hecuba and *Pandora's Box* were written in two very separate time periods. *Hecuba* was written during classical Greece and *Pandora's Box* during the Archaic time period; both use mythological material that is deeply rooted in epic tradition. *Hecuba's* story, told by Euripides, may have only been written during the classical timeline, but the myth of *Hecuba* was already well known before that, and although Hesiod wrote *Pandora's Box* in the Archaic time period it was most likely around long before that. These two myths are merely some of the many areas to look into regarding *Elpis* and are merely a stepping stone into a much wider discussion that unfortunately cannot be explored in this essay due to limitations but can still be found in other pieces of literature.

As previously discussed, the Ancient Greeks had their own word for hope: *Elpis*. What is confusing though about this word, is that *Elpis* (hope) did not just mean the word 'hope'. *Elpis* was also a deity but what he/she was the deity of, remains unclear. This is due to the fact that *Elpis* has various meanings: it could mean 'hope', or it could mean 'expectation', and these diverse meanings could and do apply to both the deity and the word itself. Of course, it can be argued that *Elpis* could just mean both hope and expectation together and it was only later in history that these two meanings became separated, a topic to be discussed thoroughly in Chapter One.

Before discussing the structure of the essay, it is important to first clarify how to identify which *Elpis* is the one being discussed, the word or the deity. In this essay the two separate versions will be identified by changing the first letter into either a lower or upper case. When discussing the deity, it will be shown with an upper case: *Elpis*. When using the word generally meaning 'hope', it will be demonstrated as a lower case: *elpis*. However, it must be stated that sometimes it is hard to identify which of the two (the deity or word) is being used in the Ancient Greek text, it is for this reason that it is impossible to simply focus on one version of *Elpis*. When uncertain about which version is being used to signify this, *Elpis* will be italicized.

First and foremost, when delving into the question of *Elpis* it is important to address who or rather what *Elpis* is. In the first chapter *Elpis* as a whole will be explored, from its gender to the role it may have been assigned, before delving into the opinions of the

ancient Greeks in regard to fate, destiny and the deities of Ancient Greece. A starting opinion of how the archaic Greeks may have looked at Elpis at first glance will be discussed in detail and the reasons why this may have been the case.

Following this discussion, a new heading within the chapter will shift the focus to the iconography available that depicts Elpis. These chosen images, although few, (due to the recent circumstances preventing the rest from being available for use) aid in getting a deeper insight into how the Ancient Greeks would have depicted and therefore viewed the deity to be. Due to these images showing Elpis as a person it stands to reason that at this part of the essay the deity not the word is the main topic of discussion. These depictions later can have a direct correlation to *Pandora's Box* -not only as it depicts Elpis leaving the jar but also because it can have a key role in chapters two page ... discussion of deception. Unfortunately, this is one of the major issues in this exploration of the subject. Although most areas for discussion can be separated, a lot of the themes subsequently come in repeatedly in another part of the essay. As such it is likely that more than once references will be made to somewhere earlier (with promises for more information) or later in the essay. However, these subsequent overlaps will be followed with a chapter number and page number to inform the reader where to find the rest of the information. This is to keep the structure of the essay not only intact but so it also to continue to make sense to the reader.

The next stage of the investigation of Elpis in Chapter One is the issue of which meaning of the word Elpis is going to be used. As previously mentioned, earlier Elpis has various meanings, two of which are expectation and hope. However, depending on which version of Elpis is being used/discussed the entire meaning can change, not only within the essay but also to the myth -such as that of Pandora's Box. Therefore, to finish this subchapter in Chapter One a discussion on which version of Elpis will be explored for the rest of the essay - whether it be "hope" or "expectation" (or even both) - will be decided upon. This must be done as exploring both possible versions of Elpis will not be possible to do in a satisfactory way.

Finally, to conclude Chapter One it will finish by delving into the humanity of hope. To do this, this subchapter focuses on the exploration into the story of Hecuba. As stated at the beginning of this essay Hecuba was once a queen of Troy before the city fell to war. By the end of the myth Hecuba ended up becoming a monster due to the amount of tragedy and despair in her life. This subchapter focuses on both Hecuba and another prominent figure named Polymestor, exploring whether their subsequent loss of humanity is due to a loss of hope as the tale continues. In doing this it will explore another side of how Elpis may have been viewed by the Greeks at the time.

Moving on from Chapter One, the second section of the essay will begin by introducing the second case study, *Pandora's Box*, into the essay, starting with the fact Hesiod wrote two versions of the tale in his two different pieces of literature the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. Chapter Two will discuss in detail both versions Hesiod wrote and how they differ from each other, as well as how hope appears to be presented in both versions. Before moving to the next subchapter, a decision will be reached on which version of Hesiod's works will be the chosen version discussed.

Proceeding from Hesiod's two pieces of work, it is revealed in Chapter 2.1 that the tale of Pandora's Box became translated wrongly and that it should be known as Pandora's Jar, hence the subchapter's title: 'The Box that Once was a Jar'. Though it does not seem to be a major issue at first glance, within this subchapter it is explored how much a simple mistranslation can change how Elpis is viewed and even how the "Jar" itself is viewed. Due to the discussion of a mistranslation not happening until Chapter 2 and despite it being a major issue to how readers look and analyse the jar, the name Pandora's Box will still be used continuously through the essay for continuity's sake and to not confuse the reader by the sudden change. However, the fact it was translated wrongly should not be forgotten as the essay continues, as the fact the box was originally a jar leads into the next subchapter of Chapter 2, which is also the final section, and discusses the theme of deception.

The idea of deception is a repeated theme in Pandora's Box, which is demonstrated as the exploration in the essay delves deeper into the myth. There is the deception of Pandora

being a beautiful evil sent by the gods (specifically Zeus) as punishment, the jar (that holds all the evil) and the possible deception that is hope or as the Greeks refer to Elpis. By analysing why these objects are shown to be deceptive it can also lead to a reasonable conclusion on whether Elpis is viewed as a blessing or a curse. This section also will be the area were consistent use of previous areas already discussed (for example the iconographic evidence and who Elpis is) are referred to once more, leading the essay to be tied up and brought together in preparation for the conclusion.

By the end of this essay I hope to have explored the concept of hope in the two chosen case studies picked, and from both found a possible viewpoint on the subject matter that is Elpis and whether it was looked at or presented as a blessing or a curse. Due to the fact the Ancient Greeks themselves appear to have struggled with the concept of hope nearly as much as modern day scholars, from what has been found so far it is likely the overall opinion will be that although Elpis may have been seen as a curse it was a necessary one to have in order to be human.

Chapter One: Elpis.

Who or What is Elpis?

The word used by ancient Greeks that is usually translated to ‘hope’ by modern day scholars is *Elpis*, used by the Ancient Greeks either for the word itself (shown as: elpis) or evoking/addressing the deity (shown as Elpis). Not much is known about the deity Elpis as it is not usually a focus of modern day scholars; those that do use it bring it up briefly and usually in connection to Christianity. Another issue of researching *Elpis* is that *Elpis* (as a word or deity) is not well-defined in ancient antiquity; modern scholars often translate it to mean ‘hope’, but it has also been translated as ‘expectation’¹⁰, ‘fear’¹¹, and according to Elissa Marder It ‘conjures up a powerful connection to anxiety as well.’¹² Due to these reasons it is difficult to know which version of Elpis the Ancient Greeks may be referring to in any text. According to Christina Howells ‘...elpis is an ambiguous quality, involving projection of the future, be it good or evil.’¹³ *Elpis* is not only ambiguous when it comes to the future, but regarding who or what it is. As stated above, Elpis could be reflecting the personification of what it characterizes and therefore is a deity.¹⁴ Or elpis could be a word or concept used to describe a feeling or action of a character in a literature piece.¹⁵ It is difficult to say which version of *Elpis* is being used within a text, whether the Archaic Ancient Greeks are talking about “Elpis” the deity, or elpis the word. It may be due to this ambiguous quality that it was avoided by the Ancient Greeks, although the likelihood is that there is a more in-depth reason. On top of a lack of clear definition, the ancient Greeks also appear to be reluctant to mention Elpis. Although the word or concept is used within ancient plays and literature, sometimes extensively, other times only briefly, the ancient Greeks do not appear to appeal to Elpis unless necessary. It can be argued that in praying to other deities they would have embodied or invoked Elpis at the same time, such as when praying towards *Tuche* or

¹⁰ Marder, 2012, p.13

¹¹ Marder, 2012, p.13

¹² Marder, 2012, p.13

¹³ Howells, 2013, p. 139

¹⁴ Louw, 2015, p.503

¹⁵ Caston and Kaster, 2016, p.44

Tyche (the Ancient Greek personification and goddess of luck).¹⁶ The Ancient Greeks, when invoking *Tyche*, would have hoped for good luck or a good future, however similarly to *Elpis* *Tyche* could also be a negative personification as just as she could bring good luck she could also bring bad. Steven D. Hales writes ‘she was an agent of cosmic balance too: bad luck brings down the haughty and good luck raises the downtrodden’¹⁷ therefore to rely on *Tyche* was not advisable as she is undependable just like *Elpis*, but unlike *Elpis* *Tyche* would have the final say in what the future would bring.

As stated, *Elpis* is usually translated as ‘hope’ or it can be translated as ‘expectation’, depending on the context (this is both as a word and as a deity). Hope in the modern-day perspective is viewed as a positive influence on humanity – one that is necessary¹⁸. However, that does not mean that the Ancient Greeks viewed it the same way. The ancient Greeks had a viewpoint on the future that could, and in many ways does change the meaning of hope. According to Perry L. Westmoreland ‘The ancient Greeks generally believed that seers could tell the future, but many believed they could not intervene to change fate.’¹⁹ The viewpoint that Ancient Greeks believed that fate cannot be changed is supported by many other scholars such as T. Van Nortwick²⁰ and Lisa Raphals.²¹ However, if this is the case then it makes *Elpis* obsolete not only as a concept but as a deity. If the future is already set, there is no point in “hoping” (or even praying to *Elpis*) for something better or even expecting for something to occur because that will not change what fate has designed. This does not negate the fact they may have longed to have hope, a chance to change this preordained fate. On the contrary they may have understood fate was set but may still try and delay or hasten the inevitable. Robert William Browne writes about Zeus himself either working with or fighting against the fates ‘Sometimes his will coincides with the decrees of Fate, sometimes he struggles in vain to resist its decisions. He can delay or hasten that which is pre-ordained, but he

¹⁶ Vella, 2004, p.20

¹⁷ Hales, 2020, p.7

¹⁸ Gallagher and Lopez, 2018, p.10; Elliott, 2005, p.9

¹⁹ Westmoreland, 2007, p.650

²⁰ Nortwick, 2008, p.100 also see Westmoreland, 2007, p.650

²¹ Raphals, 2013, p. 13

cannot change it.’²² This is supported by the fate of the Trojans whose fate was preordained but still had aid by some of the gods for as long as possible Zeus included. However, in the end their fate is decided and Zeus (after struggling against it for so long) must allow the event to take place.

If fate cannot be changed and therefore *Elpis* cannot be relied on to help it is unlikely the deity would ever be invoked by any ancient Greek. As Ronald J. Nydam states ‘The future was already determined so why hope?’²³ In this scenario it is a pointless endeavour which may be why the ancient Greeks seemed to avoid the deity. It could also indicate why *Elpis* was in Pandora’s box in the first place. However, although *Elpis* may be viewed as a pointless endeavour by the archaic Greeks it is still one that is necessary to humanity, whether it is hoping for the gods’ intervention to the fate predicted (as discussed above with Zeus’ intervention) or hoping for better fortune. Whichever the case it still is a human trait that appears to be needed (a point that is to be explored in the humanity of hope on page). Hope is also something that is still longed for and sought out still despite being viewed as pointless. It is only pointless in believing that fate can be changed, but not so much perhaps in prolonging or hastening the experience being hoped for/against happening or even hoping that the bad fate preordained is the only suffering to come. The Guard in Sophocles’ *Antigone* for example is clinging to *elpis*

Even if my report brings no good, still will I tell you, since I come with a good grip on one hope, that I can suffer nothing except what is my fate²⁴

therefore, the rest of his life will not be one of suffering and he can still hope that some of his life will still be good and not completely doomed. There is also the issue that in some cases, the ones affecting and deciding fate were the gods/goddesses²⁵ which correlates with some of the myths where they directly intervene with the fate of a demi-god or lover to a god such as Heracles, Odysseus and those involved in the Trojan War²⁶.

²² Browne, 1852, p.101

²³ Nydam, 1999, p. 112

²⁴ Soph. Ant. 235

²⁵ Raphals, 2013, p. 13

²⁶ See Lefkowitz, M.R, 2005, p.234 for Heracles, 53 for Iliad and 85 for Odyssey

As stated previously Zeus tried to prevent the Trojans' defeat; the three goddesses Aphrodite, Athena and Hera were the reason it began when they asked Paris who was the most beautiful, and these are just some examples in ancient literature of the Greek gods and goddesses' interference. This could imply that *Elpis* could be used to form a new fate, within reason. There are still other areas to consider as this would only be the case if those of higher power regarding fate did not get involved either. Raphals states

...but as early as the Homeric poems, the three fates or Moirai stood in a complex relation to the plan of Zeus. The implication was that some events were fated even beyond the power of the king of the gods to control.²⁷

The quote appears to imply that even Zeus could not intervene with what was fated, as supported by the earlier quote from Browne. However, it also implied that though there were some events he could not change it did not mean there were none. Perhaps this did not just apply to Zeus. It is seen in ancient literature that gods/goddesses can (unopposed) effect the fate of mortals, for example Odysseus and Poseidon, Archameder (spider woman) and Athena, Medusa and Poseidon/Athena. So unopposed, it is likely that *Elpis* could impact the fate of others and even change it so long as a higher god/being e.g. Zeus/the fates did not get involved. In this scenario therefore *Elpis* is not so impotent as first appears.

However, this does not negate the possibility that *Elpis* was viewed as a curse not a blessing, for as myths showed to those who read them not every divine involvement necessarily promises good things for the present or future. Whether it was pointless or not however does not negate that *Elpis* existed as demonstrated by the iconography (though it may aid in this discussion later about the argument of whether the Ancient Greeks would have looked at *Elpis* something negative).

²⁷ Raphals, 2013, p. 13.

Iconography of Elpis



Figure one: Campanian red-figure neck amphora attributed to the Owl Pillar Group, ca. 450-425 B.C. Reverse: Zeus and Elpis.

Barringer, 2005, p.40



Figure Two: Boiotian plastic aryballos, ca.625-600B.C.

Barringer, 2005,p.42

Elpis as a word or as a deity did exist in the eyes of the Ancient Greeks, and they personified her as a woman. Although many Greek goddesses and deities have been depicted as such, and therefore portraying a female deity was not unusual in this era of history, Elpis characterised as a woman can be considered to have an interesting influence on how we look at this particular deity. Not only does it reflect the myth of Pandora's box and women's involvement in misery to men (an area to be explored later in the text) it can change the outlook of hope in connection to it being a false hope or a reasonable expectation for the future; it could also correlate with hopefulness for childbearing or marriage. By looking at images of Elpis not only can it help in understanding her and how the Ancient Greeks viewed her as well, but also confirm that Elpis was indeed a woman.

Although Elpis is frequently mentioned in ancient Greek literature, surviving images of Elpis are few, J.M. Barringer believes that 'It is surprising that this graphic image of a female personification trapped under the rim of a large jar was not seized upon by ancient Greek artists...'.²⁸ Perhaps it is due to the lack of personifications of Elpis. The word is used but the deity appears to be hardly mentioned save for when it is revealed in Pandora's Box. This may be due to evidence of Elpis being invoked has been lost or that it simply was not prayed to recurringly in this way. Whatever the reason it is unlikely a clear answer can be found. However, whatever the case may be there are images that do still exist to be analysed to do with Elpis such as the ones above. Two depictions are particularly important to analyse Elpis as they are believed to have come about during the archaic and classical time periods, which are the focus of this dissertation. Any later depictions of Elpis can be found in the LIMC iconographic lexicon; these images are after the time period in question and go into Roman times.

The first image that is believed to be a portrayal of Elpis and is thought to have been fashioned around the Archaic period is Figure One. This object is a red-figure neck amphora found in the Basilicata and is now held in the British Museum. There are two diverse images on either side of the pithos both fundamentally highlighting the myth of

²⁸ Barringer, 2005, p.37

Pandora's Box. On one side is a depiction of what many believe are Pandora and her future husband Epimetheus, but it is the other side of the jar (shown above) that is important.

Looking at figure one, it can be assumed that the oval shape in which the person is appearing from is that of a pithos as there is no indication to show it as a dress or body, especially since there are no feet below. The only indication of a person is the head coming out of the pithos. This person is believed to be Elpis by some scholars. Though the myth of Pandora's Box has not yet discussed in detail it is known that Elpis was held within the box alongside all other evils. Therefore, it is plausible that the head poking out just above the rim is a visual interpretation of Elpis. The feminine features of her face, lack of beard as well as the headwear can support the belief Elpis is a woman if this image is her. Figure two is depicted to once more show her has a female which backs the ideology that Elpis is a woman.

Figure 2 is the final piece of iconography available for this time period, believed to have been made around 625-600 BC. What is interesting about the date that it is thought to have been created is that it is also believed that Pandora's Box was written by Hesiod around 700BC, therefore Figure 2 may also be the earliest depiction of Elpis based on Hesiod's telling of the myth. This small vase is around 11.6cm in height and at first glance looks like one of the typical 'proto-Corinthian perfume vases with plastic female heads'.²⁹ A Proto-Corinthian *aryballos* was a perfume vase which would hold perfume or oil, whose decoration was usually the form of animals or patterns.³⁰ However, Figure Two is slightly different to the usual *aryballos* style. If looked at closely the *aryballos*' mouth can be seen set atop a female's head, and as well as this the neck and the head of this vase are not part of the vessel but appear to be emerging from within.

Like Figure One the oval shape gives no indication that this is a dress or body, especially since once again there are no feet appearing from the bottom. The head coming out of the vase is the only indication of a person. However, unlike Figure One at first glance there is

²⁹ Barringer, 2005, p.42

³⁰ Smith and Plantzos, 2018, p.468 also see Conner and Jackson, 2000, p.58

no clear indicator if this figure is female. The head does not wear any form of accessory save for what is assumed to be the lid. It is therefore difficult to associate this figure with a gender, but not impossible. Although hard to make out there is a *fillet* around the person's head. A fillet is a type of band that in ancient times women would use to confine their hair³¹. As such this is a huge indicator that the head appearing from within the vase is a female.

From the analysis of this image therefore it can be ascertained that it was a female of some description emerging from a vase. As such, it is not so far fetched to believe it is a piece of work on Elpis inspired by Hesiod's literature piece, Pandora's Box. However, how does this image aid in answering the question of whether Elpis is a blessing or a curse? Not only does the object demonstrate the existence of Elpis and confirm the knowledge of Pandora's Box still being circulated in that time period, it also gives strong indicators towards how Elpis was shown as a deity via imagery and what ancient Greeks understood about Elpis from the tale itself.

Not only does Figure 2 show Elpis as she emerges from the jar and hints to her resealing by having the lid upon the figure's head it also demonstrates a human emotion. On Figure 2 there is a smile which can be argued to be a smirk appearing on this figurine's face. Barringer states 'Facial expressions are extremely rare in Greek art, but a smirk seems a particularly apt way to characterize an otherwise attribute-less personification of false hope'³² -which by its personification would be Elpis. A smirk could indicate to a sense of mischief, deception and success in something sinister. For it to be depicted on the face of something believed to be an interpretation of Elpis demonstrates another possible negative outlook onto the deity that is supposed to be the representation of hope.

By analysing Figures 1 and 2 it gives insight into how ancient Greeks might have imagined Elpis to look (specifically when surfacing from within the box); it has also hinted to what Elpis may have identified and personified as, and through the dates on

³¹ John, 1842, p.60

³² Barringer, 2005, p.43

which they were believed to have been constructed it can be argued they were created with the thoughts of Hesiod's telling of Pandora's Box in mind.

Elpis: expectation, hope or one in the same?

As stated in the introduction *Elpis* could mean hope, or it could mean expectation,³³ it could even be argued that it means both depending on the context it is used in. In the modern-day world, to expect something is 'a strong belief that something will happen or be the case.'³⁴ Whereas to hope is 'a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen.'³⁵ By their definitions alone the words appear to be one and the same. A person cannot have one without the other. Yet despite this there is an attempt to separate them by modern day scholars when the term *Elpis* is used. This may possibly be because the ancient Greeks would have looked at them as two separate entities, not one and the same. However, as with anything concerning the ancient world, it cannot automatically be assumed they would follow the same definitions as those in the modern era and therefore the two separate versions are possibly due to modern translations. Both versions of *Elpis* have been used at some point in ancient literature when translated. For example in the story of Nemean the word *elpis* is translated by modern scholars to mean expectation whereas in Hecuba it is translated to mean hope. To define and analyse every version of *Elpis* is impossible as there are too many myths to go through to decide which would be the best suited for this essay. Therefore, it is easier to focus primarily on how it is translated for the two main case studies. As Euripides Hecuba primarily translates *Elpis* to mean hope (as stated above) it falls to finding out which version in Hesiod's Pandora's Box will be used for the rest of this essay as well.

There are scholars who favour the idea that *elpis* means expectation when used, such as Swindoll³⁶ and Vernant³⁷. Ruth Rothaus Caston believes that in the myth of Pandora 'the retention of *elpis* could perhaps mean that expectation of evil is the only one of the evils

³³ Montiglio, 2005, p.66

³⁴ Stevenson, 2010, p.615

³⁵ Stevenson, 2010, p.44

³⁶ Swindoll, 2014, p.333

³⁷ Vernant, 1989, p.81 also see Leithart, 1999, p.80

that the jar contained which did not make it into the world of men',³⁸ so by her viewpoint elpis equates to expectation. If humanity can expect evils, then they can be avoided.

Detienne writes 'If we could avoid them, we would not fail to do so. Still, it would be necessary to be able to assess them and recognise them'.³⁹ It can therefore be argued that to recognise evils humanity needs to expect them and be aware of their presence, but if humanity continued to expect bad things to happen, would they then forget to do the most important part of being human, which was to live? When discussing Elpis defined as expectation Silvia Montiglio writes that 'Zeus's original intention was that any evil that was to strike humans should be expected by them, but at the last moment changed his mind because life would have been unbearable.'⁴⁰ This would suit the tale of Pandora's Box and Elpis remaining trapped inside (to be later discussed). It would also help to identify whether Elpis was viewed as evil in Pandora's Box.

However, there may be many issues in compacting Elpis into this one meaning, that of expectation. Regarding Elpis as expectation in Pandora's box could pose more questions than answers. Due to expectation still being in the world when Pandora closed the box, therefore it continued to exist,⁴¹ which by Caston's opinion should not have been the case. When Elpis (expectation) became trapped it 'did not make it into the world of men'⁴² and therefore it should not exist amongst humans. The fact expectation does exist in the world could contradict the tale of Pandora's box depending on how the box is looked at (to be discussed later). Whereas in terms of Elpis – if meaning 'hope' - being in the box, it could be argued that there are different versions of hope. For example, hope could prove to be false or dangerous, or it could be a positive human experience. Therefore, instead of it being the entirety of hope (Elpis) trapped in the box, only one form of the deity was trapped inside⁴³. As such it makes more sense for Elpis in this case to mean hope, rather than expectation.

³⁸ Caston and Kaster, 2016, p.29

³⁹ Detienne and Jean-Pierre, 1989, p.77

⁴⁰ Montiglio, 2005, p.66

⁴¹ Caston and Kaster, 2016, p.29

⁴² Caston and Kaster. 2016, p.29

⁴³ Bardini, 2011, p.162.

But what if it is more complicated than that? What if one (hope) simply cannot exist without the other (expectation)? People cannot hope without expecting something to occur from that hope, and a person cannot expect without having a hope that what is to be expected will also occur. Complications remain in terms of the terminology, for as stated above hope ‘is a feeling of expectation...’⁴⁴ which solidifies the view that the two are intertwined. Many consider hope as delusive and dangerous – but can it become this only if one **expects** their dreams to come true. According to Thierry Bardini ‘If, as in the golden age, human life consisted only of goods, there would be no way to hope for anything else than what one already had.’⁴⁵ and ‘If they lived confined in the present, without any knowledge of, or interest for, the future, they would still ignore Elpis.’⁴⁶ So, expectation of the future is necessary for Elpis to exist, and hope is also necessary for Elpis to exist. They both are two very different sides of a coin that are both necessary to form the coin itself, aka Elpis. However, is that what Hesiod meant when using the term *Elpis*? That *Elpis* means both expectation and hope?

It is difficult to know which version of *Elpis* Hesiod was alluding to or even if he meant the entire representation of *Elpis* (hope and expectation). Given that it is never explicitly stated by the ancient Greeks and only does it become two separate areas when translated, it cannot be certain if any of the translations are entirely correct. Despite this uncertainty, in the case of looking at Pandora’s box it is perhaps easier to look at *Elpis* as representing hope in this text, for that is how most scholars translate it for this particular myth,⁴⁷ which will be seen later in Chapter 2 when discussing Hesiod’s versions. It also means it follows the same definition of *Elpis* that Hecuba is translated by modern scholars to use. However, it still must be remembered that where there is hope there is usually expectation (this train of thought can and does apply to all other myths).

Before discussing Hesiod there are still other areas to *Elpis* that should be explored, things such as whether *Elpis* is a negative or positive attribute to humanity. Looking at

⁴⁴ Stevenson, 2010, p.44

⁴⁵ Bardini, 2011, p.162

⁴⁶ Bardini, 2011, p.162

⁴⁷ Caston and Kaster, 2015, p.503.; Bardini, 2011, p.162; Grams, 2005, p.336

Hecuba beforehand will show how Ancient Greeks considered the version of *Elpis* that is hope, and therefore will make clearer whether it was viewed as a positive or negative, which may make it easier later on to identify the purpose of *Elpis* in Pandora's box.

Humanity of Hope

To have hope, to be hopeful, is a very human trait⁴⁸. In many ways it can help someone defy certain opinions they or others may have, encourage and bring a type of strength that may have not been available to a person previously. But at the same time, it can cause arrogance, delusion and depression. In times when hope is brought up it can slowly dissolve, especially when that hope is hopeless. But what would happen if a human completely lost all sense of hope, never to regain? Ancient Greek literature explored lack of hope just as much as Hesiod explored hope in Pandora's Box, perhaps more. The play *Hecuba* may well be one of the most prominent myths which demonstrates what would happen to a person who lost hope and what could be the fate of those with foolish hope.

Hecuba or *Hekabē* was a tragedy that was written by Euripides in 427 BC. Taking place in Troy it is centred on the events after the Trojan war and is thought to be based roughly around the same time as *The Trojan Women* play, which was also written by Euripides. *Hecuba*, who was once the Queen of the fallen city Troy, is the central figure of the play. Once a queen of a great city and happily married, her fate is now to become a slave, along with the other women of Troy. As the tale continues this fallen queen is destined to lose more with each line wrote: 'O mistress, most hapless beyond all words of mine to tell; you are ruined, you no longer exist, though you are alive; of children, husband, city bereft; hopelessly undone!'.⁴⁹ At this point in Euripides highlights how such a magnitude of loss can result in a loss of hope as well but also how it was hopeless to prevent it. By this point she is no longer Queen of Troy but as Euripides writes the 'queen of sorrow'⁵⁰ and sadly it is just the beginning of her woes. Following this bitter line *Hecuba* is informed of the death of her son and her spiral of grief continues.

⁴⁸ See Obayuwana, 2012, p.43; Godfrey. 2012 p.225

⁴⁹ Eur. Hec. 667-670

⁵⁰ Eur. Hec. 658

Before even presented with the body of her youngest son, Hecuba is already suffering a great loss of hope. Her city is gone, her people dead or enslaved, her loved ones also taken from her. Her life is finished, or at least she wishes it to be so:

Lead me away, Odysseus, and do your worst, for I see nothing within my reach to make me hope or expect with any confidence that I am ever again to be happy.⁵¹

For Hecuba at this moment in time there is nothing for her to live for, her claim is that happiness will never be hers again after all she has lost. Her hope, as well as her wish, is now to die. When a person reaches such a point there is a modern day viewpoint that once hitting rock bottom then there is nowhere else to go but up, although the phrase itself doesn't appear in ancient Greek text it can be argued it is shown in ancient Greek myth such as Heracles and his efforts for redemption with the twelve trials.⁵² However, if a person is presented with even more horror/evils/suffering, blow after blow, is hope still feasible or does it become redundant? The only positive, or in this case 'hopeful' outcome is to die but when confronted with something that makes even death impossible, what becomes of the person then? If or when a person loses their final hope, even if that hope is death (due to the sheer amount of horror) is there a more monstrous path?

For Hecuba there is. Her grief along with the shock of being presented with her youngest son's body (in which was her last ounce of hope towards his possible survival) leaves her with a desperate need for revenge.

Hecuba: Without his aid I shall not be able to avenge my children. Why do I still ponder the matter? I must do and dare whether I win or lose. *Turning to Agamemnon* Agamemnon, by your knees, by your beard and conquering hand I implore you—

Agamemnon: What is your desire? to be set free? that is easily done.

⁵¹ Eur. Hec. 369-72

⁵² Uhlenbrock. 1986, p.15

Hecuba: Not that; give me vengeance on the wicked, and I am willing to lead a life of slavery forever.⁵³

However, her goals do not stem any further. Hecuba has no hope for a future and thus she does not care what happens after her revenge, or who or what she harms or what she must do to get her revenge. As George Kazantzidis states ‘...any adverse consequences of an attempt at revenge could not make anything worse.’⁵⁴ Hecuba after all already demonstrated a wish to die and she had no one left that her enemies could kill or harm to punish her; either she claims her revenge and dies, or she dies in her attempt for revenge, whichever the outcome she strangely wins in her own eyes. It is with this hopelessness and craving for revenge that the monster in Hecuba is shown. Before going into the transformation of Hecuba losing her “humanity” it is apt to look at Polymestor, the man she craves to invoke her revenge on, and his own descent due to hope and later hopelessness.

It is important to look at both Hecuba and Polymestor as both their actions cause the loss of hope in each other due to their choices. Polymestor murdered the boy he was put in charge of (Hecuba’s youngest son), this caused Hecuba to lose whatever humanity she may have had left due to the final blow of losing her faith, after already losing her kingdom, her love, her freedom and even her hope in justice and law. Her loss of humanity led to a desperate need for revenge and this revenge led to Polymestor’s new fate of being denied his hope of riches and instead led him to lose his children and become blind;

A moment, and you shall see him before the tent, blind, advancing with blind random step; and the bodies of his two children whom I with my brave women of Troy killed; he has paid me the penalty; here he comes from the tent, as you see.⁵⁵

The play nearly ends up resulting in a vicious cycle of consistent need for revenge for what they have lost whether it was their freedom, power or children.

⁵³ Eur. Hec. 750-756

⁵⁴ Kazantzidis and Spatharas, 2018, p.58

⁵⁵ Eur. Hec. 1050-1055

When Polymestor enters the tent with Hecuba, the Chorus predicts his own impending despair and doom:

You have not yet paid the penalty, but perhaps you will; Like one who slips and falls into the surge with no haven near, so shall you lose your own life for the life you have taken. For the rights of justice and of the gods do not fall together; there is ruin full of death and doom. Your hopes of this journey shall cheat you, for it has led you, unhappy wretch! to the halls of death; and to no warrior's hand shall you resign your life.⁵⁶

Unlike with Hecuba, a different form of hope is demonstrated. Instead of hopelessness being the recurring theme throughout, Polymestor starts with false hope. He craves riches and as such the evil in his heart for greed will lead him down to Hades, aka death. So, there are two versions of hope demonstrated yet again. There is the good hope that gives people a reason to live and be human, and then there is the fool's hope, which is what led to Hecuba's revenge. Therefore, there is a slight contradiction to whether hope is good or bad. It can be argued it is what the person may be hoping for, not the act of hoping. However hoping for something or for a specific outcome that is unlikely can lead to the problem of false hope which can impact a human just as badly. What is also interesting about this false hope is that it forms through deception. Luigi Battezzato states 'Deceitful hope (a familiar concept in Greek thought: Collard on Suppl. 479) has led Polymestor to death.'⁵⁷ There is a recurring theme that seems to be apparent between hope and deception, and some indication that this theme includes women as well. This theme of deception and hope will be explored later. For now, the transformation from humanity (the primary focus at this stage) to a monster is what suggests the viewpoint of Euripides regarding his views on hope.

The transformation of both Hecuba and Polymestor occurs when Hecuba has achieved her revenge, taking Polymestor's hope with it. He hoped to find riches and instead, in a similar fashion to Hecuba, he lost everything. Yet again the lack of hope causes a loss of

⁵⁶ Eur. Hec. 1024-34

⁵⁷ Battezzato, 2018, P.215

humanity. The first act of revenge by Hecuba leaves Polymestor alive but blinded and (as she once was) reduced to grief through his loss.⁵⁸ His original desire for death transforms to anger and need for revenge. George Kazantzidis states ‘So as Hecuba has herself successively lost all hope, and has suppressed all emotions beneath the single desire for revenge, her act has correspondingly denied Polymestor all his hopes.’⁵⁹ In the end this results in both losing more of their humanity in their bitterness for each other. Both become beasts/dogs and therefore monsters⁶⁰. Hecuba becomes a fiery-eyed dog or as Polymestor states ‘You’ll become a bitch with a blood-shot glare’⁶¹, whereas Polymestor becomes a blinded man who eventually dies. Though Hecuba undergoes perhaps the most monstrous transformation, both lose much of their human qualities, shown as they enter the scene by either crawling or stumbling⁶². Perhaps Hecuba’s fate of turning into a ‘wretched bitch’ is worse than Polymestor due to the amount she has lost being even greater and much more brutal- though it is difficult to judge and not the opinion that matters at present. It is the lack of hope and its link to humanity that matters here as her humanity ‘is thus seriously undermined by her traumas and her sense of utter hopelessness and its concomitant longing for extreme revenge’⁶³ which can be stated for Polymestor as well. The lesson to this tale in truth seems to be similar to the saying ‘fight fire with fire you will only get burnt’. It is a bitter cycle of trust being destroyed, hopes denied, a need for total revenge, that makes a person lose all sense of themselves, and of their humanity.

Like all things humans are interconnected: the theory that one person’s actions, no matter how small, can inherently affect another’s life is demonstrated clearly in the tale of Hecuba. In this case the dominoes of hope being knocked down (hope being lost) in one person can cause another to lose, or in this case be denied, their hope later. All this occurs due to the evils surrounding the world such as greed, lust and more. Is hope therefore itself a curse? It seems to be only the case, at least in the tale of Hecuba, due to

⁵⁸ Eur. Hec. 1024-34

⁵⁹ Kazantzidis and Spatharas, 2018, p.59

⁶⁰ Eur. Hec. 1058-9,1069-74,1075-7,1173-5

⁶¹ Eur. Hec. 1265

⁶² Eur. Hec. 1049-50,1056-8

⁶³ Kazantzidis and Spatharas, 2018, p.63

the resounding cause and effect of other evils smothering it and turning it into hopelessness or into a false hope in order for revenge to take place, a deception created by the thoughts of evils, of want and desire. It is due to Hecuba and Polymestor's own actions for revenge and the actions of those around them that make them lose their humanity, but fundamentally it is hope, or its lack, that leads to their actions. Perhaps humans are demonstrated to lose a form of their humanity when a loss of hope is shown because the person in question would lose their ability to dream, to look to the future, to rebuild, to be motivated, to do something, to have a purpose. The person loses a part of themselves that not only aids them in continuing to live but that makes them unique. If that is the case then hope is necessary to live, to be human. Even if that hope is an evil, it is a necessary evil to humankind in order to make life not only bearable but also possible to live as human beings and individuals. However, this does not explain if it is a blessing or a curse. For although, as stated, hope is an evil that is necessary - for without it humankind would suffer - in a twisted way this curse is a blessing to have.

The ancient Greeks thus demonstrate interesting views on hope and humanity. They seem to advocate that hope was useless and yet when a character in a play is shown without hope, they are nothing more than a monster or on death's doorstep, or both. There is a consistent suggestion that one can hope to delay or perhaps speed up a preordained fate but there is nothing one can do to avoid it, the Oedipus myth demonstrates that when he does eventually kill his own father. Perhaps it is only pointless when a person knows their own fate. So far the texts appear to suggest that hoping in life, although pointless, is still something to strive in doing as human beings, for the gods or goddesses can still intervene if only for a time in order to aid or squander a mortal's efforts in life. As such it can provide a comfort to the person in question as long as that person realises it will not change their fate, as what is preordained will be for the fates to decide. Perhaps it is not so much that it is pointless but merely a warning regarding what a person hopes to change. It is fine to hope to receive a form of comfort in trying times, but take heed that hoping can only do so much for even the higher beings are limited to what may be changed.

Chapter Two: Pandora's Box in Hesiod.

Pandora's Box has always been shrouded in mystery. Known to have been the box gifted to Pandora by the God Zeus, there is still debate over what was held in the box, whether it was evil or the box which once held all the good in the world before they escaped after the box was opened. However, despite this mystery the myth is still told today to warn readers of the dangers of curiosity. Adaptations of the myth appear in both books and films, all of which seem to stem from what is believed to be the first written draft of the well-told myth by Hesiod, and all taking a different direction from the last. However, in nearly all depictions the deity Elpis or hope (depending on the version being read/told) makes an appearance. The origin of Elpis (the deity) seems to be centred around Pandora's Box and therefore it appears to be a good focus point to investigate in order to fully explore whether Elpis (hope) is a blessing or a curse, as why would something that is a blessing be held in something holding only evil, or vice-versa?

There are numerous interpretations of Pandora's Box stemming from ancient sources that are believed to have originated from Hesiod⁶⁴ and it is still being reinterpreted to this day. Examples include Sophocles' satyr play *Pandora* or *The Hammers* (which unfortunately has not survived) and Erasmus' *Adagia*, an early modern interpretation. However, the version that appears to be the oldest written tale of Pandora's Box and the most prominent is by Hesiod, who wrote two renditions, the first being in the *Theogony* (though the myth is more of a summary than the actual tale) and the second in *Works and Days*. Jan Bremmer states that 'It is interesting that Pausanias refers by name only to Hesiod. And indeed, whenever later Greek authors refer to the source of the myth of Pandora, they only mention Hesiod'.⁶⁵ Of course, this does not mean Hesiod was the first to tell the tale of Pandora, only the most prominent and oldest written source that is mentioned in any texts found thus far. It is due to this however that the focus is towards Hesiod's *Works and Days*.

⁶⁴ Bremmer, 2008, p.20

⁶⁵ Bremmer, 2008, p.20

The more modern known version goes that Pandora (a young woman) is gifted a box from Zeus and warned not to open it. One day her curiosity gets the better of her and she ignores the warning, releasing all known evils into the world. The only thing that remained was hope, which she managed to contain by sealing the lid again. Some modern tales now state that hope called out to her and she re-opened the box allowing hope out, who proceeded to go out into the world to help.⁶⁶ However, as stated this is a modern-day interpretation not an ancient one and therefore does not reflect the ancient Greeks' own thoughts on the tale. It is perhaps best to first start with Hesiod's tale the *Theogony* which may be the oldest version of Pandora's Box available. Though it has less detail to its component the *Works and Days*, the *Theogony* would still have impacted his other version and could be considered his original "draft" of Pandora's Box, though it is difficult to say which text did come first as both were written around the same time in 700 BC⁶⁷. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod does not name the two components that bring evil which in the modern-day interpretation is the box itself (the container of evils) and Pandora (the one who opened the box and released evil). In fact, it is only in his other edition *Works and Days* that the name of these evils is used and the name Pandora is first created. The first evil mentioned in the *Theogony* was women, regarding which he states

And as in thatched hives bees feed the drones whose nature is to do mischief—by day and throughout the day until the sun goes down the bees are busy and lay the white combs, while the drones stay at home in the covered hives and reap the toil of others into their own bellies—even so Zeus who thunders on high made women to be an evil to mortal men, with a nature to do evil.⁶⁸

These women as stated do not receive a name on which to go by. Perhaps this is for Hesiod did not want to single out one woman but label all women in one bracket, as created by Zeus individually to bring evil to whatever household they live in and man they marry. The second evil again is not mentioned by name, it is only explained why Zeus felt the need to deliver this evil to mankind. Hesiod continues:

⁶⁶ Prot, 2016, p.1

⁶⁷ Pomeroy, S.B, Burstein, S.M, and Roberts J.T, 2008, p.53

⁶⁸ Hes. Th. 594-602

And he gave them a second evil to be the price for the good they had: whoever avoids marriage and the sorrows that women cause, and will not wed, reaches deadly old age without anyone to tend his years, and though he at least has no lack of livelihood while he lives, yet, when he is dead, his kinsfolk divide his possessions amongst them.⁶⁹

So even when a man avoids marriage there is still a form of evil that exists here: it is loneliness, a lack of an heir and perhaps greed amongst fellow men who take for themselves what was built and worked for by the deceased in life. So even if a man can avoid a woman by lack of marriage, the hope of still living a good life is obsolete, as shown by Hesiod's continuous quotes of different forms of evil invoked upon man in diverse ways. But Hesiod does not stop with this second evil, he proceeds by introducing a third evil by stating:

And as for the man who chooses the lot of marriage and takes a good wife suited to his mind, evil continually contends with good; for whoever happens to have mischievous children, lives always with unceasing grief in his spirit and heart within him; and this evil cannot be healed.⁷⁰

Yet again the mortal man is surrounded by evil. It does not matter whether alone, married to an evil wife or even a good wife, there is always a presence of evil to face. There is a distinct lack of hope that only increases the further one reads the *Theogony*. Section by section it destroys any chance of finding a pathway that does not present itself with a form of evil, showing that according to Hesiod it did not matter what humans did, there would be something dark in their lives. This may be linked to the Ancient Greek opinion that fate is already decided, and nothing can change that except for when seeking favour from the gods (see chapter 1 page 12/13). In this case their fate may be that man will suffer an evil in their lives they cannot escape, therefore there is no point in hoping or trying to avoid evil (especially as it is the will of Zeus this evil came into existence), for one way or another it must occur in some ways to keep with the cosmological balance as

⁶⁹ Hes. Th. 602-607

⁷⁰ Hes. Th. 607-612

referred to in Chapter 1 Page11-12 As for Elpis itself there is not one mention of it in this part of the *Theogony*. Consequently it is hard to completely gather what was thought of Elpis, although from what is read in the *Theogony* it can be assumed that in this scenario hope (Elpis) was completely useless, so useless in fact that there was no point in mentioning Elpis. However, it must be noted that although it appears there is no evidence of elpis in this area of text it does not mean Elpis was absent. Over time evidence could have been lost or mistranslated, as well as this the *Theogony* is a large piece of literature, and although Elpis may not have been referred to in this section does not mean it was completely absent in the entire piece of literature.

Hesiod's next book *Works and Days* finally mentions Elpis. *Works and Days* was written around 700 BC. It features many different tales including that of Pandora's Box, and according to Jacklin A. Elliott it is '...certainly one of the earliest stories that featured hope'.⁷¹ Similarly to the *Theogony* Hesiod introduces the first woman who, after going into great detail of her creation, he this time gives a name to 'And he called this woman Pandora, because all they who dwelt on Olympus gave each a gift, a plague to men who eat bread.'⁷² Already an evil is created before the box is even opened, however it could also be looked at as a bringer of evil or cause of evil rather than being an evil itself. Perhaps the most interesting thing to note about Pandora is when Hesiod speaks of her delivery to Prometheus: 'But when he had finished the sheer, hopeless snare, the Father sent glorious Argus-Slayer, [85] the swift messenger of the gods, to take it to Epimetheus as a gift.'⁷³ The term 'hopeless snare' is an interesting phrase. To those who already know the myth of Pandora's Box hope is still in the container and therefore does not exist in the realm of men yet. However, the phrase 'hopeless snare' is interesting for it can highlight this fact or suggest a unique way of looking at Pandora herself.

As previously discussed, the Ancient Greeks believed fate is set so there is no point in hoping. If that is the case, does it mean that Prometheus' fate was predestined and therefore it was 'hopeless' to resist for fate dictated he be with Pandora? If this is true, the

⁷¹ Elliott, 2005, p.4

⁷² Hes. WD. 81-83

⁷³ Hes. WD. 84-86

same could be said for any Greek man, that there is no point in resisting marriage for it is fated for them to marry eventually lest they wish to follow the second pathway of evil spoken of in the *Theogony*.⁷⁴ Or does it mean that there is no hope to resist Pandora, for hope is not yet in existence, still trapped within the box? Is this why hope is trapped in the box itself so that there would be no hope for Epimetheus to resist Pandora? It could also therefore be referencing back to the earlier discussion, that so long as higher powers did not get involved such as Zeus, then Elpis could have changed the fate of Epimetheus. It is only due to a higher power that stopped Elpis from bringing hope -but this would have been true whether Elpis was free or not, so the question remains: why was Elpis entrapped the box? To understand which possible answer it could be, it is necessary to understand how hope is viewed and even the different opinions surrounding what the box was.

The box that once was a jar.

Pandora's Box was not always called this. It wasn't until Erasmus wrote about it in his *Adagia* that the term Pandora's Box came to be, as he wrongly interpreted the word.⁷⁵ In fact, before Erasmus it would have been Pandora's *jar* or what the Greeks called a *pithos*. It is important to know this as it could change the view on the entire tale altogether.

A pithos was a place in which the Ancient Greeks (like with a box) would have stored things.⁷⁶ However, it would not have held just anything, but could have held wine or food, particularly grain. Hesiod was known for pushing the importance of storing one's food at the ready. In *Works and Days*, he states 'Set your slaves to winnow Demeter's holy grain, when strong Orion first appears, on a smooth threshing-floor in an airy place. Then measure it and store it in jars.'⁷⁷ For Hesiod the jar (or at least storing food inside the jar and saving the harvest) is something to be proud of, especially when one has

⁷⁴ Hes. Th. 602-607

⁷⁵ Mieder, 2002, p.41

⁷⁶ Lovano, 2019, p.402

⁷⁷ Hes. WD. 571

stored enough grain to see them through the winter. To open a jar was to use the provisions inside, to use the reserves through the winter, for example:

In this way your corn-ears will bow to the ground with fullness if the Olympian himself gives a good result at the last, and you will sweep the cobwebs from your bins and you will be glad, I think, as you take of your garnered substance. And so you will have plenty till you come to grey springtime, and will not look wistfully to others, but another shall be in need of your help.⁷⁸

By doing so, when these reserves were needed a man could relax knowing that down in his cellar within a jar there they would be. So, the jar was not something to fear or be cautious of but enjoy and be proud about. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant state that ‘The day it is open is like a holiday; the peasant drops his miserliness and for once gives himself over to satiety’.⁷⁹ If this is true then the jar was the opposite of being something evil but a good, one that would ward away evil such as hunger or famine. Would it then be logical to assume that perhaps the things held in the jar would not be evil either?

Verdenius states that ‘When Pandora lifted the lid, all goods flew back to heaven, except hope’⁸⁰ which is why humanity kept being able to hope and evil came into the world. However, although this may reflect hope in a more positive light it is a very unusual interpretation of Pandora’s Box. His interpretation does make sense in some regards and makes a reasonable alternative to the tale, as a pithos would be filled with food before being sealed ready for use in the later year. The household that owned the pithos would be aware that there was food awaiting to be used (something that would be considered a good) and when the pithos was finally opened, the goods inside (the food) became used up and would no longer exist. Therefore, in the words of Verdenius, the goods inside (or the food) ‘flew back to heaven’⁸¹ When the pithos was opened. This viewpoint is also in keeping with Hesiod’s view on the pithos being a glorious thing to protect and boast of.

⁷⁸ Hes. WD. 448

⁷⁹ Detienne and Vernant, 1989, p.78

⁸⁰ Verdenius, 2018, p.67

⁸¹ Verdenius, 2018, p.67

However, it does not coincide with what Hesiod writes on Pandora's Box. When Pandora opens the jar, Hesiod states:

For ere this the tribes of men lived on earth remote and free from ills and hard toil and heavy sicknesses which bring the Fates upon men; for in misery men grow old quickly. But the woman took off the great lid of the jar with her hands and scattered, all these and her thought caused sorrow and mischief to men.⁸²

Hesiod does not state that it is the good of the world that is scattered. Instead it appears Hesiod is continuing his train of thought that it is ills and misery being released, or as stated above, scattered by the hands of Pandora. Her lack of thought resulted in misery. This correlates with the idea of female work: if a woman scattered (used) the seeds to feed her household without thought of where they were needed the most, and did not use them sparingly with fair management, then it could result in problems for the household as a whole, possible ills and most especially hard toil. This is highlighted by the final sentence in which it states 'all these and her thought caused sorrow and mischief to men'.⁸³ Therefore, though Girard does propose an interesting interpretation of the myth it makes more sense to view the jar as something that held within it evil, not good, something that scholars such as Ronald J. Nydam⁸⁴ and Robert A. Kaster⁸⁵ agree with. Of course, it cannot be denied that a pithos was meant to be a positive object to have in one's home; Hesiod himself states this, however this in turn only brings a more sinister view of Pandora's jar as being deceitful in more than one way.

Deception

Pandora herself was a beauty and a gift - that was the deception. Zeus required Pandora to look desirable so she would be temptation itself to any man and therefore lead Epimetheus to ignore his brother's warnings and accept the gift from the gods, falling into Zeus' trap. Without Pandora the box was less likely to have been opened. When Pandora was created, she was endowed with a diverse set of traits by each god and

⁸² Hes. WD. 83

⁸³ Hes. WD. 83

⁸⁴ Nydam, 1999, p.112.

⁸⁵ Caston and Kaster, 2016, p22

goddess including the most dangerous to humanity – curiosity -which was the reason she opened the box despite being warned. As Pandora was a deception, so too was the jar. Elissa Marder writes ‘Both are duplicitous creations: They are beautiful on the outside while being disgusting, evil and debased on the inside’.⁸⁶ The box, like Pandora, was a deceit that appeared to be good and would bring good fortune but in truth was the exact opposite. It is interesting however that Pandora is the deception to men in bringing the first evil, and the second is the jar which deceives Pandora. It repeats the theme already created by Pandora of an evil that is in disguise. As Detienne and Vernant state ‘The first relationship is that of exterior to interior. The evil is disguised inside Pandora beneath a seductive exterior’⁸⁷ and the evil in the pithos is disguised by the ruse of the jar itself. In this case then, would there be a third ruse inside the jar?

When Pandora opened the jar all the evil came out and mankind is assailed by misfortune. But this misfortune cannot be seen, in fact Hesiod doesn’t specify exactly what evil appears from within the jar, only that Zeus made it so there was no avoiding them ‘Of themselves diseases come upon men continually by day and by night, bringing mischief to mortals silently; for wise Zeus took away speech from them.’⁸⁸ To sum it up: ‘the situation is this; The evil that can be seen and heard is hidden in the seductive form of a desirable good’⁸⁹ and ‘the evils that cannot be taken for a good remain hidden and overtake us by surprise’.⁹⁰ In either case however there is still no avoiding the evil; even when it is seen it is not completely recognised until it is too late to avoid. So, there is the seductive evil which Pandora is categorized within and perhaps (it can be argued) that so too is the pithos, and then there is the hidden evil which comes to plague the world when the pithos is opened. But does Elpis fit into either category, or could it still be classed as a good hidden within the evil?

Elpis, like Pandora, was a female (as discussed in Chapter 1 P 16) – in Hesiod’s *Works and Days* she is described as such. The fact Elpis is in the form of a female is interesting

⁸⁶ Marder, 2012, p.13

⁸⁷ Detienne and Vernant, 1989, p.77

⁸⁸ Hes. WD. 83

⁸⁹ Detienne and Vernant, 1989, p.77

⁹⁰ Detienne and Vernant, 1989, p.77

as it alludes to a form of deception based on how Hesiod presents women as deceitful. As Adrienne Mayor states ‘As in the Old Testament story of Eve and the serpent, the Pandora myth blames a woman as the agent of mankind’s woes.’⁹¹ Would it then not make sense that Elpis (hope), especially when it is as described by Neil as a ‘false hope’, would too be a female that is deceptive and attempting to be an agent of mankind’s woes? Not only could Elpis be deceiving (like Hecuba and many other goddesses who wear a disguise and use trickery to win or achieve revenge) Elpis is also known for being seductive and difficult to resist (like Pandora and the Pithos).

The seductive nature of Elpis (as hope) can be seen in the myth of Hecuba with Polymestor as seen in chapter 1 page 25 when he is seduced by the thought of riches. It can also be seen when it is addressed as ‘dangers comforter’ by Joel Aden Schlosser.⁹² This is due to the fact in trying times hope is an infamous comforter and influence on humanity – which can be seen with Hecuba who is clinging to the last of it in order to achieve her dream of revenge (as shown in chapter 1 page 24-25). However, a comforter it may be, it also proves to be dangerous in causing over-optimism. Jacklin A. Eliot certainly believes this to be the case for Elpis in Pandora’s Box: ‘Hesiodus’ writing on the origin of hope implied that it is just one more evil visited upon humankind, the “sting in the tail” that encourages foolish over-optimism’.⁹³ Despite the nature of hope causing this foolishness it is apparent that it is human to still have hope. It is not just a seductive form of Elpis that can be seen, but a deceitful one.

The Iconography in chapter 1 Page 15-18 shows Figure Two can be argued to depict this deceitful form that is Elpis. Not only does it portray a sense of wickedness through the smirk (discussed already in Chapter 1 page 18) but also by the very vase the figure is coming out of. The fact this image is of what is thought to be a perfume bottle, as already discussed in Chapter 1 page 17 is also an act of deception to ensnare men, the image becomes oddly poetic with its hinting of the many forms of deception around women. The Boston aryballos, as a perfume flask, meant it contained a substance that

⁹¹ Mayor, 2020, p.157

⁹² Schlosser, 2013, p.169

⁹³ Eliot, 2005, p.5

according to Barringer 'was known for its seductive qualities and its association with Aphrodite'.⁹⁴ This is not the only time that aromatics were associated with a higher deity. In Greek myth the gods and goddesses used and delighted in aromatics: Demeter with her 'beauty spread round about her and a lovely fragrance was wafted from her sweet-smelling robes'⁹⁵ and Hera who seduced Zeus by using perfume as well; 'with ambrosia first did she cleanse from her lovely body every stain, and anointed it richly with oil, ambrosial, soft, and of rich fragrance'.⁹⁶ But none were more associated with the scent of perfume than Aphrodite. George J Doland states 'Aphrodite, the goddess of love, could impart the power of seduction to humans by granting them access to an irresistible fragrance'.⁹⁷ However, an irresistible fragrance could prove to be a person's undoing. Perfume seduces and entraps the intended, a crafty snare that both men and women can use upon one another. This imagery references back to the idea that women can be deceiving, such as Pandora, following on the theme of deception starting with Pandora, then the box, and ending with what is inside.

Furthermore, according to Hesiod (in his version of Pandora's Box) Aphrodite bestowed Pandora with both *charis* (grace) and *pothos* (sexual longing) to attract men. This was in order to entice Pandora's husband into accepting her from the gods, though it was more to do with tricking him than anything else. According to 'Just as Aphrodite's gifts veil the shameless and deceitful Pandora, so perfume masks the debilitating effects of women's lust: both are ruses and so traps for men.'⁹⁸ Therefore, since both Pandora and perfume jars have direct links to Aphrodite it could be argued that the creator of this jar was attempting to demonstrate this link with the myth of Pandora's Box by having Elpis as its decoration. The jar could simply be an indicator towards Pandora itself or it could mean something more sinister. In the same way that Pandora was deceitfully masked by Aphrodite's gifts, so too is Elpis. A warning perhaps to the owner of this aryballos that

⁹⁴ Barringer, 2005, p.42

⁹⁵ Hom. 2. 275

⁹⁶ Classen, C.V., Classen, C., Howes, D. and Synnott, A, 1994, p.45

⁹⁷ Dorland, 1993, p.70

⁹⁸ Barringer, 2005, p.42

just as perfume can entrap and cause lust, so as well can hope, and just like hope perfume can be a negative thing if not used carefully.

Figure Two also demonstrates knowledge of the entrapment by having what appears to be the lid of the jar on top of the figure's head, ready to push back down. In Hesiod's texts Elpis is not seen, as the jar is shut before it can escape

Only Hope remained there in an unbreakable home within under the rim of the great jar, and did not fly out at the door; for ere that, the lid of the jar stopped her, by the will of Aegis-holding Zeus who gathers the clouds.⁹⁹

Therefore, there is no clear-cut description within the text of Elpis to compare to the iconographic images in Chapter One which are the only source of information to demonstrate how Elpis may have looked in the eyes of the Ancient Greeks for that period. In fact, despite believing that the two images used were based on Hesiod's telling of the tale Pandora's Box (discussed in Chapter One page 16), Elpis is only briefly mentioned at the end of the *Works and Days* and only due to it being separated by Hesiod from the other evils released.

Every evil contained within the jar is included within the same group and not named individually. However, Elpis/hope is mentioned all on its own:

Only Hope remained there in an unbreakable home within under the rim of the great jar and did not fly out at the door; for ere that, the lid of the jar stopped her, by the will of Aegis-holding Zeus who gathers the clouds.

Here is a classic reference to chapter 1 page 12, where the fate of humankind can be influenced and changed but only by the will of higher beings so long as another higher being with more power does not get involved. Zeus has inputted his will onto Elpis to keep her trapped within the box, sealing mankind's fate the way it is and making Elpis unable to possibly come to aid or hinder mankind anymore. The question is, which would Elpis do? Was Zeus' will to keep hope trapped another curse, or a form of pity to

⁹⁹ Hes. WD. 96-100

mankind by not subjecting them to another evil? Or was the third deception to make Elpis appear to be an evil that was a good, subverting the earlier ideology that it appears to look good but on the inside is bad. This time by humanity's viewpoint of the "deity" in question appears to be bad but is truly good? That there is no way of predicting the god's thoughts or actions by mere mortals and when humanity tries it is left grasping at straws.

However, there are issues with this statement. In Hesiod's *Theogony* he stated there were three paths of evil to follow, one being that a man could take a good wife though he would suffer with bad children. If a good wife could exist, it cannot be certain that the image of Elpis, of hope as a woman, was necessary a bad thing. As Froma I. Zeitlin writes, Hope is like a baby in a woman's womb¹⁰⁰ – something good that can come from the bad (once more touching on this cosmological balance of good/bad fortune). Perhaps therefore in images and literature this is why Elpis is presented as a female. Hope is as complicated as a woman, just as deceiving, enigmatic, and just as they can bring evil, they can also bring good depending on the situation (in the eyes of the Ancient Greeks). Elpis promotes neither evil nor good, it depends on how it is viewed by humanity and because it perplexes humans it is impossible to completely make it good, but equally as impossible to note it as completely evil. This could be why Hesiod may not mix it with the other evils from within the box. For only when hope is mixed with evil does it become an evil – become more expectation than hopefulness? Therefore, it was good that it stayed in the jar because it did not then become one of the multiple evils to escape.

It is still odd that Hesiod does separate hope from the group of evils and puts it aside. It is even stranger that Zeus would imprison it; unlike the other gods he was never known for showing lenience in his punishments: one would only have to look at Epimetheus' brother¹⁰¹. Yet this may be the very reason to why Zeus put hope in the box. As Ronald J Nydam states 'But held as it is, in Pandora's Box, hope is very much a possession of the gods'¹⁰². It is therefore shown as something that a human could not fully grasp and

¹⁰⁰ Zeitlin, 1996, p.64 also see: Hawley, R., Levick, B., Levick, B. and Rawson, B., 1995, p.59; Reeder, E.D. and Humphreys, S.C, 1995, p.53

¹⁰¹ Barchers, 2001, p.171

¹⁰² Nydam, 1999, p.112

therefore in order to use hope in the only fashion available perhaps it was only when the Greeks would pray to the gods such as Tuche. Zeus may have done this to combat (even more so) the human race from being on the same level as humans and make them depend on the gods in order to combat bad fortune or evil. As such, unless the gods or goddesses granted the prayers of the ancient Greeks it was pointless for them to hope or have hope, for humans cannot ever dare to trust it completely, giving way to the false hope that is our penance for Pandora opening the box. Without evil there is no need for hope, but without the gods' help hoping is pointless for it will not banish the evil and ills, for no mortal can oppose the fates without aid from a higher being.

Although still trapped within the box, it cannot be said that the deity Elpis was a separate entity in Greek life, the fact there is a deity in existence that partly represents it shows this. So, in that regard was Elpis truly trapped in the jar? Evil was in existence through Pandora if following the *Theogony* and the deliberate personality she was designed to have. However, that evil had yet to enter humankind, it was still only amongst the gods. With the lifting of the jar these evils left the "realm of the gods and entered the human realm"¹⁰³ all but hope who it could be argued was partly in the world of humans and partly still in control of the gods. In the hands of the gods it is not an evil for one should look to the gods in hope of changing their fate, but in the hands of humankind to hope and expect one's fate will change by doing nothing it becomes false hope, a hope that is deceiving and evil. As Detienne and Vernant States: 'Good and evil are joined together like two sides of a coin. Woman is an evil, but without this evil the corresponding good is lacking. It is impossible to have one without the other.'¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Hes. WD. 83

¹⁰⁴ Detienne and Vernant, 1989, p.77

Conclusion

Elpis. A word that could mean hope or expectation, or even both, that for this dissertation is explored in great length as the word or deity that personifies as 'hope'. Throughout this work there have been discussions on what/who was Elpis, what did Elpis look like, and what did Elpis mean. Although these discussions led to the conclusion that Elpis was seen as pointless in the eyes of the Ancient Greeks, as fate cannot be changed or is in the hands of the gods, it also points to the fact that hope is what makes people human. What binds people and causes them to pray to the gods or goddesses for better fortune, a better future or just something to cling onto in the bleakest of times. Now and then hope appears to be a curse as it also brings false hope and is a dangerous comforter that can blindsight from the truth, however this same argument can be used against Tuche when she brings misfortune to human lives. It is part of the cosmological balance that the gods must adhere to even when they may wish otherwise.

Euripides demonstrates what would happen to those who lose their hope and therefore their humanity in his literature text *Hecuba*. He shows that without it the lives of humans become more monstrous than what they once were. In the eyes of the writer Euripides hope or *Elpis* is a blessing to have, a blessing that makes us mortal. Hesiod's text was the second case study looked at regarding Elpis, and was a lot more complex. *Works and Days* (the second book of Hesiod's literature that was examined) was the one that really centred on Pandora's Box. It is the first piece that has the name Pandora used and is the one to mention Elpis, even if only for a second. This tale was the one that prompted the question of whether Elpis was a blessing or curse.

Yet despite being such a big factor in researching Elpis, Hesiod's thoughts and feelings to do with Elpis (within that section of the text) are well hidden. Not once did he mention whether Elpis was another evil that unlike the others did not manage to escape or was a good hidden within the bad. Nor does he mention what happens to Elpis afterwards. The reader can presume however that not much more can be done. What his telling of the tale does do is cause a long line of questions for the reader, for example, why is Elpis in the jar? Was Elpis an evil or a good? Why do we still have Elpis (hope) if it was trapped in

the jar? These questions are only a number of the many that has resulted in reading his tale of Pandora's Box and since then many have tried to find answers, rewritten the tale from their own perspective and created images with the tale in mind both ancient (figures 1 and 2 for example) and modern (in art and in film).

Hesiod creates what Elpis has always been to both the ancient and the modern world: ambiguous. There are difficulties in stating outright whether Elpis is a blessing or a curse especially when considering it from an ancient perspective, with the primary issue being that there is no possible way to know for certain. Speculation and close analysis of ancient text and iconography can aid the reader into getting to a reasonable answer, but it does not change the fact the work could have been misinterpreted (as seen in Pandora's Box) or lost. The second issue is that even now people argue over hope being a good thing or a bad, and the ancients were not much different. Perhaps that was why Hesiod left the role of Elpis (the deity) so open in his creation of it and why Euripides also showed *Elpis* from both angles in his play *Hecuba*, as neither fundamentally could answer this age-old question of Elpis: a blessing or curse?

Elpis being a blessing or curse is difficult to answer as in many aspects, as argued for throughout this essay, it is both in various ways. It is demonstrated as a good thing (for Hecuba and for praying) a bad (for being blind sighted and unable to change fate) and by some both a curse and a blessing (as two sides of a coin). The ancient Greeks appear to try to teach in their literature and art (as shown in this essay) through their warnings of delving too deep into hope's abyss but also by showing what would happen if humanity did not have hope at all, and its need to pray to the gods. Therefore, in conclusion it seems to be that for the Ancient Greeks, at least during the time of Hesiod and Hecuba, Elpis was neither a blessing nor a curse, it was both. Elpis was a curse for humanity as it hid the approaching evil and could make a person a fool. However it is what makes us human and helps us continue to live despite the bad, even if sometimes it made us foolish for believing in something so much, and for that reason it is still a blessing since it also gives humanity the will to continue despite all the misfortune. As shown through Tuche, the ancient Greeks looked at it like anything else: too much or too little of it would tip the cosmic balance; however, in practical doses, and so long as one still remained aware of

their limitations, it was fine to keep hoping. A blessing would only become a curse when decided by fate.

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