

HESIODIC *KHÁOS*: A BRIEF INTERPRETATIVE ESSAY

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Abstract

As a primordial entity in Hesiod's *Theogony*, *Kháos* has been the object of several interpretations since Antiquity. Based on its mentions in the poem and examining current interpretations, this paper aims to investigate its meaning and role in the cosmos presented by Hesiod through the historical-philological method. The focus will be on the poem itself in order to understand what *Kháos* represents within the poem's internal logic.

Keywords

Kháos; *Theogony*; Hesiod; cosmogony.

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Resumo

Entidade primordial na *Teogonia* de Hesíodo, *Kháos* tem sido objeto de várias interpretações desde a Antiguidade. Com base em suas menções no poema e em interpretações correntes, este artigo tem como objetivo investigar seu significado e seu papel no cosmo apresentado por Hesíodo por meio do método histórico-filológico. O enfoque incidirá sobre o próprio poema, tentando-se compreender o papel de *Kháos* dentro de sua lógica interna.

Palavras-chave

Kháos; Teogonia; Hesíodo; cosmogonia.

Introduction

The debate on the meaning of *Kháos* in Hesiod's *Theogony* dates back to Antiquity itself, and modern scholars have also dedicated themselves to investigating it.² Given *Kháos*'s elusive character, this paper intends to be a brief interpretative effort in order to understand the possible meaning and role of this primordial entity focusing on the poem itself, but not disregarding current interpretations.

Before starting the analysis, it is necessary to briefly address what I consider to be a common misunderstanding and confusion caused by the use of the word 'chaos' when dealing with Hesiod's *Theogony*. Many classicists who work with the poem are aware of the problem raised by the use of 'chaos' for Hesiod's theogonic *Kháos*, nevertheless a certain usage is still seen in ways that reinforce the misinterpretation as 'disorder.' As an example, when classicists say that Typhon/Typhoeus is 'an agent of chaos' in the *Theogony* (as D  tienne and Vernant, 1991: 117-119), they mean that he is an agent against the order, more specifically the Zeus's order.³ However, it leads readers to think that Typhon is somehow related to the primordial *Kháos*, which is not the case. Typhon is born from the union of Earth (*G  a*) and Tartarus and belongs to a lineage that is not related to *Kháos*. In fact, as put by Mond   (1989: 28), *Kháos* and Earth inaugurate not the 'two branches' from which the whole Hesiodic cosmos descends, but they are 'two separate trees.' Hence, Earth's descendants, on the one hand, and *Kh  os*'s, on the other, bear different functions in the poem's organization of the cosmos.

The use of the phrase 'agent of chaos' for Typhon presupposes 'chaos' as disorder, and although this is not the meaning of *Kh  os* in the *Theogony*, it leads to mixing up '*Kh  os*,' 'chaos,' and Typhon's role and function in Hesiod's cosmogony. The phrase 'agent of chaos' comes from the motif of *Chaoskampf* (German for 'struggle against chaos'), as worked by Hermann Gunkel in 1895 for the interpretation of biblical and Mesopotamian literature.⁴ Although the term itself does not appear in Gunkel's book, it came to designate the battle against the so-called 'chaotic agents' fought by

² The most influential material in English specifically about *Kh  os* has been Solmsen (1950), Bussanich (1983), and Mond   (1989). In French, see Podbielski (1986) and Wacziarg (2001). In Portuguese, see Torrano (2012).

³ Both spellings are used in the *Theogony*, Typhon (*Typh    n*, 306) and Typhoeus (*Typh    s*, 821 e 869).

⁴ The original title is *Sch  pfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*, published in English as *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* (trans. K. William Whitney Jr.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

divine beings or heroes who represent the supposed order (Sonik, 2013: 1, n. 1).

Not even renowned Classicists dealing with Hesiod's *Theogony* escape from the trap of using 'chaos' in a kind of losing manner that can cause a certain misreading or even a deleterious confusion.⁵ I hope this paper can be useful to specialists and to the general public in helping to elucidate the non-chaotic character of *Kháos* in Hesiod's *Theogony*. I also intend to propose an understanding of this primordial entity that I believe has been underrated regarding Hesiod's theogonic program, trying to make sense of its role as the ancestral that originates the lineage of Night.

***Kháos*, the first of all entities**

Before narrating the birth of the gods, Hesiod's *Theogony* starts with a long proem of 115 lines in which the poet invokes the Muses and narrates his experience at Mount Helicon with them, from whom he received his song.⁶ As daughters of Memory (*Mnemosýne*) and Zeus, the Muses are the divine authority that legitimates the poet's song in front of an audience.⁷ Their divine authority, however, does not imply that the content of their song is true, for truth is not a necessity nor an aspiration for the Muses. As early as in the poem's beginning, they declare to 'know how to say many false things similar to genuine ones,' and they also know how to proclaim true things when they wish (27-28).⁸ Regardless of the true or untrue nature of

⁵ See, for example, Détienne and Vernant (1991). Although they define the primordial entity in Hesiod's *Theogony* as a 'gaping, bottomless chasm' on p. 62, when they talk about the Titanomachy, on p. 76, they clearly regard 'chaos' as a state of confusion: '[...] all the different regions of the cosmos and all the elements are once again mixed up in a confusion resembling the primordial chaos. [...]' See also p. 135: '[...] with Hesiod, the account of the theogony follows a linear development, passing from disorder to order, [...]' Summing up, their notion of Hesiodic primordial chaos comprises a bottomless chasm (p. 62), a state of confusion with all elements of the cosmos mixed up (p. 76), and disorder (pp. 134-135). See especially pp. 117-119 for an analysis of Typhon's role as an agent of chaos and disorder.

⁶ For a commentary to the proem as a hymn to the Muses, being themselves the subject and object of their song, see Pucci (2007). The editions and commentaries consulted for this paper are those by West (1966), Most (2006), Arrighetti (1998) and Ricciardelli (2018).

⁷ Their birth is narrated in 53-63 and mentioned again in 915-17.

⁸ The translation used in this paper is Most's (2006). The debate raised by the Muses' declaration in 27-28 is extensive. See, for example, Clay (2003: 58 ff.) and, in Portuguese, Brandão (2005: 75 ff.). From a point of view external to the poem, by declaring himself as the Muses' spokesman, the poet is also declaring his narrative as dependent on them.

what they sing, their knowledge is absolute, comprising the past, present, and future, for they know 'what is and what will be and what was before' (38). As put by Bussanich (1983: 212), the Muses 'are the voices of cosmic memory.'⁹ Besides the authority of this divine knowledge, their song gathers importance as well by its glorifying power, for singing about the gods is to glorify them (as can be seen in 67 and 105).

By invoking these goddesses in the proem's beginning, and then by reiterating the invocation in the end of it, the poet consequently summons their knowledge, from which he can start to sing a *theogony*, i.e., a song about the birth of the gods, and a cosmogony, i.e., how the cosmos came to be, since the gods are elements of the cosmos.¹⁰

Near the middle of the proem (43-46) a sensible concern with the beginning of the cosmos is noticeable: 'Sending forth their deathless voice [the Muses'], they glorify in their song first the venerated race of the gods *from the beginning*, those to whom Earth and broad Sky gave birth, and those who were born from these, the gods givers of good things; [...]' (italics mine). That concern is even more explicit in the proem's end, when the poet reiterates his invocation to the Muses, and repeatedly asks them to tell him how *in the beginning or in the first place* (*tà prôta*, 108 e 113, *ex arkhês*,

As observed by Clay (2003: 63-64), Hesiod cannot guarantee the absolute truthfulness of his song, for what he narrates in the *Theogony* is beyond human and, therefore, unverifiable. She points out that with the Muses' speech in 27-28, it is made evident the unbridgeable gap between divine knowledge, available only to the gods, who can discern between what is true and what is false masqueraded as true, and human knowledge, incapable of doing that.

⁹ As the 'voices of cosmic memory' that provide the songs for the poet in the archaic oral tradition, they can also be considered as the voices that sing a 'history of the cosmos,' since that tradition can be understood as narrating a history from the origin of the cosmos with Hesiod's *Theogony* to the present moment of the poet with Hesiod's *Works and Days*, encompassing the Homeric Hymns and Homer's epics. The concept of 'history of the cosmos' does not imply a discourse about facts or historical truth, but that which oral tradition accounted as a legitimate narrative about the past. For the use of the 'history of the cosmos' concept developed for the poems in hexameter belonging to the archaic oral tradition, see Graziosi and Haubold (2005).

¹⁰ Formed by *theós* ('god,' 'divinity') and *gónos* ('race,' 'descendance,' 'procreation'), the title *Theogony* is not attested for Hesiod's poem before the stoic philosopher Chrysippus, who lived in the 3rd century B.C., and was possibly established by the Alexandrian grammarians. However, in the 5th century B.C., Herodotus uses the word *theogony* when attributing to Homer and Hesiod the creation of the gods for the Hellenes (2.53). Observe that Herodotus also says that the Persian *Mágos* sings a *theogony* (1.132).

115) the gods came to be and who was the first one.¹¹ As already noticed by Clay (2003: 72):

[...] In fact what is striking is Hesiod's repeated insistence (*tà prōta*, 108, 113, *prōton*, 115; *ex arkhēs*, 115) on the correct beginning; he demands of the Muses that they begin at the absolute beginning and proceed in a strictly chronological fashion. (Transliterations mine.)

The Muses, then, fulfill the shepherd-poet's request (22-23 and 26), starting a genealogy of the cosmos with 'the very first one' (*prōtista*) to come into being (116-125):¹²

In truth [*étai men*], first of all [*prōtista*] Chasm [*Kháos*] came to be [*géneto*], and then [*autár épeita*] broad-breasted Earth, the ever immovable seat of all the immortals who possess snowy Olympus' peak and murky Tartarus in the depths of the broad-pathed earth, and Eros, who is the most beautiful among the immortal gods, the limb-melter – he overpowers the mind and the thoughtful counsel of all the gods and of all human beings in their breasts.

From Chasm [*Kháos*], Erebus and black Night came to be; and then Aether and Day came forth from Night, who conceived and bore them after mingling in love with Erebus.

Line 116 starts with *étai men*, a combination of particles expressing a strong asseveration (Denniston 1954: 389), emphasizing the beginning of the theogonic and cosmogonic account with *Kháos* as the one that comes 'first of all,' and the use of the superlative *prōtista* (116) stresses its foremost position in the sequence of primordial gods, appearing even before Earth (*Gaia*), who comes next (116-118). As the other primordial gods, *Kháos* is not born from a parent in particular, but simply comes into being. It is from both *Kháos* and Earth that the Hesiodic cosmos descends (with the

¹¹ *Theogony* 104-115: 'Hail, children of Zeus, and give me lovely song; glorify the sacred race of the immortals who always are, those who were born from Earth and starry Sky, and from dark Night, and those whom salty Pontus (Sea) nourished. Tell how *in the first place* (*tà prōta*) gods and earth were born, and rivers and the boundless sea seething with its swell, and the shining stars and the broad sky above, and those who were born from them, the gods givers of good things; and how they divided their wealth and distributed their honors, and also how they *first* (*tà prōta*) took possession of many-folded Olympus. These things tell me *from the beginning* (*ex arkhēs*), Muses who have your mansions on Olympus, and tell which one of them *was born first* (*prōton*).' (Italics mine.)

¹² *Theogony* 116-125: ἤτοι μὲν πρότιστα Χάος γένητ'· αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα / Γαῖ' εὐρύστερνος, πάντων ἕδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ / ἀθανάτων οἳ ἔχουσι κάρη νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου / Τάρταρά τ' ἡρόεντα μυχῷ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης, / ἥδ' Ἔρος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι, (120) / λυσιμελής, πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ' ἀνθρώπων / δάμναται ἐν στήθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπιφρονα βουλήν. / ἐκ Χάεος δ' Ἐρεβὸς τε μέλαινα τε Νύξ ἐγένοντο· / Νυκτὸς δ' αὖτ' Αἰθήρ τε καὶ Ἥμερῃ ἐξεγένοντο, / οὓς τέκε κυσαμένη Ἐρέβει φιλότῃ μιγεῖσα. (125). This and all subsequent text in Greek from the *Theogony* is from Most's edition (2006).

exceptions of Tartarus and Eros), but not as a primordial couple, and it seems to be important to the theogonic and cosmogonic history being told that the cosmos did not come from their union, resulting in separate lineages. This implies that Earth should not be born *from Kháos*, and the text is clear about a sequence expressed by *autár épeita* ('but thereafter'). Different from 'broad-breasted Earth,' *Kháos* does not receive any qualification or explanatory phrase in the passage besides being the first to appear. And still different from 'earth,' *kháos* is a term whose meaning is not evident, found only in four mentions in the poem (116, 123, 700, and 814).¹³ In addition, later usage of the word *kháos* derives its meaning from different interpretations of Hesiodic *Kháos*.

Translating it by Chasm, Most (2006: 13, n. 7) reasonably points out the misleading character of rendering *Kháos* by 'Chaos,' a cognate that leads the reader to think of 'a jumble of disordered matter.' As previously mentioned, this is not the conception of *Kháos* to be found in Hesiod's *Theogony*. It is possible that this notion became current after the Roman poet Ovid, whose poem *Metamorphoses* presents *Chaos* – the Latin spelling of *Kháos* – as a confused and shapeless mass of discordant elements which was the state of the cosmos before the appearance of the ocean, the earth and the sky.¹⁴ Such meaning is also found in Lucian's *Amores* (32) in the 2nd century AD.¹⁵ Later, in the 5th century AD, Augustin of Hippo attributes to the Greeks a conception of *chaos* found in Ovid's poem: 'first, therefore, the matter was confused and formless, from where came all things that are distinct and formed, this is what I believe that was named *chaos* by the Greeks.'¹⁶

Although the translation as Chasm avoids the confusion between Hesiodic *Kháos* and chaos as 'a jumble of disordered matter,' it implies a reading in which the word *kháos* is identified with *khásma* ('chasm,' 'gulf'). This

¹³ When the words 'kháos' and 'earth' are not capitalized, they are being regarded as common nouns.

¹⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5-9: *Ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum / unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe, / quem dixere chaos: rudis indigestaque moles / nec quicquam nisi pondus iners congestaque eodem / non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum.* (Edited by Magnus, 1892.) 'Before the ocean and the earth appeared – / before the skies had overspread them all – / the face of Nature in a vast expanse / was naught but Chaos uniformly waste. / It was a rude and undeveloped mass, / that nothing made except a ponderous weight; / and all discordant elements confused, / were there congested in a shapeless heap.' (Translated by More, 1922.)

¹⁵ *Apud* Kirk (1957: 27), who attributes the origin of this notion to the Stoics.

¹⁶ Translation mine. *De Genesi contra Manich.* 1.5.9: *primo ergo materia facta est confusa et informis unde omnia fierent quae distincta et formata sunt quod credo a Graecis chaos appellari* (*apud* Solmsen, 1950: 235-236, n. 4).

identification is fundamentally based on two arguments. First, the word *khásma* is used in the *Theogony* (740) in beginning of the description of Tartarus in the phrase *khásma méga* ('big chasm'), designating an abyss whose floor is not reachable even after a fall during a whole year.¹⁷ In the end of the description of Tartarus, the lines 736-739, that preceded the mention of *khásma méga* in 740, are repeated in 807-810, but this time *Kháos zopheroîo* ('gloomy *Kháos*') is mentioned instead of *khásma méga*. This identification is hard to refute, since *khásma méga* and *Kháos zopheroîo* seem to occupy the same cosmographical place. Solmsen (1950: 238) firmly asserts that '*khásma* is the same as *kháos*.' West (1966: 192) considers that *Kháos* is best translated as Chasm and is also in favor of its identification with *khásma*, and so is Podbielski (1986). Chasm, therefore, is currently the predominant interpretation for Hesiodic *Kháos*, as can be seen from West's edition, Most's translation, and several works that deal with the *Theogony*, such as Détienne and Vernant (1991: 62) and Muellner (1996: 55).¹⁸

The second argument, which reinforces the first, is a possible etymological link between *kháos* and *khásma*. Although Chantraine (1980: 1256) does not mention any relation between them, Beekes (2010: 1614) suggests an old connection between the group *kháos/khaûnos*, with *khaûnos* meaning 'porous,' 'spongy,' and *kháskō/khásma/khaneîn*, all these three related to the action of 'opening,' 'yawning.' In his brief but careful reassessment of the etymological evidence, Mondì (1989: 7) concludes that both groups are derived from different roots, not having any immediate connection

¹⁷ *Theogony* 736-745: ἔνθα δὲ γῆς δνοφερῆς καὶ Ταρτάρου ἡερόεντος / πόντου τ' ἀτρυγέτοιο καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος / ἐξείης πάντων πηγαὶ καὶ πείρατ' ἔασιν / ἀργαλὲ' εὐρώεντα, τὰ τε στυγέουσι θεοὶ περ' / χάσμα μέγ', οὐδὲ κε πάντα τελεσφόρον εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν (740) / οὐδ' αὖς ἴκοιτ', εἰ πρῶτα πολέων ἔντοσθε γένοιτο, / ἀλλὰ κεν ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα φέροι πρὸ θύελλα θυέλλης / ἀργαλὲ'· δεινὸν δὲ καὶ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι / τοῦτο τέρας· καὶ Νυκτὸς δ' ἑρεμνῆς οἰκία δεινὰ / ἔσθηκεν νεφέλης κεκαλυμμένα κυανέῃσιν. (745). 'That is where the sources and limits of the dark earth are, and of murky Tartarus, of the barren sea, and of the starry sky, of everything, one after another, distressful, dank, things which even the gods hate: a great chasm, whose bottom one would not reach in a whole long year, once one was inside the gates, but one would be borne hither and thither by one distressful blast after another – it is terrible for the immortal gods as well, this monstrosity; and the terrible houses of dark Night stand here, shrouded in black clouds.' Compare it to the description of Tartarus in lines 721-725: 'For it is just as far from the earth to murky Tartarus: for a bronze anvil, falling down from the sky for nine nights and days, on the tenth day would arrive at the earth; [and in turn it is the same distance from the earth to murky Tartarus:] and again, a bronze anvil, falling down from the earth for nine nights and days, on the tenth would arrive at Tartarus.'

¹⁸ Solmsen (1950: 235, n. 1) points out that the association between *Kháos* and an abyss can be traced back to Jacob Grimm, who compares it to the Nordic *ginnungagap*. See Mondì (1989: 8, n. 22) for the reasons against such a comparison.

between them. Notwithstanding, regardless of an etymological relation between *kháos* and *khásma*, nothing prevents Hesiod from having established a connection between them, considering that this poet constructs other etymological relations in his poem, sometimes denominated 'false etymologies,' as the one for the name Aphrodite (194-200), thus named for being born out of the 'foam' (*aphrós*) formed around Sky's penis that was thrown into the sea by Cronos (188 ff.). At any rate, an identification of *kháos* and *khásma* does not necessarily need to rely on any etymological link since certain interchangeability between them can be seen in the poem itself. Additionally, the meaning of a word is so or more determined by its usage than by its etymological origin. The problem with *Kháos* is that the poem does not provide us with as many instances of usage or as much context as would be necessary for us to disclose its meaning with certainty. The etymological observations, then, gather much importance as to become a final argument. This is understandable as they are one of the few instruments available for grasping *Kháos*'s meaning in the *Theogony*, however, its use as a final and decisive argument is questionable.

After the first two occurrences of *Kháos* in lines 116-125, the third one is at the end of the Titanomachy episode (617-721), at the moment in which Zeus strikes the Titans, throwing lightning bolts that shake the foundations of the cosmos. *Kháos* is mentioned as one of the places hit by the effects of those lightning bolts (687-705):¹⁹

Then Zeus no longer held back his strength, but at once his breast was filled with strength and he manifested his full force. He strode at the same time from the sky and from Olympus, relentlessly hurling lightning bolts, and the thunderbolts, driving forward a sacred flame, flew densely packed, together with the thunder and lightning, all at once from his massive hand. All around, the lifegiving earth roared as it burned, and all around the great immense forest crackled; the whole earth boiled, and the streams of Ocean and the barren sea. The hot blast

¹⁹ *Theogony* 687-705: οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔτι Ζεὺς ἴσχευ ἐὼν μένος, ἀλλὰ νῦ τοῦ γε / εἶθαρ μὲν μένεος πλῆντο φρένες, ἐκ δὲ τε πᾶσαν / φαῖνε βίην· ἄμυδις δ' ἄρ' ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἢ δ' ἀπ' Ὀλύμπου / ἀστράπτων ἔστειχε συνωχιδόν, οἱ δὲ κεραυνοὶ (690) / ἵκταρ ἅμα βροντῇ τε καὶ ἀστεροπῇ ποτέοντο / χειρὸς ἅπο στιβαρῆς, ἱερὴν φλόγα εἰλυφόωντες, / ταρφέες· ἀμφὶ δὲ γαῖα φερέοβιος ἐσμαράγιζε / καιομένη, λάκε δ' ἀμφὶ περὶ μεγάλ' ἄσπετος ὕλη· / ἔξεε δὲ χθὼν πᾶσα καὶ Ὠκεανοῖο ῥέεθρα (695) / πόντος τ' ἀτρύγετος· τοὺς δ' ἄμφεπε θερμὸς αὐτμή / Τιτῆνας χθονίους, φλόξ δ' αἰθέρα διὰν ἵκανε / ἄσπετος, ὅσσε δ' ἄμερδε καὶ ἰφθίμων περ ἐόντων / αὐγὴ μαρμαίρουσα κεραυνοῦ τε στεροπῆς τε. / καῦμα δὲ θεσπέσιον κάτεχεν Χάος· εἶσατο δ' ἅντα (700) / ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδεῖν ἢ δ' οὐασιν ὅσσαν ἀκοῦσαι / αὐτῶς, ὥς ὅτε Γαῖα καὶ Οὐρανὸς εὐρὸς ὑπερθε / πῖλνατο· τοῖος γάρ κε μέγας ὑπὸ δοῦπος ὀρώρει, / τῆς μὲν ἐρειπομένης, τοῦ δ' ὑπόθεν ἐξεριπόντος· / τόσσοις δοῦπος ἐγέντο θεῶν ἔριδι ξυνιόντων. (705).

encompassed the earthly Titans, and an immense blaze reached the divine aether, and the brilliant gleam of the lightning bolt and flash blinded their eyes, powerful though they were. A prodigious conflagration took possession of Chasm [*Kháos*]; and to look upon it with eyes and to hear its sound with ears, it seemed just as when Earth and broad Sky approached that would rise up as she was pressed down and as he pressed her down from on high-so great a sound was produced as the gods ran together in strife.

The strife of cosmic proportions affects the very foundations of the cosmos: Earth burns, the streams of the river Ocean and the sea boil, a flame reaches the 'divine aether,' and *Kháos* is taken by a prodigious conflation (*kaûma*).²⁰ From this passage it is possible to assume, therefore, that *Kháos*, besides being a primordial entity, is also a place, like the primordial Earth and Tartarus, and the same logic seems to apply to Aether, who is *Kháos*'s grandson (see lines 123-25 above).²¹ Therefore, Earth, Tartarus, and *Kháos*

²⁰ Notice that in the passage Most does not capitalize aether (see Greek text in the previous footnote) either in Greek or in his translation, and the same will occur in line 814 for *Kháos* (see footnote 21). By not using the capital letter, the editor and translator indicate that, in that context, the term is not being used as a proper noun, which means that it is not being understood as a divine entity. It is difficult to know, however, if the poet and the audience would make such a distinction, especially in the case of aether, for it is called 'divine' in this context. It is likely that there is no such distinction for the oral tradition from which the *Theogony* derives.

²¹ I consider Tartarus as one of the primordial entities, along with *Kháos*, Earth, and Eros. Although the lines 118-119 were ignored by Plato (*Symposium* 178B) and Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 984a27), West (1966: 193-195) considers them to be the poet's later addition, Most (2006) does not exclude them, Arrighetti (1998) argues that Plato and Aristotle not mentioning them is not sufficient to consider them spurious, and Ricciardelli (2018) seems not to oppose to keep them. Even if it is kept as authentic, there is still the possibility that, as a neutral plural (*Tártara*), Tartarus might be an accusative object to *ékhoui* ('they have,' 'they occupy,' 'they inhabit') in line 118, designating the inferior extremity in opposition to the superior extremity, the Olympus, among the places inhabited by the immortals (Most, 2004: 178-180). In this reading, Earth is the 'ever immovable seat' to the immortals who inhabit (*ékhoui*) Olympus as well as to the ones inhabiting Tartarus. The main argument for this reading is the use of the neuter plural *Tártara* instead of the masculine singular. The neuter plural *Tártara* also occurs in 841 in the phrase *Tártara gaîēs*, translated as 'Tartarus in the earth' by Most. In other instances (682, 721, 725, 736 = 807, 822 e 868), Tartarus is masculine singular. However, it is possible to read Tartarus as among the primordial gods as neuter plural nominative. The main reason for Tartarus to be among the primordial entities is, in my view, that it has an important role in the poem's cosmography and there would be no mention of its origin if we disregard its position as one of the primordial entities, not even in the almost one hundred lines that describe it. The line 119 is the only possibility of finding its origin in the poem, and considering the importance given to the origin of the gods in a poem whose main theme is centered in that origin, it is difficult to accept that the poet would leave its birth unmentioned. Furthermore, Tartarus is Typhon's father, Earth's offspring

belong to a theogony, to a cosmogony as well as to a cosmography, in which those 'gods that are place,' or 'place-gods' (as they will be called henceforward), are circumscribed within a map of the cosmos as, at the same time, those 'place-gods' circumscribe it. Thus, we have our first clue of what *Kháos* represents in Hesiodic cosmogony provided by the poem itself, it is fundamentally a place in the theogonic cosmography.

Based on that passage, *Kháos* has been interpreted as the region between earth and sky, since the battle is taking place above ground (Kirk, 1957: 26-32), but what is being stated can simply indicate that this battle of cosmic proportions affects the whole of the cosmos in a vertical axis, from the highest place above ground to the deepest underground, with the blast from Zeus's lightning bolts reaching the Aether above and its conflation reaching *Kháos* below. The case against the interpretation of *Kháos* as the region between earth and sky is made by the poem itself at the end of the description of Tartarus, when *Kháos* is mentioned for the last time (807-814):²²

That is where the sources and limits of the dark earth are, and of murky Tartarus, of the barren sea, and of the starry sky, of everything, one after another, distressful, dank, things which even the gods hate.

That is where the marble gates are and the bronze threshold, fitted together immovably upon continuous roots, self-generated; and in front, apart from all the gods, live the Titans, on the far side of the gloomy chasm.

Incarcerated and apart from the gods, the Titans live on the far side of *Kháos zopherós* ('gloomy,' 'dark'). In this passage, *Kháos* is placed as a limit for Tartarus, where the Titans started to inhabit after being imprisoned. Here we have our second clue in relation to *Kháos*, its darkness, expressed by the adjective *zopherós*, and also the third one, it is not, or not anymore, an unbounded or limitless space, for it is located, in the poet's or the Muses' perspective, before the gates of Tartarus.

that will be fought by Zeus as the final opponent and enemy to his order. *Contra*, see, for example, Bussanich (1983: 212 n. 2), who is against considering Tartarus as one of the primordial entities whether the lines 118-19 are interpolated or not. For a synthesis of the arguments about whether Tartarus is or is not a primordial god, see Wacziarg (2001: 144-46).

²² *Theogony* 807-14: ἔνθα δὲ γῆς δνοφερῆς καὶ ταρτάρου ἡερόεντος / πόντου τ' ἀτρυγέτοιο καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος / ἐξείης πάντων πηγαὶ καὶ πείρατ' ἔασιν, / ἀργαλέ' εὐρώεντα, τὰ τε στυγέουσι θεοὶ περ. (810) / ἔνθα δὲ μαρμάρειά τε πύλαι καὶ χάλκεος οὐδός, / ἀστεμφὲς ῥίζησι διηνεκέεσσιν ἀρηρώς, / αὐτοφυῆς· πρόσθεν δὲ θεῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἀπάντων / Τιτῆνες ναίουσι, πέρην χάεος ζοφεροῖο.

Kháos and darkness

As previously mentioned, the lines 807-810, near the end of Tartarus's description, can also be found in 736-739, fourteen lines after the beginning of its description. That is where the poet uses *Kháos zopherós* instead of *khásma méga*, the main reason why they are considered as synonyms. If *khásma* and *Kháos* seem to occupy the same cosmographic location in the poem and are words so similar in sounding, although their etymological relation is not a settled argument, their identification is not farfetched. Nevertheless, if *khásma* and *Kháos* designate the same cosmographic location, why would Hesiod denominate his primordial place-god *Kháos* instead of *Khásma*, since this last one is a word of less abstruse meaning?²³ Both Earth and Tartarus, primordial place-gods whose coming into being follows that of *Kháos*, have names not difficult to comprehend; even though Tartarus is not so obvious as Earth, the poem dedicates almost one hundred lines to its description. Why would the Muses give Hesiod as the origin of the cosmos a divine entity so difficult to grasp? Or why would the poet give his audience a primordial entity whose meaning was not clear enough?

As observed by Paula Philippon (apud Podbielski 1986: 257), Hesiod defines the nature of the gods by name, epithet and progeny. In the case of *Kháos*, its name is not clear, its qualification is solely given by the adjective *zopherós* (814), remaining only to its progeny the potential to give us a better comprehension of that primordial entity.

I will focus now on the only adjective attributed to *Kháos* in the *Theogony*, *zopherós* (814), "dark", which is *hápax legómenon* in the whole of the archaic oral poetry in hexameter. Like *Kháos*, it has no occurrence in the poems of Homer – there is no evidence that *Kháos* is part of a theogonic or cosmogonic conception in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*.²⁴ However, Homer uses the noun *zóphos* ('darkness'), which also occurs in the *Theogony* in the formula *zóphos ēeróeis* (653, 658, and 729). The first occurrence of this formula in Hesiod's poem is in Zeus's speech to the Hundred-handers

²³ Mondy (1989: 9) suggests that *kháos* and *khásma* differ in their level of generality, for "[...] *khásma* can be used of anything with the physical configuration of a pit or cavity, whereas *kháos* is primarily a cosmic ter; there are, in other words, many *khásmata*, but there is only one *kháos*' (transliterations mine). Granted that this explanation can be convincing, it does not preclude the questions above.

²⁴ In the *Iliad*, the river Ocean and Tethys are the primordial couple according to Hera's speech in 14.187-210 and 14.302-311 and Sleep's reply to Hera in 14.243-246.

when asking them to ally themselves to him and to rebel against the Titans in exchange of being rescued from ‘under the murky gloom’ (*zóphos ēeróeis*), for the Hundred-handers were kept by their father Sky under the Earth, at her edge and limits (617-623). The formula *zóphos ēeróeis* is repeated by Cottus, one of the Hundred-handers, in reply to Zeus (658). And, finally, the narrator mentions it in the description of Tartarus, relating it to the place where the Titans are held. In the *Theogony*, therefore, *zóphos ēeróeis* or ‘murky gloom’ is associated to the underground environment, to the limits of the Earth and to Tartarus.

In the *Iliad* the formula occurs predominantly in relation to Hades (15.191, 21.56, and 23.51). As a poem that narrates another moment in the history of the cosmos in which Zeus had already ascended to supreme power, and the division of the cosmos among Zeus, Poseidon and Hades had already occurred, the ‘murky gloom’ (*zóphos ēeróeis*) is related to Hades, who occupies in this new order the physical and conceptual place Tartarus assumed to the previous divine order.²⁵ There is, however, an instance (12.240) in which the phrase ‘towards the murky gloom’ is in opposition to the right side, ‘towards the dawn and the sun,’ when Hector addresses Polydamas referring to the flight of birds as an omen. It is certain that, as in the *Theogony*, in the *Iliad* the *zóphos ēeróeis* is associated to the underworld, but it is also associated to the west and to the left side, a relation found more frequently in the *Odyssey*. In this poem, as in the *Iliad*, the formula recurs in reference to Hades (11.57 and 11.155) and also in an expression that contrasts what is ‘towards the dawn and the sun’ with what is ‘towards the murky gloom’ (13.241).²⁶ The use of *zóphos* outside the

²⁵ Notice the passage around *Iliad* 15.191 in which Poseidon mentions to the goddess Iris the tripartite division among himself, Zeus, and Hades, who received ‘the murky gloom’ (*zóphos ēeróeis*). For other occurrences of the formula *zóphos ēeróeis*, see also 21.56 in which Achilles, when seeing Priam’s son Lycaon, who had been sold by Achilles in Lemnos, speaks about the possibility of the dead ‘raise themselves from the murky gloom;’ and 23.51, in which Achilles refers to Patroclus’s body as ‘the deceased who descends to the murky gloom.’

²⁶ In the *Odyssey* the formula is used to refer to Hades in 11.57 in Odysseus’s speech to Elpenor and in 11.155 in Anticlea’s speech to Odysseus when he descends to the underworld; in 13.241 it occurs in Athena’s speech to Odysseus contrasting the direction ‘towards the dawn and the sun’ and ‘towards the murky gloom.’ Differently from what happens in the *Iliad*, in the *Odyssey* the word *zóphos* appears alone, outside the formula: in 3.335 in Athena’s speech to Nestor (‘The light has descended into the gloom’), meaning the sunset; in 9.26 in Odysseus’s speech to the king Alcinous telling him that he comes from Ithaca, ‘the last [island] towards the gloom;’ in 10.190 in Odysseus speech stating he does not know where he is (‘Friends, we do not know where the gloom is or where the dawn is’); in 12.81 in Circe’s speech to Odysseus (‘In the middle of the rock

formula, which does not occur in the *Iliad*, does not leave doubt that darkness or gloom is also located in the west, the region in which the sun sets (*Od.* 3.335, 9.26, and 10.190), and the other occurrences outside the formula associate, furthermore, *zóphos* to Erebos (*Od.* 12.81 and 20.356), which, by its turn, is associated to Hades in Teoclimenus's speech to the suitors saying that the souls crave for going 'to Erebos towards the gloom.' There is, therefore, in the location of the 'murky gloom' in Homer a verticality but also a horizontality, this last one indicated by the region where the sun sets. With the entrance of Erebos and Hades located to the west, there is a clear association between what lies in the west and what is underground having darkness as a point in common.

Accordingly, Tartarus, the underworld environment and the limits of the Earth are connected in the *Theogony*, like darkness, Hades and the west or the sunset are connected in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In this last poem, there is also a direct association of Erebos to the west (12.81) and to Hades (20.356). In the *Theogony* Erebos is *Kháos*'s firstborn (123).

Considered by West (1966: 31) to be *Theogony*'s flesh and blood, genealogy is the essential way according to which Hesiod's poem explain the cosmos. Genealogies establish relations of origin that explain how the cosmos is made up, therefore, understanding who the children are helps to understand who their parents are, be it by similitude or contrast. Immediately after the primordial entities come into being, the descendants of *Kháos* are the first ones to be born *from* someone (124-126):²⁷

From Chasm [*Kháos*], Erebos and black Night came to be; and then Aether and Day came forth from Night, who conceived and bore them after mingling in love with Erebos.

The pair of siblings Erebos and Night are *Kháos*'s firstborns, inaugurating the lineage of this entity whose name is grammatically neuter. It is significant, perhaps, that the poet mentions *Kháos*'s first descendants before Earth's, for there would be no prejudice to mention them immediately before Night's progeny, right after the episode of Sky's castration, from line 211 onwards. For some reason, the poem puts the birth

there is a dark cave, / facing the gloom [west, *zóphos*], towards Erebos [...]); in 20.356 in Teoclymenus's speech to the suitors ('full of specters is the vestibule, full is the patio, / craving for going to Erebos towards the gloom [...]).

²⁷ *Theogony* 124-26: ἐκ Χάος δ' Ἐρεβός τε μέλαινά τε Νύξ ἐγένοντο / Νυκτὸς δ' αὖτ' Αἰθήρ τε καὶ Ἡμέρη ἐξεγένοντο, (125) / οὓς τέκε κυσαμένη Ἐρέβει φιλότῃτι μιγείσα.

of Erebos, Night, Aether, and Day before Earth starts her own lineage originating Sky.

Both Erebos and Night, two children born from *Kháos* alone, have the aspect of darkness, with Erebos being the underground darkness and Night the darkness above ground – notice, however, that her abode is associated to the underground environment in 744-745 (see text in the footnote 16). In this process of parthenogenesis, it is possible to suppose an unfolding of *Kháos*, similar to the one in which Earth generates Sky ‘equal to herself.’ The theogonic and cosmogonic process in Hesiod’s *Theogony* is characterized by an unfolding in the generated entities of conceptual aspects existent or at least associated to the original entity.

Although Erebos and Night were generated by a kind of asexual reproduction, the siblings are the first ones in the poem to reproduce sexually, forming a couple. Night, the female part, gives birth to Aether and Day after ‘mingling in love’ (*philótēti migeîsa*) with her brother Erebos and getting pregnant (*kysaménē*). Such union is only possible by the existence of Eros as a primordial entity, the only one not to be a place-god, but a principle of union, which makes possible for two entities to unite and procreate.²⁸ Eros cannot be a place for the reason that, from the moment it comes into existence, he must be anywhere, presiding unions that will generate the parts that inform the cosmos.²⁹ It is also worth noting that the first sexual union in the poem produce a kind of counterpart to their parents.

If Erebos and Night bring within them aspects of their progenitor *Kháos*, and if the characteristic we can presume to be in the children is darkness, *Kháos* must also contain it in itself, a quality stated by the poem itself when it attributes the adjective *zopherós* to *Kháos* in 814.

The poem could continue with Night and her children, but after the three lines in which we can have a glimpse of *Kháos*’s lineage, the poem turns

²⁸ It is possible, perhaps, to speculate that *Kháos* and Earth do not form a primordial couple in Hesiod’s theogonic conception because they appear before Eros, or the other way around, that Eros’s appearance is later because *Kháos* and Earth are not supposed to be a primordial couple in Hesiod’s theogonic conception.

²⁹ Torrano (1996, p. 43), in the essay that accompanies his translation of the *Theogony* to Portuguese, explains the primordial *Kháos* from a relation to the verb *kháinō* and its variant *kháskō*, ‘to open’ and ‘to open a mouth, the fauces, or the beak,’ seen as ‘the power presiding separation’ in opposition to Eros, ‘the power presiding the loving union.’ *Kháos* would be a ‘scissor,’ presiding the asexual reproduction by a kind of cissiparity, the way by which it originates its children.

itself to Earth's lineage (126-153) and to the narrative of the first succession myth, the one regarding Sky and his son Cronos (154-210), to return to Night's progeny only in 211-232. Before continuing with the descendants of Night, this paper also will make a brief detour.

The air, the space, the unlimited, the void

In the 5th century BC, in the epinician ode 5 (16-30), Bacchylides compares the illimited space through which Zeus's eagle can fly to an illimited source of poetic creativity from which the poet drinks.³⁰ Designating such a space, he uses the word *kháos*. The scholium to line 116 in the *Theogony* mentions Bacchylides's interpretation: 'Bacchylides named *kháos* the air when speaking of the eagle.'³¹ Despite Mondì (1989: 16-17) remarks that Bacchylides can be using *kháos* as illimited space in a metaphor to the illimited source of poetic creativity and not as a space between Earth and Sky, Bacchylides used *kháos* to refer to a space where the eagle flies, be it translated as air, as suggested by the scholiast to the *Theogony*, or as void, as rendered by Jebb. This use of *kháos* in Bacchylides has a certain weight for having been pointed out by a scholiast at a comment to the line 116 of the *Theogony*.

Still in the 5th century BC, Aristophanes in the *Clouds* makes Socrates explains to Strepsiades that the sophists' pantheon consists of the triad *Kháos*, the Clouds and the Tongue (424) and in 627 he swears by 'Breath, *Kháos* and Air.'³² Mondì (1989: 20-21) points out that Aristophanes can be simply making an irony to the vacuity of the sophistic discourse. However, the association of *kháos* to something related to the air in the passages is hard to refute, although it may not *the air* exactly.

Notwithstanding, in another play by Aristophanes, *Birds* (690-99), *Kháos* is the first entity to come into being in the creation of a cosmogony declared by the birds' chorus, before Night, Erebus, and Tartarus, which are entities

³⁰ Bacchylides, epinicion 5.16-30: 'The eagle, cleaving the deep ether on high with his swift tawny wings, messenger of wide-ruling Zeus the lord of thunder, trusts boldly [20] his mighty strength; the shrill-voiced birds crouch in fear of him; the heights of the wide earth stay him not, nor the rough, steep waves of the unwearied sea; he plies his wing of delicate plumage in the illimitable void, sped by the breath of the west wind, conspicuous in the sight of men.' (Edited and translated by Jebb 1905.)

³¹ Flach (1876: 221): Βακχύλιδης δὲ χάος τὸν ἄερα ὠνόμασε, λέγων περὶ τοῦ ἀετοῦ.

³² Aristophanes, *Clouds* 627: μὰ τὴν Ἀναίνοϊν μὰ τὸ Χάος μὰ τὸν Ἀέρα. (Edited by Hall and Geldart, 1907.)

related to darkness.³³ Thus, it is possible to find in the same author a flexible use of *Kháos* regarding the associations attributable to it at least in the 5th century BC. It is worth mentioning, in addition, that Aristophanes seems to use *Kháos* strictly in cosmogonies he creates for his comic characters, and not as a common noun as Bacchylides does.

In his *Physics* (208b29-209a2), Aristotle mentions *Theogony*'s 116 (with a small variation, using *pántōn* instead of *étoi*) and gives his interpretation of Hesiodic *Kháos* as a place (*khóra*) in which things exist.³⁴ Kirk (1957: 26) refutes such interpretation of Hesiodic *Kháos* on the grounds that it is much later than Hesiod, although he identifies that notion in Pythagoras, Zeno of Elea, and Plato's *Timaeus*. Bussanich (1983: 218) seems to follow Aristotle when defining *Kháos* as a 'passive principle in which cosmic-divine manifestation occurs,' but he actually compares it to the Receptacle as a 'space' (*khóra*) in Plato's *Timaeus* (52B1), in which things come to exist (50D1 and 52C4), and whose character stripped off of any substance would be somewhat similar to that of *Kháos*.

Mondi (1989: 23f.) explores a possible etymological relation between *kháos* and the adjective *khaûnos* ('spongy', 'porous'), although this term is attested only from the 5th century B.C. onwards, being later than Hesiod. The passages in several authors in which such a word appears suggest that its use indicates a lack of defined or rigid form, and the words derived from it also point to certain absence of materiality. From this relation, Mondi (1989: 25) establishes the following definition for *kháos* in the *Theogony*:

³³ Aristophanes, *The Birds* 693-699: 'At the beginning there was only Chaos, Night, dark Erebus, and deep Tartarus. Earth, the air and heaven had no existence. (695) Firstly, blackwinged Night laid a germless egg in the bosom of the infinite deeps of Erebus, and from this, after the revolution of long ages, sprang the graceful Eros with his glittering golden wings, swift as the whirlwinds of the tempest. He mated in deep Tartarus with dark Chaos, winged like himself, and thus hatched forth our race, which was the first to see the light.' (Translated by O'Neill, 1938.)

³⁴ Aristotle, *Physics* 208b27-209a2: 'Hesiod [202] seems to be on the right track in putting Chasm [*Kháos*] first in his system. At any rate, the reason he says "First came the Chasm [*Kháos*], and then broad-breasted Earth" is presumably because the first requirement is that there should be space [*khóra*] for things. In other words, he shares the common belief that everything is somewhere – that is, in some place [*tópos*]. And if place [*tópos*] is like that, then it would be truly remarkable and prior to everything, since that which is a prerequisite for other things to exist, but whose existence does not depend on other things, is bound to be primary. The point here is that place is not destroyed when the things it contains are destroyed.' (Translation by Waterfield, 2008: 79.) (Transliteration mine.) Notice that the translation of *Kháos* as Chasm does not seem to fit Aristotle's text. Mondi (1989: 1-2) suggests that perhaps Aristotle had considered some etymological relation between *kháos* and *khōra*.

[...] What *kháos* represents for Hesiod is something which mediates between non-existence and existence: the state of condition of undifferentiated formlessness regarded as an entity in itself. And since form and differentiation presuppose boundary, *kháos* can justifiably be described as boundless, keeping in mind that 'unboundedness' in this restricted and intuitive sense is not the same thing as spatial infinity. We can say, in short, that *kháos* stands in contrast to the bounded form of the subsequent cosmic masses in the same way that primal darkness stands in contrast to the subsequent cosmogonic light. (Transliteration mine.)

As has been previously pointed out, the *Theogony* informs that the Titans live 'on the far side of the gloomy chasm' (814), which puts a limit to *Kháos* as a place-god. Nevertheless, it is possible to think that, within the logic of the poem there is a movement from undefinition to definition in which the cosmos takes its form with the birth of the gods (Clay, 2003: 15) in such a way that *Kháos* could have come into being as something undefined and had gained limits and contours along the coming into being of other place-gods, assuming its first delimitations with Earth, who comes into existence immediately after *Kháos*, and Tartarus, the third place-god.³⁵

Kháos's unboundedness is also pointed out by Clay (2003: 15-16), for whom the primordial entity 'is apparently not, as we might think, a jumble of undifferentiated matter, but rather its negation, a featureless void.' Nonetheless, I agree with Podbielski (1986: 255): '[...] Conceiving Chaos either as an empty space or, as H. Fränkel wishes, as "Nichtsein" ('not-being') contradicts the very principle of the whole coming into being, even more because, for our author, Chaos also exists in the current world.' (my translation from the original text in French).

Another contradiction is yet noticeable. If unlimited, Hesiodic *Kháos* would lose its essential feature if it gained delimitations with the birth of Earth and Tartarus, and by being limited, it would contradict the *Theogony*'s fundamental principle that every entity only exists for the reason of what it is constituted by. *Kháos* can only be unbounded in the sense that it does not possess a corporeal, substantial, or tangible essence, like Earth does, as stated at the moment of her appearance by being called 'broad-breasted' (117). This lack of substance is indicated in its immediate progeny, and continues to be with its grandchildren, the children of Night, to which she gives birth alone, the same way she was generated by *Kháos* (see below).

³⁵ See Mondy (1989: 10): '[...] the fact that the cosmological *kháos*, now bounded by the elements of the evolved cosmos, can be viewed as, or as being in, a chasm, would not necessarily imply that the cosmogonic *kháos*, existing alone before the genesis of any other entity, should or could be so viewed.' (transliteration mine). Werner (2013: 12) defines *Kháos* as 'an empty space whose first delimitation appears in the sequence, Earth.' (Translation mine.)

However, this absence of tangibility is not the only feature in *Kháos* or its lineage. There is one, which is in fact stated by the poem, and has been put aside by most interpretation efforts in favor of what I think are more philosophically elaborated or overthought ones. *Kháos* is called *zopherós* ('dark,' 'gloomy') in the poem and originates the siblings Erebus and Night, the underground darkness and the darkness above Earth, respectively. Furthermore, if it is a kind of primordial darkness, *Kháos* would not lose its main *raison d'être* in the poem, as it would with the unbounded character, a loss that does not occur to any other entity in the *Theogony* and would contradict the logic of the poem itself.

When we look at the catalogue of the descendants of Night, we see it is formed in most part by harmful powers or dark forces to which humans can be subjected to, to the exception of the Hesperides, guardians of the golden apples (211-232).³⁶ When 'mingled' (*migeîsa*, 125, literally 'mixed')

³⁶ *Theogony* 211-232: Νύξ δ' ἔτεκε στυγερὸν τε Μόρον καὶ Κῆρα μέλαιναν / καὶ Θάνατον, τέκε δ' Ὕπνον, ἔτικτε δὲ φῶλον Ὀνείρων. / δεῦτερον αὖ Μῶμον καὶ Ὀϊζὺν ἀλγινόεσσιν / οὗ τιμι κοιμηθεῖσα θεῶν τέκε Νύξ ἐρεβεννή, / Ἑσπερίδας θ', αἷς μῆλα πέρην κλυτοῦ Ὠκεανοῖο (215) / χρύσεια καλὰ μέλουσι φέροντά τε δένδρεα καρπὸν / καὶ Μοίρας καὶ Κῆρας ἐγείνατο νηλεοποίνους, / Κλωθὴ τε Λάχεσιν τε καὶ Ἀτροπον, αἷ τε βροτοῖσι / γεινομένοισι διδοῦσιν ἔχειν ἀγαθὸν τε κακὸν τε, / αἷ τ' ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε παραιβασίας ἐφέπουσιν, (220) / οὐδέ ποτε λήγουσι θεαὶ δεινοῖο χόλοιο, / πρὶν γ' ἀπὸ τῷ δώωσι κακὴν ὄπιν, ὅστις ἀμάρτη. / τίκτε δὲ καὶ Νέμεσιν πῆμα θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσι / Νύξ ὀλοή· μετὰ τὴν δ' Ἀπάτην τέκε καὶ Φιλότητα / Γῆρας τ' οὐλόμενον, καὶ Ἑριν τέκε καρτερόθυμον. (225) / αὐτὰρ Ἑρις στυγερὴ τέκε μὲν Πόνον ἀλγινόεντα / Λήθην τε Λιμόν τε καὶ Ἄλγεα δακρυόεντα / Ὑμῖνας τε Μάχας τε Φόνους τ' Ἀνδροκτασίας τε / Νείκεά τε Ψευδεά τε Λόγους Ἀμφιλογίας τε / Δυσνομίην τ' Ἄτην τε, συνήθεας ἀλλήλησιν, (230) / Ὅρκον θ', ὃς δὴ πλεῖστον ἐπιχθονίους ἀνθρώπους / πημαίνει, ὅτε κέν τις ἐκὼν ἐπίορκον ὁμόσῃ· (211) Night bore loathsome Doom and black Fate and Death, and she bore Sleep, and she gave birth to the tribe of Dreams. Second, then, gloomy Night bore Blame and painful Distress, although she had slept with none of the gods, and the Hesperides, who care for the golden, beautiful apples beyond glorious Ocean and the trees bearing this fruit. And she bore (a) Destinies and (b) pitilessly punishing Fates, (a) Clotho (Spinner) and Lachesis (Portion) and Atropos (Inflexible), who give to mortals when they are born both good and evil to have, and (b) who hold fast to the transgressions of both men and gods; and the goddesses never cease from their terrible wrath until they give evil punishment to whoever commits a crime. Deadly Night gave birth to Nemesis (Indignation) too, a woe for mortal human beings; and after her she bore Deceit and Fondness and baneful Old Age, and she bore hard-hearted Strife.' (226) And loathsome Strife bore painful Toil and Forgetfulness and Hunger and tearful Pains, and Combats and Battles and Murders and Slaughters, and Strifes and Lies and Tales and Disputes, and Lawlessness and Recklessness, much like one another, and Oath, who indeed brings most woe upon human beings on the earth, whenever someone willfully swears a false oath.

in love (*philótēti*) with her brother, Night gives birth to Aether and Day, counterparts of the original couple, the only sexual union in *Kháos*'s lineage. Following the ways of asexual reproduction of her progenitor, Night originates, or unfolds into, entities conceptually contiguous to her in the cosmo-theogonic conception of the poem, and the absence of substance remains in her progeny. If there is, in fact, in the *Theogony* any 'agent of *Kháos*', it is to be found in Night's descendancy, which plays that role more properly than Typhon in the cosmos presented in the poem and are in fact connected to *Kháos* in their ascendancy.

If the Hesperides, caretakers of the golden apples, seem to be an anomalous element in this progeny for their possible corporeal feature, their habitat puts them in the cosmography related to their mother. Inhabiting 'beyond glorious Ocean' (215) and, as neighbors to the Gorgons (274-75), 'at the edge towards the night.'

There clearly is in the *Theogony* a cosmography of darkness that deserves more attention than this paper can give to it. For now, I hope it suffices to say that *Kháos* must be counted as a fundamental part of it.

Conclusion

Based on the reading of *Theogony*'s passages, *Kháos* is a primordial 'place-god,' as Earth and Tartarus. Its location in the cosmography presented in the poem is, at the same time, under Earth and before Tartarus. *Kháos*'s children, Erebus and Night, point to the essence of darkness below and above ground, a darkness properly supposed to be already in their progenitor. Although in the depths of Earth, but on this side of Tartarus, *Kháos* keeps itself present in the composition of the cosmos also above ground: its essence subsists in his daughter Night and in the imperishable forces descending from her, all invisible but sensible to the mortals. They will never cease to exist while there are humans on Earth to perceive them and be subjugated by them.

Despite the proposed etymologies, the meaning of its name is still for being deciphered. Perhaps the key to understand its name is not in any etymological relation but in a wordplay with the sound of *kháos* and *pháos* ('light'). This last one is always associated to the world above Earth in

About the Night and her children, see Ramnoux (1986: 65 especially): 'What does exactly mean a Potence name? *Something of divine (tí theíon)* that the man learns to know and to name facing experience. [...]' (Italics in the original text; my translation from French.)

contrast to the underground environment: Sky did not allow his children with Earth to ‘come up into the light’ (*es pháos ouk aníeske*, 157), keeping them in ‘a hiding place in Earth’ (*Gaiēs em keuthmóni*, 158); the Hundred-handers were also brought ‘back up into the light’ (*anégagon es pháos aûtis*, 626) when rescued from under Earth and ‘have come up to the light’ (*es pháos aps aphíkesthe*, 652) ‘from under the murky gloom’ (*hypò zóphou ēeróentos*, 653). It is still pertinent to point out that *pháos* is associated to the goddess Dawn in line 451, the extreme opposite of sunset or the west, and in 755 Dawn is mentioned together with Day in the passage in which the alternance between Day and Night is described.

Even if *Kháos* is to be associated to the *khásma méga*, ‘a big abyss/chasm’, it is possible to trace in the *Theogony* more elements to associate it with darkness.

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