

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

A THEORETICAL INTERPRETATION OF HESIOD'S CHAOS

Mythical cosmogonies have often proved to be recalcitrant to philosophical investigation. Perhaps the rational faculty is incapable of responding sensitively to mythopoeic representations. They seem to beg to be deciphered like a code, or elicit the despairing judgment that they are too muddled or opaque to convey philosophical meaning. The modern reader of Hesiod's *Theogony* inevitably feels the pull of both impulses when he meditates on the figure of Chaos. By resisting both tendencies, I will attempt to define Chaos in theoretical terms without doing violence to its reality as a mythical symbol. It will be argued that Chaos does possess a cosmogonic function which is consistent with, and even necessitated by, the poet's larger theogonic concerns.

In the proem (1–115) Hesiod sets the stage for an innovative speculation on the pre-cosmic condition. Several aspects of this initial section determine our approach to the cosmogony that follows. In the opening lines Hesiod identifies the theological situation in the present as the Olympian order of Zeus. The poet's participation in this divine-human continuum is facilitated by the Muses, whom he encounters in a specific place, on Helicon (22–23). On Olympus they sing to Zeus of the present, future, and past (38); through their inspiration Hesiod himself is given access to their knowledge (31–32), which constitutes the truth, in opposition to the falsehoods imparted to other singers (26–28). This forceful claim is meant to establish the accuracy and truth of the entire poem.¹ Here I will limit myself to testing its validity with respect to the cosmogony.

The portion of the truth that most concerns us is the past: specifically, how the divine race of gods came to be (44–46, 105–15). Hesiod here announces his intention to look through and behind the Olympian order of the present, as well as the theological history which brought it about, in order to glimpse the origins of the process. This speculation must rely on the Muses because, as the daughters of Zeus from Mnemosyne (36–37, 54), they are the voices of cosmic memory. At the end of the proem, he feels the anamnestic impulse and bids the Muses to tell "who was first to come forth among the gods" (115).

In the account of the origin of things, the first three divinities named are Chaos, Gaia, and Eros (116–20).² Although Chaos is "first of all," it too is said to come-

1. Hesiod certainly would reject P. Pucci's assertion that the discourse imparted to him by the Muses is partially untrue and distorted (*Hesiod and the Language of Poetry* [Baltimore, 1977], pp. 10–12). Similarly, his attempt to separate word and thing by interjecting Derrida's hypostasized "difference" violates what for the mythopoeic imagination is an essential identity (pp. 25–27).

2. Whether or not verses 118–19 are interpolated or are a later insertion by Hesiod himself, Tartarus should not be considered as one of the primordial entities. For the exclusion of Tartarus from the cosmogony, see M. L. West, *Hesiod: "Theogony"* (Oxford, 1966), p. 194; M. C. Stokes, "Hesiodic and Milesian Cosmogonies II," *Phronesis* 8 (1963): 3.

to-be (116 *πρώτιστα Χάος γένητ'*).³ Does the fact that Chaos comes-to-be, like the other gods, indicate Hesiod's inability to search for the *ἀρχή* of the gods?⁴ To resist this conclusion it is necessary to understand the symbolic language of the myth. The sequence of events within a mythical account, particularly one which concerns the pre-cosmic condition, must be distinguished from empirical or historical time. Strictly speaking, mythical time is timeless, but its sequential flow can articulate qualitative relationships and ontological distinctions.⁵ Because Hesiod portrays, in a narrative progression, the derivation of the present, static order of Zeus, he must employ the language of "coming-to-be."⁶ Certainly, the births of all the other gods are narrated in the same manner. But there is this crucial difference: whereas the first three gods simply appear on the scene, the rest of the gods come to exist by means of procreation. Thus, despite the literal meaning of *γένετο*, I would argue that Hesiod isolates a timeless moment, an *Urzeit*, that is qualitatively distinct from subsequent stages of the cosmogony. In itself a durationless condition, the primordial time can only be described temporally as the past, relative to the sequence of events which follows it. This symbolization of the primordial time is not philosophically precise, nor is it a presentiment of the concept of eternity. Here rational speculation is constrained by mythical thought.

To affirm divine initiative in the existence of the cosmos, Hesiod sets off the primordial triad of Chaos, Gaia, and Eros as the *ἀρχή* of the gods.⁷ The three should be taken together, because upon each of them depends the existence of all other divine entities. Eros denotes the procreative force that is active in the generation of a divinity from its parent(s).⁸ In Gaia we recognize the universal Earth-goddess; for Hesiod she is to be conceived as the mother of the gods and as the substantial foundation of all things. Thus the theogonic and cosmogonic roles played by Gaia and Eros are relatively clear. Chaos, however, is a much more elusive figure. It is not readily apparent why Chaos is necessary for cosmogony, or what its function is within the triadic *ἀρχή* and as a permanent element in the cosmological structure.

Turning first to the meaning of the word *χάος*, we find that it is derived from $\sqrt{\chi\alpha}$ and denotes a yawning space or gap.⁹ Because Chaos exists before anything

3. A literal rendering of *γένετο* as "came-to-be" is probably correct; but an instance where the same form means "was" occurs in frag. 144, *Fragmenta Hesiodica*, ed. R. Merkelbach and M. L. West (Oxford, 1967).

4. Taking *γένετο* in its most literal sense, M. H. Miller concludes that Chaos even has an "antecedent generator," namely Tartarus ("La logique implicite de la cosmogonie d' Hésiode," *RMM* 82 [1977]: 452–54).

5. See the valuable discussion of the mythical concept of time in E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms II: Mythical Thought*, Eng. tr. R. Manheim (New Haven, 1955), pp. 104–17.

6. The same narrative strategy is adopted by Plato and expressed in Timaeus' remarks on mythological symbolization (*Ti.* 27C–30C).

7. For this important idea, and much that follows, I am indebted to E. Voegelin, *The World of the Polis* (Baton Rouge, 1957), pp. 134–35.

8. In his discussion of the ancestry of the four causes in *Metaphysics* A. Aristotle observes that in Eros Hesiod was the first to look for the efficient cause (*Metaph.* 984b23 ff.).

9. For useful summaries of other interpretations, see G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 27–29; West, "Theogony," pp. 192–93; J. Fontenrose, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and its Origins* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1959), pp. 223–24.

Sanskrit literature provides substantial evidence of the use of the same root in a cosmogonic sense. In the Vedas and Upanishads, *kha* (opening, gap, hollow) and its derivative *ākāśa* (space) define a purely principal space, from and in which cosmic manifestation occurs. For an extensive discussion of the Sanskrit terms, with copious textual references, see A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Kha and Other Words

else, this characteristic must be examined in itself, without reference to things which do not yet exist. The connotations of the name and its root deserve more attention than they have received. Now, the *Theogony* as a whole is a compendious enunciation of divine names. That Hesiod inherited a highly developed mythological theology does not detract from the fact that being named is synonymous with coming-to-be. For the mythological imagination, to be named is to proceed from nonexistence to existence. This theory of expression is especially relevant in the case of Chaos: the naming of the first entity initiates the cosmogony. And because this is the first use of the word, I think it not unlikely that Hesiod is indulging his fondness for etymologizing, though in a less than obvious manner.¹⁰ The name Chaos symbolizes the initial stage of pre-cosmic reality—a yawning chasm or abyss. Since it stands at the beginning of things, it cannot be envisioned according to the laws of perspective or dimension.

The root sense of Chaos as a yawning space provides a foundation for a theoretical definition of Chaos. It should be emphasized first that as a mythical symbol Chaos must be interpreted qualitatively, not quantitatively. It should not be equated with empirical space or void.¹¹ Since its function is cosmogonic, Chaos must be defined as undimensional or principial space, an articulated nothing: it is the barest indication that there is a qualitative something, from and in which cosmic differentiation occurs.¹² To a large extent this interpretation relies on an understanding of the sort of symbolization Hesiod employs. Speculation on the first things is the response of the imagination when finite experience confronts a transfinite reality, in this case the origin of the cosmos. Thus, in Hesiod's mind there is coalescence between the symbol, Chaos, and what it signifies, the first level of cosmic articulation. Rather than dwelling on the eventual, historical inadequacy of the symbol, we should be sensitive to the reality symbolized. As the least differentiated divinity in the *Theogony*, Chaos denotes the limits of the cosmic process, beyond which mythical representation cannot go. Moreover, its symbolic nuances differ from those of the primeval or subterranean darknesses, Erebus and Night, the offspring of Chaos (123).¹³ Less articulated than they, Chaos represents the dimensionless expanses of cosmic depth in which cosmic manifestation begins. Thus it possesses a principial function: it is necessary for generation of the cosmos and gods. Yet this function is limited. Hesiod's Chaos

Denoting 'Zero', in Connection with the Indian Metaphysics of Space," in *Selected Papers*, vol. 2: *Metaphysics*, ed. R. Lipsey (Princeton, 1977), pp. 220–30. There is no question here of historical influence; but the analogous, cosmogonic use to which diverse poetic traditions have put the Indo-European root *kha* suggests that Hesiod was exercising his imagination on very fertile material.

10. Discussions of etymologizing in Hesiod can be found in *Hésiode et son influence*, Entretiens Hardt 7 (Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1962), pp. 53–55 (Kirk, von Fritz, Verdenius, La Penna, Gigon, Solmsen, Waszink) and G. S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 114–15.

11. Cf., e.g., F. Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca, 1949), p. 27 and H. Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, Eng. tr. M. Hadas (Oxford, 1975), pp. 102, 105–6.

12. Although I disagree with their general interpretations of Chaos, a few scholars have proposed useful definitions: "ein qualitatives Nichts" (O. Gigon, *Der Ursprung der Griechischen Philosophie* [Basel, 1945], p. 30); "nicht ein rein privatives Nicht, sondern ein negatives Etwas" (H. Fränkel, "Drei Interpretationen aus Hesiod," in *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens* [Munich, 1955], p. 318); "It seems to reproduce the vision of a dark abyss whose precipices remain indistinct and nebulous: the as yet empty womb of coming-to-be" (P. Seligman, *The Apeiron of Anaximander* [London, 1962], p. 94).

13. On this point Fontenrose, *Python*, p. 223, remarks: "Darkness (Erebus) and Night (Nyx) were born from Chaos. That is, a male and a female spirit of darkness appeared, simply the dual chaos transferred to the second generation."

is an essential precondition for cosmogony, but it is not a generative cause or substance like the Milesian ἀρχαί, nor does it hold the seeds or potentialities of all things within itself.

Analysis of Chaos' cosmogonic function must reckon with the presence of Gaia and Eros in the primordial time. If it is true that together they constitute a loosely formulated, triadic ἀρχή, the principal space of Chaos must somehow be complemented, in an essential way, by the pre-cosmic divinity signifying earth and the procreative force which makes possible the entire theogonic process. The appearance of Eros in the initial cosmogonic phase indicates that Hesiod abstractly distinguished it as a personified, quasi-demiurgic cause from the process of divine generation, for he recognized the inexorable movement towards differentiation beyond the minimal level represented by Chaos. While Eros signifies the mechanism, Gaia can be seen as an attempt to symbolize the matrix of creation. She concentrates these functions in herself: mother of the gods, the seat or abode of all things (117), and a figurative expression of cosmic substance. As the necessary counterpart to the insubstantiality of Chaos, she makes concrete the notion of a "place for things" which is incompletely suggested by the yawning space of Chaos. We should probably imagine that Gaia comes-to-be in Chaos, but not as an empirical object appears in space; rather, as principal space, Chaos defines the totality of reality at the point Gaia appears. She can only exist within Chaos, simply because nothing else exists.¹⁴

Since Hesiod's speculation extends to the origin of the cosmos, why was he unable to conceive of a single first principle? Unlike the Milesians, Hesiod had not yet discovered nature (φύσις) as an autonomous realm or process. His thought still moves within the medium of the myth. The presentation of three very different divinities in the first stage of his cosmogony can be attributed to the irreducible plurality of the world of experience. To symbolize the transfinite origin of the divine-cosmic order, Hesiod projects his experience of process into a process within the ἀρχή: the interrelation of the members of the triad. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that this system of relations is barely articulated. Not only the descriptions of Chaos, Gaia, and Eros, but also the entire cosmogonic section of the poem are so short (116–33) that it is difficult to disagree with the judgment that Hesiod's interests are generally more moralistic (e.g., the victory of Zeus) than cosmogonic.¹⁵ But this view must be balanced against further evidence of Chaos' principal function later in the poem.

To this point I have considered the first appearance of Chaos without reference to its later evocations in the Titanomachy (617–719) and the description of Tartarus (720–819). This is not because Chaos is conceived in a radically different sense in the latter, but rather because the perspective is there cosmographic instead of cosmogonic. Misinterpretations of Chaos can largely be attributed to the fact that its position within the established cosmos is projected back onto the divinity

14. For the opposite view, see H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy* (Baltimore, 1935), pp. 123–24; F. M. Cornford, *Principium Sapientiae* (Cambridge, 1952), p. 195; F. Solmsen, "Chaos and Apeiron," *SIFC* 24 (1950): 243. From the analogy of Greek and oriental theogonies, Fontenrose (*Python*, pp. 212–13, 223) believes that Chaos is the parent of Earth and Eros. This is a very attractive interpretation, but I think it places too much emphasis on Chaos as the sole source of cosmogony.

15. Cf. U. Hölscher, "Anaximander und die Anfänge der Philosophie," *Hermes* 81 (1953): 398.

which appears before anything else has come-to-be. Such confusion is evident in interpretations of verses 687–712. In that passage, the entire cosmos is in an uproar because of the battle between Zeus and the Titans. Earth and Heaven crash together, producing a conflagration so great that Chaos is seized by tremendous heat (700). Relying on a literal reading of the text and on later conceptions of Chaos, many scholars have identified Chaos with the gap between Heaven and Earth.¹⁶ But it seems unlikely that a gap between two cosmic masses could exist before the masses themselves.¹⁷ The notion that great heat seizes Chaos simply indicates the universality of the conflagration: even the remote expanses of the cosmic depth feel the upheaval. The shift from cosmogonic to cosmographic perspective accounts for the location of Chaos in the nether regions of the cosmos. It is still only a barely articulated nothing; but hereafter it is seen and described from the viewpoint of the differentiated world above.

The difficulties of ascertaining the relation between Chaos and the rest of the cosmos become acute when we turn to the description of Tartarus. At the end of their battle with Zeus, the Titans are hurled beneath the Earth and enchained in Tartarus (717–21), above which grow the roots of Earth and Sea. A similar image is elaborated in verses 736–38: below the Earth are found the “sources and limits” (πηγαὶ καὶ πείρατα) of Earth, Tartarus, Sea, and Heaven. In fact, they extend into the “great chasm” (740). Pointing to a supposed analogy between verses 728 and 736–38, some argue that this chasm is Tartarus.¹⁸ Others identify the chasm with Chaos—Chaos defined as the gap between Earth and Tartarus.¹⁹ However, a third possibility, that the chasm is Chaos, but conceived as stretching out *below* Tartarus, seems more likely, for the following reasons. First, the roots of Earth and Sea should be dissociated from the sources and limits of the four great cosmic masses. The former extend into Tartarus, the region immediately below them; but if the chasm is identified with Tartarus, the latter would contain its own source, which is impossible.²⁰ Moreover, “root” does not suggest origin, as does “source.”²¹ Second, it is clear from the spatial details in the two passages that Tartarus can be reached, but not the chasm. Even if we allow for poetic imprecision in the presentation of topographical detail, there is a significant difference between Tartarus, which a falling anvil reaches in ten days (724–25), and the chasm, which cannot be crossed in a year (740–41). Third, an important genealogical fact supports the contention that Chaos is below, prior to, and less differentiated than Tartarus: the latter is probably identical with Erebus, who is born from Chaos (123).²² Its genealogical dependence on the yawning abyss leads

16. Cf. Cornford, *Principium Sapientiae*, p. 194; Kirk and Raven, *Presocratic Philosophers*, pp. 28–29; Stokes, “Hesiodic and Milesian Cosmogonies II,” p. 20.

17. This salient criticism is made by G. Vlastos in his review of Cornford’s *Principium Sapientiae* (*Gnomon* 27 [1955]: 75).

18. G. S. Kirk, “The Interpretation of Hesiod *Theogony* 736 ff.,” *PCPS* n.s. 4 (1956–57): 11–12; Kirk and Raven, *Presocratic Philosophers*, p. 28; C. H. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (New York, 1960), pp. 81–82; M. D. Northrup, “Tartarus Revisited: A Reconsideration of *Theogony* 711–819,” *WS* n.s. 13 (1979): 25–27.

19. Solmsen, “Chaos and Apeiron,” p. 239; West, “*Theogony*,” p. 192.

20. Stokes offers an explanation of how this is possible in his “Hesiodic and Milesian Cosmogonies I,” *Phronesis* 7 (1962): 25–26.

21. For a defense of the view that πηγή can mean “origin” in Hesiod, see Stokes, “Hesiodic and Milesian Cosmogonies I,” pp. 15, 28–31.

22. Cf. Fontenrose, *Python*, pp. 223–24 and notes 8–9.

to the conclusion that Tartarus is one of the many darknesses which pervade the regions below the Earth. Thus, it is as mistaken to suppose that Chaos is the gap between Tartarus and Earth as it is to consider it the gap between Heaven and Earth.

Further proof of the identification of Chaos with the chasm emerges from the cosmographic detail of verses 736–54. The cosmogonic function of Chaos in 116 is emphasized by the association of the chasm with the “sources and limits” of the four cosmic masses.²³ To be sure, the description is somewhat metaphorical: the archaic meaning of *πηγή* as “spring” is broadened to “source,” though this does not imply that Chaos provides the substance of which the cosmic masses are constituted. Nor should we imagine that the literal boundaries of Heaven, Earth, and Sea extend to Chaos. Mythopoeic perspective is not empirical; rather, it enables the poet to define figuratively the character of essential relations. “Source” indicates that the point from which differentiated, cosmic manifestation begins is the undifferentiated, namely, Chaos. Similarly, “limits” designates the boundaries of the cosmos accessible to the inspired poet. This boundary-zone is symbolized by the “great threshold of bronze,” where Night and Day meet and proceed on their respective journeys (744–54).²⁴ When either completes a circuit, it enters the “awful home,” that is, Chaos. For both polar opposites, entrance into Chaos signifies nonexistence, reemergence existence. This cosmological detail is consistent with Chaos’ generation of Night (123), which in turn gives birth to Day through union with Erebus.

Other details of the present passage are not so readily assimilated to the characterization of Chaos as a barely articulated nothing. How can such an entity have a floor (741), as well as storms blowing through it (742–43)? In this case “floor” is the mythopoeic expression for a limit or boundary; but because it cannot be reached in an indefinite period of time (poetically, a year), Hesiod and his readers would envision a limitless expanse. I am not suggesting that Hesiod considered Chaos infinite in an abstract sense. Although it is barely articulated, Chaos is still a constituent element within the finite cosmic order, beyond which the mythopoeic imagination could not go. The cosmographic perspective determines that Chaos be described from the viewpoint of the differentiated upper world. The storms which blast through Chaos serve to convey the terror (743–44) of its insubstantiality, and its darkness (814) the threat of nonexistence.

A detailed comparison of Hesiodic and Milesian cosmogonic speculation is beyond the scope of this investigation; but consideration of the essential characteristics will help determine the historical significance of Hesiod’s Chaos. Like most of the early Greek philosophers, Hesiod was interested in giving an account

23. I take *χάσμα* in apposition to *πηγαί και πείρατα*. West, “*Theogony*,” p. 364, and Northrup, “Tartarus Revisited,” p. 27, dissociate them.

24. The same threshold is referred to in verses 811–12. That here too it separates the upper world from Chaos is suggested by two significant details. First, the “sources and limits” of the four cosmic masses, which refer to Chaos in 736–39, are located near the threshold (807–10) and hence probably in Chaos. Second, the Titans are said to dwell “in front of” the threshold and gates (813), which separate Chaos and Tartarus. They were hurled into Tartarus (717–21). Thus, “beyond Chaos” (814) could mean either that the poet’s eye has moved up from Chaos, beyond which lies Tartarus, or that *πέρην* means “deep within,” indicating that Tartarus is enveloped by Chaos. The cosmographic detail of 807–14 is somewhat confused on any interpretation; but I think that Hesiod there refers to Chaos, not Tartarus. For a similar view, see Hölscher, “Anaximander,” p. 400.

of the primordial condition. He shares their belief that the less differentiated precedes the more differentiated, that both the *ἀρχή* and the cosmos are divine, and that the first principle continues to play a role in the ongoing cosmic process. If his symbolization of the origin of the cosmos is more mythopoeic than rational, and more religious in intent than scientific, such comparisons are still valid.²⁵ But some attempts to discern similarities between Hesiod's Chaos and the *ἀρχαί* of the Milesians ignore salient facts. First, Hesiod's cosmogony begins with the triad of Chaos, Gaia, and Eros. Neither the unity nor the universality of the *ἀρχή* have been achieved. Second, in their exploration of nature the Milesians identified individual cosmic elements (Thales—water, Anaximenes—air) or something beyond the cosmos (Anaximander's *ἄπειρον*) as the originative substance. It is an error to suppose that Chaos, or even Gaia, is a substance in this sense. Third, the *ἄπειρον* in particular is more than the source of things, it also "surrounds and steers all things" (D.-K. A 15). This positive characteristic is totally inappropriate to Chaos and the primordial triad as a whole.²⁶

More fruitful parallels to Hesiod's cosmogony can be found in Plato's *Timaeus*. It is to be noted first that Plato's cosmogonic speculation differs fundamentally from both the Hesiodic and Milesian types in its use of two primordial principles: the demiurgic Nous and the Receptacle. The former represents, in conjunction with the Forms, transcendental, divine substance, which is supremely active; the latter symbolizes principal space. If we limit ourselves to a comparison of the Receptacle with Chaos and Gaia, these striking parallels emerge: (1) corresponding to the Receptacle's function as "seat" (*Ti.* 52B1 *ἔδρα*) and "mother" (50D3), Gaia, the mother of the gods, is described as the "firm seat" (*Theog.* 117 *ἔδος ἀσφαλές*) of all beings;²⁷ (2) the notion of Chaos as principal space is analogous to the definition of the Receptacle as "space" (52B1 *χώρα*) "in which things become" (50D1, 52C4); (3) the Receptacle's insubstantiality is somewhat similar to that of Chaos; it is not to be identified with any of the four elements or their combinations (51A6–7); rather, it is a "nature invisible and characterless, all-receiving"²⁸ . . . and very hard to apprehend" (51A8–B1); (4) the phrase excised from this passage—"partaking in some very puzzling way of the intelligible"—may indicate that the Receptacle is divine like Chaos (but cf. 53B1–3); (5) also like Chaos, it is "everlasting, not admitting of destruction" (52B1) and exists "even before the Heaven came into being" (52D4).

These analogies should not be pressed too far: the philosopher's Becoming is something quite different from the poet's theogonic process. Nevertheless, it is my belief that in Chaos Hesiod attempted to symbolize an underlying, passive principle in which cosmic-divine manifestation occurs, with Gaia a creative matrix which participates in generation. That his speculation lacks a male or positive

25. I disagree with Kirk's position that "the speculative functions of myths . . . preclude philosophy rather than facilitate its progress" (*Nature of Greek Myths*, p. 301).

26. For this reason, despite certain similarities between the two conceptions, I doubt the validity of attempts to find an antecedent for the *ἄπειρον* in Hesiod's Chaos; cf. Solmsen ("Chaos and Apeiron") and Stokes ("Hesiodic and Milesian Cosmogonies II," esp. pp. 5–14).

27. For this analogy I am indebted to Solmsen, *Aristotle's System of the Physical World* (Ithaca, 1960), p. 130.

28. Chaos, of course, is receptive only by implication, whereas the Receptacle is formally so, because Plato wanted to distinguish it from his primary principle, the demiurgic Nous.

principle not only distinguishes him from Plato, who calls the model according to which the Demiurge constructs the cosmos "father" (50D3), but also sets his account apart from the many creation myths which begin with Heaven and Earth.

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THE DATE OF HAGNIAS' DEATH

Both Isaeus 11 and [Demosthenes] 43 deal with disputes over the estate of Hagnias son of Polemon of Oeum Cerameicum, who made his will when about to serve as ambassador and died not long after making it.¹ A niece was adopted by will and inherited; when she died, Hagnias' matrilinear half-brother Glaucon, named as residual heir in the will, was successfully challenged in court by Phylomache II, wife of Sositheus, the speaker of [Demosthenes] 43. Phylomache in turn was defeated by Theopompus, the speaker of Isaeus 11; he held the estate until his death, when his heir Macartatus was challenged by Sositheus, this time claiming on behalf of his second son Eubulides III. It was for this latter suit that [Demosthenes] 43 was composed.

Harpocraton refers to a Hagnias who was captured and killed by the Spartans while on an embassy to Persia, and it has generally been assumed that this Hagnias was the man with whose estate our speeches are concerned. Since a witness testimony in [Demosthenes] 43. 31 dates an early stage in the dispute to 361/360 B.C., Harpocraton's embassy was dated in the 370s until the publication of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, which dates it to 396. However, if Hagnias the son of Polemon died in 396, it is hard to understand what his kin were doing between that date and 361/360. Attempts to eliminate this problem have hitherto taken the form either of rejection of the chronological testimony of [Demosthenes] 43. 31 or of complicated hypotheses about the history of the family.² The aim of this article is to show that neither of these two approaches is satisfactory, and to argue instead that we should reject the identification of the testator Hagnias with the ambassador of 396, and return to a date in the 370s for the death of the testator.

REJECTION OF THE ARCHON-DATE IN [DEMOSTHENES] 43. 31

Both P. Roussel and L. Gernet, editors of the Budé texts of Isaeus and of Demosthenes' private speeches, felt that a 35-year gap between Hagnias' death and the delivery of Isaeus 11 was impossible, and rejected the date in [Demosthenes] 43. 31 on the grounds that the witness testimonies in this speech were of doubtful reliability. The strongest argument against the authenticity of this particular testimony arises from its statement that Phylomache II defeated all her rivals in 361/

1. It is not explicitly stated in Isaeus 11. 8 that he died while on the embassy.

2. The most recent discussions are those by J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families* (Oxford, 1971), no. 2921 (cited as *APP*), and W. E. Thompson, *De Hagniae Hereditate*, *Mnemosyne* Supp. 44 (Leyden, 1976); cf. the stemma in table 1.