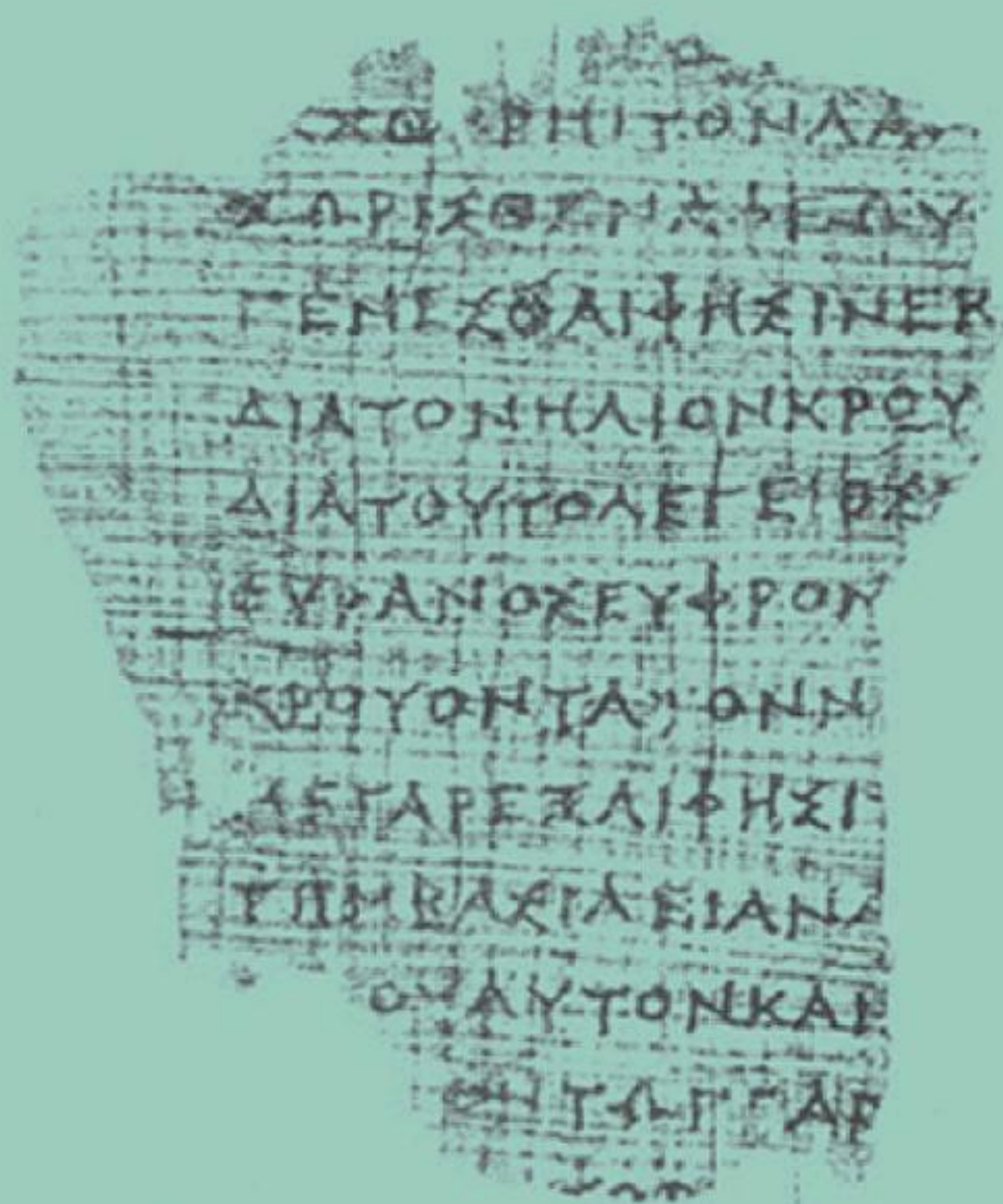


# THE DERVENI PAPYRUS

## Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation

GÁBOR BETEGH



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## *Preface*

I first met the Derveni papyrus via a reference to the Heraclitus quotation in it. When I read the text in the anonymously published *ZPE* transcript, I found it astonishing and fascinating; I realised that I wished to know more about it even apart from its lesson on Heraclitus.

Presumably everyone interested in ancient philosophy, and especially in the earliest part of it, has the dream that by some archaeological miracle some new evidence will one day be found which can shed new light on the doctrines of individual philosophers or on the intellectual climate of the age. I felt I was reading such a document. Also, the commonplace of papyrology became personal experience: I found it outstandingly exciting to read a text which did not come down to us through the stemma of medieval manuscripts but had survived in a copy written by someone around the end of the classical age.

Yet, even though many of the phrases and ideas of the text had a familiar ring, I found the text beyond comprehension. The reasoning appeared contorted, I soon got lost in the jungle of allegorical identifications, and, on the whole, it seemed far from obvious what the author actually wanted to say, why he wanted to say it, and, more generally, what the purpose of the whole text was. As I turned for help to the secondary literature, numerous details became clearer, but I had the feeling that many of the basic questions were still open, or, for that matter, had not even been asked. Also, piece by piece, I gathered the details of the unfortunate editorial situation.

When I finally decided to work on the Derveni text more thoroughly, I first had the clear intention of concentrating solely on that aspect of it which is the most immediately connected to Presocratic philosophy: the cosmological views of the author. Sharing the assumption of most interpreters that the Orphic poem was no more than a pretext for the author, I believed I could examine the author's cosmology without bothering too much with the Orphic poem. Besides, my knowledge about early Orphism was scanty, and the little I knew admonished that it was safer to avoid this slippery



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My semesters in Paris were financed by a French governmental scholarship, administered by the Service Culturel, Scientifique et de la Coopération de l'Ambassade de France in Budapest. The Cambridge Overseas Trust, Christ's College and the Hungarian Soros Foundation financed the year I spent in Cambridge. For the final revision I received financial help from the Hungarian OTKA Foundation (FO32471).

I dedicate this book to my family. I suppose it is not easy to live with someone who spends much of his time in a different age and in a different land. One can understand that the wife of Hermotimus of Clazomenae got fed up after a while when the soul of her husband was travelling too much to distant places, while only his body stayed at home. My family, by contrast, have always been particularly patient and supportive. Let me express my gratitude first of all to my mother for all the help and encouragement she has given me over the years. Let me also thank my grandmother and mother-in-law for their support. But my thanks go, above all, to my wife, Ági, who has supported me unfailingly with her love, patience and care. I could not have accomplished this book without her help. Finally, let me also mention our daughter Juli who made me realise even more acutely how good it is to come back home after such spiritual journeys to remote lands and ages.



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## *Text and translation*



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COL. 2.

. . . Erinyes . . . of the Erinyes . . . they honour . . . are so[uls] . . . funeral  
libations in droplets . . . brings honour . . . for each something birdlike . . .  
fitted to the music . . .



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COL. 4.

who (?alters) what lays . . . to give rather than that harms (*verb*) . . . for  
[. . .] does not allow to obtain (?it) from chance. Is it not on account of  
these that the cosmos possesses order? In the same way, Heraclitus . . . the  
common . . . overturns what is private; he who speaking as someone telling  
holy discourses said:

The sun . . . according to nature is a human foot in width, not transgressing  
its boundaries. If . . . oversteps, the Erinyes, the guardians of Justice, will find  
it out.

. . . would make a transgression . . . of justice . . .



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## COL. 6.

. . . prayers and sacrifices appease the souls, and the enchanting song of the magi is able to remove the daimones when they impede. Impeding daimones are avenging souls. This is why the magi perform the sacrifice, as if they were paying a penalty. On the offerings they pour water and milk, from which they make the libations, too. They sacrifice innumerable and many-knobbed cakes, because the souls, too, are innumerable. Initiates make the preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides, in the same way as the magi. For the Eumenides are souls. On account of these, he who is going to sacrifice to the gods, first birdlike . . . and the . . . (they) are . . . as many as . . .



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## COL. 10.

. . . and to say. For it is not possible to say without uttering; and he (sc. Orpheus) considered 'to say' and 'to utter' to be the same; and 'to say' and 'to teach' mean the same (*or*: have the same power): for it is not possible to teach without saying whatever is taught through discourses. Teaching is considered to reside in saying. Accordingly, 'to teach' was not distinguished from 'to say' on the one hand, and 'to say' from 'to utter' on the other, but 'to utter', 'to say' and 'to teach' mean the same. Thus nothing prevents 'all-pronouncing' and 'teaching all things' from being the same thing.

By saying that she is 'nurse', he (sc. Orpheus) expresses in riddling form that whatever the sun dissolves by heating, the night unites by cooling . . . those things which the sun heated . . .



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COL. 12.

. . . and to take away (sc. his rule). And the next line goes like this:

so that he may rule on the lovely abode of snowcapped Olympus

Olympus and time are the same. Those who think that Olympus and the heaven are the same are entirely mistaken, for they do not know that the heaven cannot be longer rather than wider; but if someone were to call time long, he would not be wrong at all. And whenever he (sc. Orpheus) wanted to speak about heaven, he added the epithet 'wide', whereas whenever (he wanted to talk) about Olympus, on the contrary, he never (added the epithet) 'wide', but 'long'. By saying that it is 'snow-capped', the power . . . snowy . . . snowy . . . white . . . bright . . . grey . . . and . . .



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COL. 14.

[?he made] to leap the brightest and hottest having separated it from himself. He says that this Kronos was born from the sun to the earth because he became the cause through the sun that they were struck against each other. For this reason he says: '(He) who did a great deed.' And after this:

Ouranos son of Night, who first of all ruled

Naming Mind that strikes (? the beings) against each other Kronos, he says that it did a great deed to Ouranos; for (he says that) he (sc. Ouranos) was deprived of his kingdom. He named Kronos himself from his action and the others too according to the same principle. For of all the things that are . . . nature . . . that he got deprived of his kingdom . . . the things that are . . .



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## COL. 18.

. . . and those moving downwards. But speaking about [. . .] he means that the [? earth] and all the other things are in the air, it being breath. Now Orpheus named this breath Moira. But all other men according to the common usage say that Moira spun for them and that those things which the Moira has spun will be, on the one hand speaking correctly, but on the other hand not knowing either what Moira is or what spinning is. For Orpheus called wisdom Moira. This seemed to him to be the most suitable out of the names that all men have given. For before Zeus received his name, Moira was the wisdom of the god always and through everything. But since Zeus received his name, they think that he was born, even though he existed even before, but was not named. For this reason he says 'Zeus was born first', as he was first . . . then . . . men [? not understand]ing what is said (τὰ λεγόμενα) . . . Zeus . . .



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## COL. 20.

. . . those men who, while performing the rites in the cities, have seen the holy things, I wonder less that they do not have knowledge. For it is not possible to hear and at the same time to understand (*or*: learn) what is being said (τὰ λεγόμενα). But all those who (hope to acquire knowledge?) from someone who makes craft of the holy rites deserve to be wondered at and pitied. Wondered at because, thinking that they will know before they perform the rites, they go away after having performed them before they have attained knowledge, without even asking further questions, as though they knew anything of what they have seen or heard or learned; and pitied because it is not enough for them to have spent their money in advance, but they also go off deprived even of their judgement. Hoping before performing the holy rites that they will attain knowledge, they go away after having performed them deprived of hope too. . . . by his own . . . mother . . . sister . . .

## COL. 21.

οὔτε τὸ ψυχ[ρὸν] τῷ ψυχρῷ. θόρνῃ δὲ λέγ[ων] δηλοῖ  
 ὅτι ἐν τῷ ἀέρι κατὰ μικρὰ μεμερισμένα ἐκινεῖτο  
 καὶ ἐθόρνυτο, θορνύμενα δ' ἕκα<c>τα συνεστάθη  
 πρὸς ἄλληλα. μέχρι δὲ τούτου ἐθόρνυτο, μέχρι  
 ἕκαστον ἦλθεν εἰς τὸ σύνητες. Ἀφροδίτη Οὐρανία 5  
 καὶ Ζεὺς καὶ ἀφροδιτιάζειν καὶ θόρνυσθαι καὶ Πειθῶ  
 καὶ Ἀρμονία τῷ αὐτῷ θεῷ ὄνομα κεῖται. ἀνὴρ  
 γυναικὶ μισγόμενος ἀφροδιτιάζειν λέγεται κατὰ  
 φάτιν. τῷ γὰρ νῦν ἐόντων μιχθέντων ἀλλ[ή]λοις  
 Ἀφροδίτη ὦν[ο]μάσθη. Πειθῶ δ' ὅτι εἶξεν τὰ ἐ[ό]ντα 10  
 ἀλλήλο[ι]ς ἢ. εἰ[κ]εῖν δὲ καὶ πείθειν τὸ αὐτόν. [Ἀ]ρμονί' δὲ  
 ὅτι πο[λλὰ. . . . ἦ]ρμοσε τῶν ἐόντων ἐκάστω[ι].  
 ἦμ μὲν γ[ὰρ καὶ πρ]όσθεν, ὠνομάσθη δὲ γενέσ[θαι] ἐπεὶ  
 διεκρίθη. τὸ δὲ δι[α]κριθῆν[αι] δηλοῖ ὅτ[ι].[. . .]. εἰς  
 εἰ. . .[. . . ἐκ]ράτει ὥστε διεκ[ρίθησαν] 15  
 [ ±15 ] .[ . . . ] ν.[ ] γυν

1. θόρνῃ ZPE: θορν<ύ> η Janko: θορ{ν} ἦ Janko: θόρ{ν} η Ts. ap. L&M: θορνῇ West 2. ἀέρι  
 Ts. ap. Bernabé: ἀέρι ZPE || ἐκινεῖτο Ts. ap. Bernabé: ἐκινεῖτο ZPE 3. δ' ἕκα<c>τα συνεστάθη Ts.  
 ap. L&M: δὲ κατασυνεστάθη Karsomenos and ZPE 5. ἦλθεν pap. ut vid.: ἦλθεν ZPE 7. θεῷ  
 ὄνομα Ts. ap. Bernabé: θεῷ ὄνομα ZPE || <καὶ ἀφροδιτιάζειν καὶ θόρνυσθαι> ἀνὴρ Ricciardelli  
 Apicella || ἀνὴρ <γὰρ> Janko 8. μισγόμενος Ts. ap. Bernabé: μισγόμενος ZPE || ἀφροδιτιάζειν  
 <καὶ θόρνυσθαι> Janko || λέγεται Karsomenos and Ts. ap. Bernabé: λέγεται ZPE 8-9. κατὰ |  
 φάτιν τῷ γὰρ pap. ut vid.: κατὰ φάτιν | τῷ γὰρ ZPE || κατὰ φάτιν <καὶ ἀφροδιτιάζειν καὶ θόρνυσθαι>  
 Merkelbach 11. ἀλλήλο[ι]ς ἢ ZPE: ἀλλήλο[ι]ς Janko || αὐτόν ZPE: αὐτό Janko || [Ἀ]ρμονί' α  
 pap. ut vid.: [Ἀ]ρμονία ZPE 12. ἦρμοσε ZPE: συνήρμοσε Karsomenos || ἐκάστω[ι] Ts. ap. L&M:  
 ἐκάστω[ι] ZPE 13. ὠνομάσθη ZPE: ἐνομίσθη Janko 14. τὸ ZPE: τῷ Janko || .[. . .]. εἰς ZPE:  
 τ[ῷ] μεί[ξε]ς Janko 15. εἰ. . . ZPE: ἐδίωκε Janko || καὶ ἐκ[ράτει] Janko: .]ατει ZPE || ὥστε Ts. ap.  
 L&M: ὡς ZPE διεκ[ρίθησαν] Janko: διε .| ZPE

## COL. 21.

. . . nor the cold to the cold. By saying 'by mating', he (sc. Orpheus) makes clear that divided up into small (pieces) they were moving and mating in the air, and as they were mating, they all got put together with each other. They were mating until each came to its like. Aphrodite Ourania, and Zeus, and to aphrodise, and to mate, and Peitho, and Harmonia are given as name to the same god. A man mingling with a woman is said by common usage to aphrodise. For (this reason) as the things that are now got mixed with one another, (this god) has got the name Aphrodite. (It has got the name) Peitho, because the beings yielded to one another; and to yield and to persuade is the same. (It has got the name) Harmonia, because many of the beings got fitted to one another. For they existed even before, but were spoken of as 'being born' since they were separated out . . . to be separated out makes clear that . . . ruled so that they got separated out . . .

## COL. 22.

πάν[τ' οὐ]ν ὁμοίω[ς ὦ]νόμασεν ὡς κάλλιστα ἡ[δύ]νατο  
 γινώσκων τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῇ φύσιν, ὅτι οὐ πάντες  
 ὁμοίαν ἔχουσιν οὐδὲ θέλουσι πάντες ταῦτά  
 κρατιστεύοντες λέγουσι ὅτι ἂν αὐτῶν ἐκάστωι  
 ἐπὶ θυμὸν ἔλθῃ, ἅπερ ἂν θέλοντες τυγχάνωσι, 5  
 οὐδαμὰ ταῦτά, ὑπὸ πλεονεξίας, τὰ δὲ καὶ ὑπ' ἀμαθίας.  
 Γῆ δὲ καὶ Μήτηρ καὶ Ῥέα καὶ Ἥρη ἡ αὐτή. ἐκλήθη δὲ  
 Γῆ μὲν νόμωι, Μήτηρ δ' ὅτι ἐκ ταύτης πάντα γ[ίν]εται.  
 Γῆ καὶ Γαῖα κατὰ [γ]λῶσσαν ἐκάστοις. Δημήτηρ [δὲ]  
 ὠνομάσθη ὡςπερ ἡ Γῆ Μήτηρ, ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ἐ[ν] ὄνομα 10  
 τὸ αὐτὸ γὰρ ἦν. – ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς Ὑγμνοῖς εἰρ[η]μένον·  
 Δημήτηρ [Ῥ]έα Γῆ Μήτηρ Ἑστία Δηϊώι. καλε[ῖτ]αι γὰρ  
 καὶ Δηϊώ ὅτι ἐδη[ιώθ]η ἐν τῇ μείξει. δηλώσει δὲ [ὅτ]αν  
 κατὰ τὰ ἔπη γέν[ητα]ι. Ῥέα δ' ὅτι πολλὰ καὶ . . . [ 15  
 ζῶια ἔφυ [ ±11 ] ἐξ αὐτῆς. Ῥέα καὶ [ 15  
 κα [ ±17 ] . η δ' ἐκ[

1. πάν[τ' Ts.: π[ά]ν[τ] ZPE || ὡς Ts.: ὡς ZPE || ἡ[δύ]νατο Ts.: ἡ[δύν]ατο ZPE 2. γινώσκων Ts.:  
 γινώσκων ZPE || ἀνθρώπων Ts.: ἀνθρώπων ZPE || οὐ πάντες Ts.: οὐ πάντες ZPE 3. οὐδὲ  
 θέλουσι Ts.: οὐδ' ἐθέλουσι Janko || πάντες Ts.: πάντες ZPE 6. ὑπὸ Ts.: ὑπὸ ZPE 7. Γῆ  
 Ts.: Γῆ ZPE || Ἥρη Ts.: Ἥρη ZPE 8. δ<έ> Janko 9. [γ]λῶσσαν Ts.: [γ]λῶσσαν ZPE ||  
 Δημήτηρ [δὲ] Ts.: Δημήτηρ [δὲ] Kapsomenos and ZPE 10. ὡςπερ Ts.: ὡςπερ Kapsomenos  
 and ZPE || ὄνομα Ts.: ὄνομα Kapsomenos and ZPE 11. εἰρ[η]μένον Ts.: εἰρ[η]μένον ZPE  
 12. Μήτηρ Ts.: Μή[τ]ηρ ZPE || καλε[ῖτ]αι Ts.: καλε[ῖτ]αι ZPE || γὰρ Ts.: γὰρ ZPE 13. μείξει  
 Ts.: μείξει ZPE || δὲ, [ὅτ]αν Janko: δὲ [λί]αν Ts.: δ. [ . . ]αν ZPE 14. κατὰ τὰ ἔπη Ts.: κ[α]τὰ τὰ  
 ἐπ[.] || ZPE γέν[ητα]ι Janko: γεγ[νᾶν] Ts.: γε. [ . . ] ZPE || Ῥέα Ts.: Ῥέα ZPE || δ<έ> Janko || . . .  
 [ ZPE: π[αν]τοῖα Ts. ap. L&M 15. ζῶια Ts. and Janko: ζῶια ZPE || καὶ [ Ts.: κα [ ZPE || ἔφυ  
 [ρύεντα Ts. ap. L&M: ἔφυ [ρέοντα Burkert: ἔφυ [ραϊδίως Janko || Ῥέα ZPE: Ῥέα Janko || καὶ [Ῥείη  
 Ts.: καλ[ῶν Burkert 16. κατ[ὰ γλῶσσαν ἐκάστοις Ts. ap. L&M: κα [ ZPE || Ἥρη δ' ἐκ[λήθη Ts.  
 ap. L&M: ] ηρεκ[ ZPE

## COL. 22.

So he (sc. Orpheus) named all things in the same way as finely as he could, knowing the nature of men, that not all of them have a similar nature nor do all want the same things. When they have the power, they say anything that occurs to each one's heart, whatever they happen to want, never the same things, through greed (*or*: arrogance), sometimes also through lack of understanding. Earth (Ge), Mother (Meter), Rhea and Hera is the same (*or*: are one and the same). She/it was called Earth (Ge) by convention; Mother, because all things are born from her (*or*: from this one). Ge and Gaia according to each one's dialect. And (she/it) was called Demeter as the Mother Earth (Ge Meter), one name from the two; for it was the same.

And it is said in the *Hymns* too: 'Demeter Rhea Ge Meter Hestia Deio'. For (she/it) is also called Deio because she/it was torn (*or*: ravaged: ἐδιδιώθη) in the mixing/sexual intercourse. He will make it clear when, according to the verses, she is born. . . . And (she/it) is called Rhea because many and . . . animals were born . . . from her. Rhea and . . .



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COL. 24.

. . . are equal measured from the centre, but those which are not round-shaped cannot be of equal limbs. This (verse) makes it clear:

which shines for many articulate-speaking humans on the boundless earth.

Someone might think that this verse is said wrongly, namely that when she is at her utmost, the things that are show up more than before she is at her utmost. But he does not mean this (by saying that) she shows, for if he had meant this, he would not have said that she shows for many, but that for all at the same time, both for those who work the land, and for those who sail when they have to sail, and for the former the seasons. For if there were no moon, people could not have discovered the counting either of the seasons, or of the winds . . . and all the others . . .

## COL. 25.

καὶ λαμπρό[τ]ητα· τὰ δ' ἐξ ὧν ἡ σελήνη [λ]ευκότατα μὲν  
 τῶν ἄλλωγ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον μεμερισμένα  
 θερμὰ δ' οὐκ ἔστι. ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλα νῦν ἐν τῷ ἀέρι ἕκασ  
 ἀλλήλων α[ι]ωρούμεν, ἀλλὰ τῆς μὲν ἡμέρης ἄδηλ' ἔστιν  
 ὑ[π]ὸ τοῦ ἡλίου ἐπικρατούμενα τῆς δὲ νυκτός ἐόντα  
 5 δῆλὰ ἔστιν. ἐπικρατεῖται δὲ διὰ σμικ[ρ]ότητα.  
 αἰωρεῖται δ' αὐτῶν ἕκαστα ἐν ἀνάγκῃ, ὥς ἄμ μὴ συνίη  
 πρὸς ἀλλήλα· εἰ γὰρ μή, συνέλθοι <ἄν> ἁλέα ὅσα τὴν αὐτὴν  
 δύναμιν ἔχει, ἐξ ὧν ὁ ἥλιος συνεστάθη. τὰ νῦν ἐόντα  
 10 ὁ θεὸς εἰ μὴ ἤθελεν εἶναι, οὐκ ἂν ἐπόησεν ἥλιον. ἐποίησε δὲ  
 τοιοῦτογ καὶ τ[ο]σοῦτον γινόμενον οἷος ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ λόγου  
 διηγείται. τὰ δ' ἐπὶ τούτοις ἐπίπροσθε π[ο]ιεῖται  
 [οὐ β]ου[λό]μενο[ς] πάντας γιν[ώ]σκε[ι]ν. ἐν δὲ [τ]ῷιδε  
 σημαί[ν]ε[ι].  
 [αὐτ]ᾶρ [ἐ]πεὶ δ[ὲ] π[άν]τα Διό[ς] φρήμ μή[σατ]ο ἔργα  
 15 [ .τρωνη .[  
 [ ]πηγ. .[  
 [ ]ων .[

1. λαμπρό[τ]ητα ZPE: λαμπρό[τ]ατα Janko || ὧν Ts.: ὦν ZPE || σελήνη Ts.: σελήνη ZPE ||  
 [λ]ευκότατα Ts.: [λε]υκότατα ZPE: [λε]υκότερα Janko 2. ἄλλωγ κατὰ Ts.: ἄλλωγ κατὰ ZPE:  
 ἄλλωγ <καὶ> κατὰ Janko 3. θερμὰ δ' οὐκ Ts.: θερμὰ δ' οὐ[κ] ZPE 4. ἔστιν Ts.: ἔστιν ZPE  
 || α[ι]ωρούμεν<α> Janko || ἡμέρης ZPE: ἡμέρης Janko 5. ὑ[π]ὸ Ts.: ὑ[πὸ] ZPE || δὲ Ts.: δὲ  
 ZPE 6. ἐπικρατεῖται Ts.: ἐπικρατεῖται ZPE 7. ἀνάγκῃ Ts.: ἀνάγκῃ ZPE 8. ἀλλήλα  
 Ts.: ἀλλήλα ZPE || <ἄν> West 11. καὶ τ[ο]σοῦτον Ts.: καὶ τ[ο]σοῦτον ZPE || ἐν Ts.: ἐν ZPE  
 12. διηγείται Ts. *ap.* Bernabé: διηγεί[τ]αι ZPE || δ' ἐπὶ Ts. *ap.* Bernabé: δ' [ἐ]πὶ ZPE || τούτοις Ts.  
*ap.* Bernabé: τούτοις ZPE || ἐπίπροσθε Ts. *ap.* Bernabé: ἐπίπροσθε ZPE || π[ο]ιεῖται Ts. *ap.* Bernabé:  
 π[ο]ιεῖται ZPE 13. β]ου[λό]μενο[ς] Ts. *ap.* Bernabé: β]ου[λό]μενο[ς] ZPE: β]ου[λο]μένο[υ]  
 Janko || δὲ Ts.: δὲ ZPE || σημαί[ν]ε[ι] Ts.: σημαί[ν]ει ZPE 14. [αὐτ]ᾶρ [ἐ]πεὶ δ[ὲ] Ts.: [ . . .  
 ]. .[. ]μει[ ZPE || π[άν]τα Ts.: ]ωσ[τα] ZPE: π[άν]τα Janko || Διό[ς] φρήμ μή[σατ]ο ἔργα Ts.: . . .  
 διο[. . . . .]σα[. . . ]. ZPE: νόο[ς] αἰ[γιόχ]οιο | [μή]σατο Janko 15–17. Ts.: not in ZPE

## COL. 25.

... and brightness. Those things out of which the moon is (composed) are the whitest of all, divided according to the same principle (*or*: measure), but they are not hot. And there are other things now in the air, floating far away from each other. But during the day they are invisible being dominated by the sun, whereas during the night it is visible that they exist. They are dominated because of their smallness. Each of them floats in necessity, so that they do not come together with one another; for otherwise all those which have the same characteristics as those out of which the sun was set together would come together in one mass. If the god had not wished that the things which are now should exist, he would not have made the sun. But he made it of such a sort and of such a size as is explained in the beginning of the account. Those (words) which come after these he puts before (as a screen) not wishing all men to understand. In this verse he indicates:

But once [? the heart] of Zeus devised all deeds

## COL. 26.

μη[τρ]ός μὲν ὅτι μήτηρ ὁ Νοῦς ἔστιν τῶν ἄλλων  
 ἑᾶς δὲ ὅτι ἀγαθῆς. δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖςδε τοῖς ἔπεσιν  
 - ὅτι ἀγαθὴν σημαίνει.  
 - Ἑρμῇ Μαιάδος υἱὲ διάκτορε δῶτορ ἑάων.  
 - δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ ἐν τ[ῶ]νιδε. 5  
 - δοιοὶ γὰρ τε πίθοι κατακῆνται ἐν Διὸς οὐδεῖ  
 δῶρων οἷα διδοῦσι, κακῶν, ἕτερος δὲ τ' ἑάων.  
 - οἱ δὲ τὸ {ρ}ῥῆμα οὐ γινώσκοντες δοκοῦσιν εἶναι  
 μητρὸς ἑαυτοῦ· ὁ δ' εἵπερ ἤθελεν ἑαυτοῦ μητρὸς  
 ἐμ φιλότῃτι ἀποδείξαι θέλοντα μιχθῆναι τὸν 10  
 θεόν, ἐξῆν αὐτῶι γράμματα παρακλίναντι  
 μητρὸς ἐοῖο εἶπε[ῖ]ν· οὕτω γ[ὰ]ρ ἂν ἑαυτοῦ γίνοιτο  
 [υἱὸς δ']αὐτῆς ἂν εἴη. . . . . δ]ῆλον ὅτι ψ[. . . . .][ ]  
 [. . . . .] ἐν τῇι συ [. . . . . . . .] ἀμφοτερ[  
 [. . . . . . ἀ]γαθῇ [. . . . . . . .]. α[ 15  
 [. . . . . .]. ἐναι[

1. μη[τρ]ός Ts. *ap.* Bernabé: μη[τρ]ός ZPE || μήτηρ Ts. *ap.* Bernabé: μήτηρ ZPE || Νοῦς Ts. *ap.* Bernabé: Ν[οῦ]ς ZPE || τῶν Ts. *ap.* Bernabé: τῶν ZPE 2. ἑᾶς ZPE: ἑᾶς Kapsomenos || ἀγαθῆς Ts. *ap.* Bernabé: ἀγαθῆς Kapsomenos and ZPE || δὲ ZPE: δ]ε Kapsomenos: δὲ Janko || ἔπεσιν Ts. *ap.* Bernabé: ἔπε[σιν] ZPE: ἔ[πεσιν] Kapsomenos: ἔπεσι Janko 3. σημαίνει ZPE: σημαίνει Kapsomenos 4. ἑάων ZPE: ἑάων Kapsomenos 5. τ[ῶ]νιδε ZPE: τῶνιδε Kapsomenos 8. δοκοῦσιν ZPE: δοκοῦσιν Kapsomenos 10. ἀποδείξαι Ts. *ap.* Bernabé: ἀποδείξαι ZPE: ἀποδείξαι Kapsomenos: ἀποδείξαι Janko || μιχθῆναι ZPE: μιχθῆναι Kapsomenos 11. ἐξῆν ZPE: ἐξῆν Kapsomenos || <β> γράμματα Kapsomenos || παρακλίναντι Janko: παρακλίναντα ZPE 12. μητρὸς ZPE: μητρὸς Kapsomenos || εἶπε[ῖ]ν ZPE: εἶπειν Kapsomenos 13. [υἱὸς δ']αὐτῆς ἂν εἴη Ts. *ap.* L&M: ]αὐτῆς ἀνε[ ZPE || ψ[ Janko: υἱός Janko: Ζεύς Ts. *ap.* L&M 14. συ [ ZPE: συ[μείξει or συ[ουσία Burkert

COL. 26.

... '[of?] mother' because the Mind is the mother of the others; and 'of his own (ἐᾱς)' because she is good. He makes clear in these verses too that it means good:

Hermes Diaktoros son of Maia, giver of goods (ἐᾱων).

He makes it clear in these as well:

For two urns are placed on Zeus' threshold,  
Of gifts such as they give: of evils, and the other one of goods (ἐᾱων)

Those who do not understand the term think that it is '[of?] his own mother'. But if he had wished to show the god wishing to mingle in love of his own (ἐαυτοῦ) mother, it would have been possible for him by altering some letters to say of his own (ἐοῖο) mother. For thus it would have become his own (ἐαυτοῦ), and he would be her son . . . . her . . . clear that . . . both . . . good . . .



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A large number of different bronze and silver vessels surrounded the base of the krater, while another group of clay vessels was placed at the middle of the tomb. Spears, a sword, a knife and a pair of greaves were lying at the north-west corner of the tomb, along the wall. The tomb also contained a group of alabaster and various smaller objects, like boxes, nails and spatulas, and stems of wreaths.

The grave goods in tomb  $\Delta$  were similar in nature to those found in the first two graves, but somewhat less numerous and of a less refined quality. They also included drinking and other vessels of bronze and clay, alabaster, wreaths (two with gilded bronze leaves, another with a solid gold myrtle branch), spearheads and swords, and pieces of jewellery, and an eight-stater of Philip II. The uneven arrangement of the goods in tomb  $\Delta$  suggested to the excavators that the offerings of a first burial were later pushed aside to make room for a second, inhumed body.

On the basis of the bones and the nature of the grave goods, the archaeologists have concluded that tomb A contained the cremation of a man, tomb B the cremation of a man and a woman,<sup>7</sup> and tomb  $\Delta$  the inhumation of a man and a woman. The careful construction of the tombs and the abundance of the grave goods, although not unusual in Macedonian tombs of the same period, show the relatively high economic and social status of those buried there. Moreover, the weapons, armour and especially the horse harnesses in tombs A and B indicate that these men belonged to the upper military class.

The remains of the pyres of tombs A and B and the objects contained in them can offer us some idea of the ritual. The corpse was cremated a few metres away from the grave, on top of a richly decorated couch; some of the objects found in the remains of the pyre of tomb A seem to have decorated the couch. According to the reconstruction of Themelis and Touratsoglou, the clay column capitals found in the ashes of the pyre formed part of an elaborate structure on which the couch was laid. They have also suggested that the ivory eyes found among the ashes 'probably come from clay (or wooden) masks-images of the dead (?) or of chthonic demons (?) which were burned in the pyre' (p. 207). For parallels, they quote near contemporary examples from Salamis in Cyprus and from the late archaic tombs at Vergina. Other objects found among the remains of the pyre on top of tomb A indicate that some offerings were burnt on the pyre with the body. After cremation the bones were wrapped in cloth and put into the krater, which was then placed in the grave. The grave was

<sup>7</sup> On this point, see the detailed study in Musgrave (1990).

finally closed in with the covering slabs, and the remains of the pyre thrown on top of the slabs.<sup>8</sup>

On the basis of the coins, metal vessels and pottery, Themelis and Touratsoglou maintain that 'all the evidence favours a date for the burials in the late fourth to early third century'.<sup>9</sup>

#### THE SCRIPT

The discovery of the papyrus scroll among the remains of the pyre of tomb A was, without exaggeration, sensational. To begin with, it was the first papyrus found in mainland Greece. In contrast to the sand of Egypt and the volcanic tufa in Herculaneum, the humidity of the Greek soil is unfavourable to the conservation of papyri. In this case, however, the fire of the pyre evaporated all the humidity from the fibres, and the resultant carbonisation saved the roll from putrefaction. The age of the roll only added to the excitement raised by the discovery, as papyrologists agreed that it might be the oldest Greek papyrus found so far.<sup>10</sup>

Some words, such as *μύσται*, *θεοῖς θύειν* and *χοάς* (apparently all from col. 6), were readily legible on the loose parts of the roll, and they already suggested the religious nature and high interest of the text. The roll was immediately transferred from the site to the Archaeological Museum of Thessalonica, where, on the invitation of C. Makaronas, S. G. Kapsomenos offered a first expert evaluation and dating of the text. Makaronas also offered the rights of publication to Kapsomenos.

Anton Fackelmann, conservator of the Vienna National Library collection of papyri, executed the extremely difficult task of the unrolling. He first rendered the papyrus less fragile by the application of the juice of fresh papyrus plant, and then peeled off fragments from the side of the roll, using static electricity to move the scraps. This method resulted in a collection of some 200 fragments, some larger, some very small. The fragments were then arranged in 9 groups and put between glass plates for conservation. The grouping does not correspond to the original order of the fragments, and in some cases was apparently based merely on the size of the individual fragments. The establishment of the original order of the fragments and

<sup>8</sup> Makaronas (1963) implied that the pyre was originally burnt where its remains were found, that is, on the covering slabs of the tomb. This, as noted already by Ginouvès (1994) 187, cannot be correct, because the krater containing the ashes had to be put into the grave before the covering slabs were placed on the top. (Ginouvès, however, mistakenly assigns the papyrus to tomb B.)

<sup>9</sup> Themelis and Touratsoglou (1997) 221.

<sup>10</sup> This title might now go to the badly preserved roll found in 1982 in a tomb in Athens and dated to the fifth century. But, as far as I know, this roll has not been made legible as yet.

the decipherment of the text were carried out with the help of high quality photographs, some of which were on display together with the papyrus at the Archaeological Museum of Thessalonica in the spring of 1998.<sup>11</sup>

The bottom part of the papyrus was consumed by the flames, and only 7–8 cm of the upper half escaped. This means that we have 15–17 lines of writing in the better preserved columns, of which the upper 10–11 lines have an almost continuous text, whereas usually only a few letters are legible in the bottom lines.<sup>12</sup> Only small fragments of 9–10 lines, some with hardly any legible letters, remain from the badly damaged first columns.

Kapsomenos, with the help of K. Tsantsanoglou, first reconstructed 22 columns, with a number of unidentified fragments remaining.<sup>13</sup> Tsantsanoglou (1997) has established, however, that we possess the remains of 26 columns in total, a fact which has also provided a definitive column numbering. The first columns, which made up the outer layers of the roll, were more exposed to the destructive effects of fire and time, and are accordingly in a much worse state of preservation. The remaining upper parts of the last columns, on the other hand, contain very few lacunae. In accordance with an established ancient practice, a relatively large block of space (about 17 cm) is left blank after the last column in order to make the use of the roll easier.

It is not clear how much of the original roll has reached us. According to a survey made by Eric Turner, the height of early literary papyri varies between 12.7 cm (comic fragment, Brit. Lib. pap. 1824. P. Hib. 1 6., early third century BC) and 21.7 cm (Eur. *Antiope*, Brit. Lib. pap. 485. P. Petrie 1 1–2, mid third century BC).<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the number of lines per column is normally between 21 and 31, with the unusually high number 36–7 in the case of the highest roll. On the basis of these data, it seems that we have about half of the lines of the individual columns in the Derveni papyrus. It is even more difficult to guess how many columns are lost before our column 1.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, it is possible that the text continued on a second roll. The available evidence, however, does not allow us to verify or falsify this hypothesis.<sup>16</sup>

The usual length of the individual lines varies between 30 and 45 letters, which number, however, can occasionally be considerably lower in lines

<sup>11</sup> For the description of the conservation process and for a primary papyrological description, see Kapsomenos (1964). For some published photographs, see Turner and Parsons (1987) plate 51; Tsantsanoglou and Parássoglou (1988) tav. IV; and the dust cover of L&M. For a full list, see the entry 'Illustrations' in the Bibliography by M. S. Funghi in L&M.

<sup>12</sup> It is mostly in these bottom lines that we may expect new readings with the allocation of smaller, hitherto unplaced fragments.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Kapsomenos (1963) and [Anon.] (1982). <sup>14</sup> Cf. Turner (1980b) 37.

<sup>15</sup> See however p. 328 n. 9 below. <sup>16</sup> See however p. 130 below.

preceding a quotation, or, in some cases, at the end of a period. The length of the lines was apparently set in order to accommodate a hexameter.<sup>17</sup> The scribe usually avoids separating words, the only surviving exceptions to this rule being ἑξαμαρ|τάνουσιν in col. 12.4–5 and ἐπι|τελέσαντες in col. 20.6–7.

Although the papyrus is completely carbonised, the writing is easily legible when light is shed on it at the appropriate angle. The bilinear script shows a very neat, skilled book hand with small characters, using a sharp kalamos. The square, separate letters are comparable to the lapidary style of fourth-century inscriptions. The writing, however, is ‘fast’; particularly notable are the sigma and omega written in one sequence.<sup>18</sup>

Paragraphoi usually, but apparently not in all cases, precede and follow the lemmata, and occasionally indicate punctuation with or without a dash in the line.<sup>19</sup> Iota adscript and consonant assimilation are regular features. There are a few supralinear corrections, apparently by the first hand.

Most papyrologists agree on the basis of its palaeographic features that the manuscript must be dated to the second half of the fourth century BC.<sup>20</sup> Tsantsanoglou and Parássoglou give a more precise dating, and assign the papyrus to the period between 340 and 320.<sup>21</sup> It should be noted, however, that the extreme scarcity of comparative evidence makes the dating difficult and insecure. Moreover, one cannot completely exclude other factors that might blur the picture. It is not inconceivable, for example, that the nature of the text prompted the reproduction of a more antiquated handwriting. Naturally, the date of the manuscript need not be identical with the date of the text itself.

The dialect used in the text is mixed. Most commentators consider it basically Attic with an Ionic overlay, whereas West and Janko maintain

<sup>17</sup> So, e.g., Obbink (1997) 44 n. 9. The length of a hexameter, roughly 36 characters, was regularly used in papyri as a stichometric unit even for prose texts. It does not mean, however, that the actual lines in papyri were of this width. Typically the lines contained 18 characters, which means that two papyrus lines made up one ‘line’ taken as a unit. Cf. Sedley (1998a) 119–20 with reference to Cavallo (1983) 20–2. Nevertheless, in the absence of other documents, we cannot know much about fourth-century BC practice, and the possibility cannot be excluded that early papyri used longer lines. Cf. Parsons in Turner and Parsons (1987) 151 n. 113, with reference to J. Irigoin, who raises the possibility that the Derveni papyrus might be taken as evidence for the origin of the latter stichometric practice. See also p. 95 below.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed palaeographic and papyrological description, see Kapsomenos (1963); Turner and Parsons (1987) 92; and, for col. 4, Tsantsanoglou and Parássoglou (1988).

<sup>19</sup> See also p. 95–6 below.

<sup>20</sup> Alternative views have been put forward, however. Turner, for example, first preferred the dating between 325 and 275 BC, but, as Parsons indicates in Turner and Parsons (1987) 151 n. 111, he later settled for the fourth century BC. Irigoin (1972) 547, on the other hand, proposes an earlier date, possibly as early as the first half of the fourth century.

<sup>21</sup> Tsantsanoglou and Parássoglou (1988) 125.

that it is fundamentally Ionic with Attic features which, according to West but with Janko's dissent, might be due to the transmission of the text.<sup>22</sup> Notably, sometimes the same word appears in different dialectal forms (e.g., *σμικρο-*, *μικρο-*; *ὄντα*, *ἐόντα*).<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Janko has drawn attention to the sporadic Doric elements, such as the use of *νιν* for *μιν*.

#### THE EDITORIAL SITUATION

The study of the Derveni papyrus has regrettably been hindered by the lack of an authoritative edition. As the editorial situation is quite complex, and has not been solved as yet, it seems appropriate to summarise it briefly here. Shortly after the discovery S. G. Kapsomenos received the rights of the edition from C. I. Makaronas, Curator of Antiquities in Central Macedonia. After the first brief announcements, Kapsomenos published in 1964 a more elaborate general description of the find and the content of the text, to which he also added the provisional transcription of parts of coll. 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 26 (according to the current numbering; Kapsomenos' numbering was lower by four) in order to give an idea of the character of the text.<sup>24</sup>

Although the exceptional importance of the text for several areas of classical studies had immediately been recognised, Kapsomenos' very incomplete transcription was the only officially available text for a long time. When Kapsomenos died in 1978, K. Tsantsanoglou, who had been Kapsomenos' assistant and collaborator since the first phases of the work, took over the task of the edition with G. M. Parássoglou. In the meantime, unpublished transcripts of larger parts of the text were apparently circulating among scholars working on related subjects.

Events, however, took an unexpected turn in 1982, when a transcript, with a very short German introduction but without signature appeared in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 47, on separate page numbering following page 300.<sup>25</sup> This transcript contained a number of supplements and emendations, without in most cases indicating their originator; as far as one can reconstruct it, some of them apparently came from the Greek editors, whereas some were suggested by other scholars. In reply to this unauthorised edition, the Greek editors and Sir Eric Turner published an objection in *Gnomon* 54, stating that the text published 'is in part provisional and in part wrong, owing to changes made without the editors' knowledge

<sup>22</sup> For the former view, see most recently Funghi (1997) 36; for the latter, see West (1983) 77, and Janko (1997) 62.

<sup>23</sup> For a full survey, see Janko (1997) 62–3.

<sup>24</sup> Kapsomenos (1964).

<sup>25</sup> [Anon.] (1982).



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'the Derveni author' throughout to refer to the author of the papyrus (not to the author of the poem commented on in it).

#### THE PAPYRUS SCROLL AND ITS SEPULCHRAL CONTEXT

The location of the papyrus in the remains of the pyre of tomb A poses an obvious problem. Why was it there? The answer to this question is not independent of the interpretation of the text of the papyrus. It may affect our reading of the text and, conversely, one's assessment of the text is likely to influence one's answer to the question concerning the ritual or other function of the scroll. Thus, we should not expect any definite answer at this point; I shall suggest an answer in [chapter nine](#), based on my interpretation of the text.<sup>34</sup> What follows in this chapter is a survey of different possibilities with their respective necessary or likely implications.<sup>35</sup>

The more sceptical answer, raised first in passing by F. W. Walbank and now considered more seriously by Richard Janko,<sup>36</sup> is that the papyrus was mere scrap, used quite simply to light the pyre. Indeed, we have some evidence about the Roman custom of putting papyrus on the funeral pyre in order to set it alight. Nevertheless this evidence is quite meagre. The two most relevant passages both come from Martial. In *Epigr.* 10.97.1 he writes *dum levis arsura struitur Libitina papyro* ('While the light-heaped pyre was being laid with papyrus for the flame' trans. Ker). Standard editions of Martial connect this line with *Epigr.* 8.44.14 where we read *fartus papyro dum tibi torus crescit* ('while, stuffed with papyrus, your pyre is growing high' trans. Ker). If the two passages attest the same custom, then the latter text implies that one has to think not of a single roll kept whole, but rather a layer of torn papyrus put underneath the wood to help combustion.<sup>37</sup> If so, these texts cannot provide a real parallel for the suggested use of the Derveni papyrus.

The text of *Anth. Pal.* 9.174.2–6 (fifth century AD) is sometimes also adduced in this context. The author is speaking here about the abysmally low wages of teachers, and develops a nice simile: 'Here the nurse brings, perforce, the fee once a month, tying up the wretched pittance in byblus and paper, and puts the contemptible little paper, like a pinch of incense,

<sup>34</sup> The impatient reader can already turn to page 347 below.

<sup>35</sup> The Strasbourg Empedocles papyrus presents the same problem about the relationship between text and archaeological context. For a recent discussion, see Osborne (2000) 332–4.

<sup>36</sup> Walbank *apud* Kapsomenos (1964–5) 22. Janko (1997) 62 and (2001) 1 n. 1. Janko's interest in this possibility is clearly related to his attempt at giving a non-religious interpretation of the text.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Lewis (1974) 96.

by the master's seat, as if by a tomb.' (ἐνθα τροφὸς κατὰ μῆνα φέρει μισθὸν μετ' ἀνάγκης, | βύβλω καὶ χάρτη δησαμένη πενίην | ὥς δὲ κάπνισμα τιθεῖ παρὰ τὸν θρόνον, ὥς παρὰ τύμβον, | τὸν μικρὸν χάρτην, τὸν παραριπτόμενον – trans. Paton). This text, however, does not refer to rolls but to the well-attested use of cheap papyrus (*charta emporetica*), as well as discarded and torn writing papyrus, for wrapping incense.<sup>38</sup> Therefore this text, also very remote from the Derveni tombs in time, cannot be used as a parallel either.

There is, to the best of my knowledge, not a shred of evidence from the classical or Hellenistic period for a comparable Greek or Macedonian practice of lighting a pyre with a roll of papyrus.

It is also important to note that the carbonised roll was not on its own in the remains of the pyre. As mentioned above, some other personal belongings of the person buried in tomb A were left among the ashes on top of the covering slabs. For example, a pair of greaves and some spearheads were found there. We can contrast this with the fact that the greaves and arms of the person buried in the neighbouring tomb B were neatly placed inside that tomb together with other valuable objects. And even if one were to try to explain the location of the greaves by the assumption that the person was cremated in his greaves, and that then they were simply left in the remains of the pyre, the presence of other pretty objects, such as the coloured alabaster, found also among the ashes of the pyre on top of the covering slabs, would need explanation. All this indicates that not all the offerings and valuable objects were put inside tomb A, but some of them were left in the ashes on the covering slabs. The presence of such objects in the remains of the pyre, I would maintain, considerably strengthens the hypothesis that the roll was not treated as waste paper.

The alternative answer to the question concerning the location of the roll, and the one espoused by most interpreters, is that it was designed to be burnt with the corpse on the pyre, and thus that it had some function in the funerary ritual. In this event, its placement can be compared with other Greek texts found in tombs. These, however, apparently fall into different categories. Some of them have no obvious eschatological implication. For example, the papyrus roll from Hawara found in a tomb (P. Bodl. Ms. Gr. Cl. a. I(P), mid second century AD) contains two verses from *Iliad* 1 and the whole of *Iliad* 2. One can compare this find with the testimony of Photius *Bibl.* 190.151a, according to which Cercidas of Arcadia (fourth century BC) wanted to be buried with a copy of the first two books of the *Iliad*. A roll

<sup>38</sup> Cf. e.g. Athenaeus 9.374b.

from Saqqarah, also found in a tomb and dated to the fourth century BC – hence very close to the Derveni papyrus in time – preserves the *Persians* of Timotheus of Miletus (P. Berol. 9875). Although different hypotheses have been advanced, the function of these rolls in graves remains unclear.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, some texts in tombs have evident eschatological bearing, as we can see most conspicuously in the case of the gold leaves. More and more of these are coming to light, and help to reshape our view of ancient eschatological beliefs and mystery religions. Furthermore, owing to some momentous new discoveries, such as the gold leaves from Hipponion and Thessaly, these objects and texts are now customarily treated again as ‘Orphic’ and/or ‘Bacchic’.<sup>40</sup> These tiny inscribed gold plates clearly have a place in the tomb, for, most probably, they were meant to be guides for the deceased in their journey to the afterlife. The texts carved on them, despite their brevity and enigmatic wording, evince a distinct core of eschatological beliefs with a conception of the nature and fate of the soul as well as an elaborate topography of the underworld.

Admittedly, a few verses inscribed on gold leaves are not the same thing as the longer, argumentative prose treatise on the Derveni papyrus – even though I shall try to show later that there might be significant connections between the Derveni text and the gold leaves.<sup>41</sup> There are some indications, however, that papyri could be used for comparable purposes. Scholars have surmised on the basis of the archaeological data that the papyrus roll found in the right hand of an inhumated person at Callatis (present day Romania) could contain a Dionysiac/Orphic text possibly with eschatological content;<sup>42</sup> but this is sheer speculation, because the roll was unfortunately destroyed before anyone could read it.

A further indication may come from Euripides’ *Hippolytus*. Theseus in his diatribe against Hippolytus depicts him as a hypocritical Orphic. He first alludes to the vegetarian diet customarily associated with Orphism, and then continues with the following words: ‘Having Orpheus as your lord, you revel honouring the smoke of many writings’ (Ὀρφέα τ’ ἄνακτ’ ἔχων | βᾶκχευε πολλῶν γραμμάτων τιμῶν καπνοῦς *Hipp.* 953–4). The expression πολλῶν γραμμάτων . . . καπνοῦς is usually understood as referring to the trifling or worthless nature of the Orphic texts. The

<sup>39</sup> Turner (1980a) 76–8 raises the possibility that the Hawara case shows an imitation of the Egyptian custom of putting a copy of the *Book of the Dead* in the tomb. See, however, the case of Cercidas mentioned above.

<sup>40</sup> For a survey, see Pugliese Carratelli (1993), to which add also Frel (1994). Parker (1995) 496–8 presents good arguments for the case that the gold leaves can be treated as Orphic.

<sup>41</sup> See ch. 9 below. <sup>42</sup> See Pippidi (1967) 210.

word *καπνός* could indeed have this secondary meaning;<sup>43</sup> yet, I suggest, Theseus' turn of phrase might be taken just as well as a play on words, also alluding to Orphic books burnt on pyres – such as the one at Derveni.

We can also add the evidence offered by pictorial representations, the most notable of which is the funeral vase dated 330–320 BC. The vase painting depicts Orpheus with the heroised deceased who holds a papyrus roll in his hand.<sup>44</sup> The scholars who published the vase suggest that this may be taken as a reference to the Orphic custom of equipping the dead with texts. All these pieces of evidence, both textual and pictorial, refer to the prominent place texts and books had in Orphic circles – a phenomenon that has been analysed by, among others, Marcel Detienne.<sup>45</sup> But all this is admittedly very far from compelling in the case of the Derveni papyrus. We have to acknowledge, on the other hand, that the lack of comparable evidence might just as well be due to the fact that papyri are very rarely preserved in Greek tombs. And this is even more likely to be the case if they were burnt, or meant to be burnt, on funeral pyres. In all events, as we shall shortly see, the first columns of the Derveni text do have eschatological implications, and could indeed be referring to rituals connected with the funeral.<sup>46</sup>

To conclude, acknowledging all these qualifications and uncertainties, I still favour the hypothesis that the Derveni roll did have a function in the ritual. This is made likely by the presence of other valuable objects in the remains of the pyre, by the specific Orphic concern for eschatology, by the well-documented Orphic custom of equipping the dead with texts, and possibly also, as I shall argue, by the special role allotted to fire in the Derveni text.

#### WAS THE PERSON BURIED IN THE TOMB AN 'ORPHIC'?

The hypothesis that the papyrus had a function in the ritual, and, further, that it had this specific role on account of its content, is likely to imply,

<sup>43</sup> See LSJ 1. So e.g. Barrett (1964) ad loc.; Halleran (1995) ad loc.; Linforth (1941) 52–3.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Schmidt (1975); see also Burkert (1999a) 72–6, esp. 75. <sup>45</sup> Detienne (1989).

<sup>46</sup> Yet again, the eschatological relevance of a text cannot in itself guarantee its ritual function in a funeral context. Martin and Primavesi (1999) 36–8 argue for instance that the papyrus containing Empedocles' *Physica*, with its demonological story, was used as discarded paper, regardless of its content, for the fabrication of the funeral crown. But this view is also open to debate. (For the alternative, see Most (1997) 130.) The case of the Empedocles papyrus is certainly different in that the papyrus was torn into pieces for this secondary use, and apparently only a small part of the roll was used, with no attention paid to equipping the deceased with the entire text.

without however necessitating it, that the person buried in tomb A had some association with Orphism. But when we try to answer the question set above, everything depends on what we mean by the term 'Orphic'. Here we find ourselves faced with the notorious problem of social organisation and identities in mystery cults in general, and in Orphism in particular.<sup>47</sup>

First of all it should be noted that Orphism was not a unitary movement, and therefore we should accept differences; the trouble is that our evidence, especially from the classical and early Hellenistic period, is so meagre that we do not know who could count as Orphic, and on what basis, in different communities and in different parts of Greece. Second, it should also be remembered that people could be associated with Orphism in different forms and at different levels.<sup>48</sup> At one level, we have the itinerant priests propagating initiations in the name of Orpheus – apparently, this was a distinct type known as the *orpheotelestai*. On another level, we have the initiated, that is, the clientele of the *orpheotelestai*. Our information is frustratingly sparse on both groups and the interaction between them, the main source being Adeimantus' unsympathetic representation in Plato's *Republic* 2. The text is well known, but is worth quoting here at length:

Begging priests and prophets frequent the doors of the rich and persuade them that they possess a god-given power founded on sacrifices and incantations. If the rich person or any of his ancestors has committed an injustice, they can fix it with pleasant rituals. Moreover, if he wishes to injure some enemy, then, at little expense, he'll be able to harm just and unjust alike, for by means of spells and enchantments they can persuade the gods to serve them. And the poets are brought forward as witnesses to all these accounts. [There comes a quote from Hesiod *Works and Days* 287–9, and then Homer *Il.* 9.497–501 about the gods being swayed by prayers and sacrifices.] And they present a noisy throng of books by Musaeus and Orpheus, offspring as they say of Selene and the Muses, in accordance with which they perform their rituals. And they persuade not only individuals but also whole cities that the unjust deeds of the living or the dead can be absolved or purified through ritual sacrifices and pleasant games. These initiations, as they call them, free people from punishment hereafter, while a terrible fate await those who have not performed the rituals. (*Republic* 364b–365e trans. Grube)

In any case, it is natural to think that the profession of an *orpheotelestes* required a strong adherence to the so-called Orphic life, with its dietary

<sup>47</sup> On this subject, see e.g. Burkert (1982) and (1987a) ch. 2; Parker (1995).

<sup>48</sup> This important, but often ignored, point is well put by Bernabé (2002) 7: 'Il y a beaucoup de manières d'être "Orphique".'



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people with very similar eschatological beliefs could be buried either way. We can observe this phenomenon in the case of the tombs providing the gold plates: the person buried in Timpone Grande in Thurii was cremated, whereas those in Timpone Piccolo and Hipponion were inhumed.<sup>52</sup> Also, within this closed group of six tombs in Derveni, showing similarities in many respects, A, B, Γ, E and Z had cremation burials, whereas Δ had inhumation (the case of H is unclear because of looting, but cremation is more probable). It is to be noted, however, that the Derveni group is exceptional in the contemporary Macedonian context in which inhumation is far more common than cremation (53 cremations out of 600 burials in Olynthos, and 16 out of 229 in Akanthos).<sup>53</sup> This fact may point to some special importance attached to cremation – divergence from the prevailing norm often carries a meaning.

It is customary to associate Orphism with some kind of ascetism and ‘puritanism’. The relative wealth of the offerings found in tomb A seems to be in conflict with such an attitude. This is indeed one of the reasons why Themelis and Touratsoglou preclude the possibility that ‘the occupant of tomb A (and the owner of the papyrus) was a devotee of Orphism.’<sup>54</sup> However, the clientele of the itinerant Orphics could of course be of higher economic and social status as well. Adeimantus’ begging priests and soothsayers ‘go to rich men’s doors’, and it is unlikely that an initiation itself would cause these people to give up their riches, or to make funerals more modest if the local sociological setting required otherwise. Indeed, as has been stressed by Jan Bremmer, the material of the gold leaves also indicates a higher economic status.<sup>55</sup> The Thracian cultural context may also be relevant at this point. According to Ivan Marazov, the mysteries in ancient Thrace, among which Orphism had a distinguished place,

<sup>52</sup> The burial of Timpone Grande is specific in the sense that the corpse was first put in the coffin, and then the pyre was built upon it. The evidence for the type of burial in the tombs of Timpone Piccolo is indirect. See Zuntz (1971) 292. For a survey of the type of burial with the different gold leaves, see the useful survey in Graf (1993b) 257–8.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Themelis and Touratsoglou (1997) 202.

<sup>54</sup> Themelis and Touratsoglou (1997) 205. Their conclusion is that ‘It might be assumed that the Orphic papyrus accompanied the dead man on the pyre either because of its general religious-eschatological content, similar to that of the “Dionysiac” krater B1, or because its owner liked to read such texts, or was indeed himself the commentator.’ The last of these options seems highly unlikely to me, especially if one considers those mistakes in the papyrus which indicate that it was a copy. Moreover, the intentional use of an eschatological text in an eschatological context is a sign of a stronger commitment than a simple favourite reading. It has to be noted that Themelis and Touratsoglou do not seem to know about Tsantsanoglou (1997), which, as we shall see, has important implications also on this question.

<sup>55</sup> Bremmer (1999) 82.

‘were of a markedly social nature – they were accessible only to the representatives of the upper crust.’<sup>56</sup> And, after all, one should also bear in mind Morris’ assertion, based on the study of thousands of Greek tombs, that ‘There can be no one-to-one correlation between grave goods and eschatology.’<sup>57</sup>

The presence of *oinochoiai* in tomb A may, at least according to some, cause another problem. For Burkert maintains that the Orphic dietary restrictions included the prohibition on drinking wine.<sup>58</sup> This is in fact the other and stronger reason why, with explicit reference to Burkert’s claim, Themelis and Touratsoglou exclude the possibility that the person in tomb A was a follower of Orphism.<sup>59</sup> Yet I find the textual basis for Burkert’s claim too weak. Burkert adduces only Plato’s *Laws* 672b:

There is a little-known current of story and tradition which says that Dionysos was robbed of his wits by his stepmother Hera, and that he gets his revenge by stimulating us to Bacchic frenzies and all the mad dancing that results; and this was precisely the reason why he made us a present of wine. (trans. Saunders)

One can take this as a reference to the Orphic myth about the rending of Dionysos, although it is far from necessary to do so. Yet, surely, it does not contain anything about a prohibition on drinking wine. Furthermore, our other sources on the Orphic life only speak about vegetarianism, and never mention that Orphics were teetotallers – a curiosity perhaps no less noteworthy than total abstention from meat. On the other hand, there is evidence for the Pythagoreans’ abstinence.<sup>60</sup> Yet nothing makes it necessary that the Orphics followed the Pythagoreans in this respect.

Moreover, such a restriction on drinking wine would be difficult to square with the important place allotted to Dionysos in Orphic thought. And even though it is still disputed whether or not the gold leaves can count as Orphic, it is significant that the last line on the Pelinna leaves, which bridge the gap between the A and B leaves of Southern Italy, speaks emphatically about the reward of wine for the initiate.

Judging from the spearheads, the pair of greaves and the remains of a horse’s harness found in the remains of the pyre, the person had military

<sup>56</sup> Marazov (1998) 114. On the social and economic situation of the persons buried with the gold leaves, see the important correctives in Graf (1993b) 255–6.

<sup>57</sup> Morris (1992) 106.

<sup>58</sup> Burkert (1985a) 301 writes that ‘Orphics eat no meat, no eggs, no beans, and they drink no wine.’

<sup>59</sup> Themelis and Touratsoglou (1997) 205; their reference is to the Greek translation of Burkert (1985a).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Iamblichus, *Vita Pyth.* 107. Some other sources mention specifically that Pythagoras drank water (instead of wine): see, e.g., D.L. 8.13.



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In her recent book on the interactions between the living and the dead in Greek culture, Sarah Iles Johnston has made an important contribution to the understanding of the eschatological lore forming the background of the Derveni author's views.<sup>4</sup> For my part, I have not much to add to these excellent comparative studies. I shall summarise and put together their main results, but my own focus here will be on the internal logic of the author's argument, as far as the condition of the text permits, and I shall formulate some questions to which we can return in the final chapters, after an examination of the second part of the text, the interpretation of the Orphic poem.

Let us start with a quick overview of the topics of the individual columns, to give a table of contents, as it were. In column one, the only significant word is 'Erinyes', which is, however, a bold reconstruction. In column two, Erinyes are surely mentioned at least twice. Moreover, they are clearly mentioned in the context of some sacrificial ritual, possibly a funerary rite. The topic of column three is manifestly eschatological; it not only mentions *daimones*, but speaks about unjust (men?) and responsibility. In column four, the author evokes Heraclitus' dictum about the sun not transgressing its measures and being overseen by the Erinyes (previously known as fr. B3 and B94 DK). The most obvious link with the previous columns is the role Heraclitus allots to the Erinyes: they would find out the sun, should it try to overstep its boundaries. Column five contains a diatribe directed against the contemptible religious, moral and epistemological attitudes of the ignorant populace, and treats those sources of information – such as oracles and dreams – that should give warning for the errant. Finally, column six seems to weave the different threads together: it speaks about the sacrificial rites performed by the magi, the parallel rites of the initiates, as well as the eschatological rationale of these ritual activities, involving souls, *daimones* and Eumenides.

This thematic array is impressively rich, but, as far as I can judge, can easily make up a coherent whole. The most probable scenario, it seems to me, is that the ritual activities dealt with in columns 2 and 6 constitute the immediate topic of this part of the text, and the rest is invoked in order to explain these cult activities. So when we turn now to the more detailed analysis, I shall start with these two columns: besides dealing with the sacrifices, it is in these columns that the most important actors, the magi and the initiates, are mentioned.

<sup>4</sup> Johnston (1999).



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simply textual, for much hinges on this question concerning the religious outlook of the text as a whole. The prescription of animal sacrifice would be quite unwelcome in an Orphic context.

In the first lines of the same column, the Erinyes appear twice (Ἐρινύ col. 2.3 and Ἐρινύω col. 2.4). The extant text does not let us see what the relationship between the Erinyes and the sacrifices was, but one reasonable guess is that the Erinyes were specified as the recipients of the offerings.<sup>12</sup> But, notably, the recipients of these sacrifices are not the chthonic or other gods. As Tsantsanoglou rightly suggests, the fact that (at least in the remaining part of the text) the gods of the traditional pantheon are not specified as recipients of sacrifices, and even only mentioned as belonging to the belief system of others (col. 3.7: 'are called assistants of the gods'), is most probably related to the author's theology expressed in the commentary on the Orphic poem in the second part of the text.<sup>13</sup> Let it suffice to say now, without anticipating too much, that in the second part of the papyrus the author collapses the divine beings mentioned in the Orphic poem into the figure of one divine cosmic agent.<sup>14</sup> It is highly significant, then, that the explanation of rituals in the first columns does not refer to the traditional gods, and hence is consistent at this important point with the theology expounded in the second part of the papyrus.

#### THE MAGI AND THE INITIATES

Since the magi made their appearance in column 6 with the new readings of Tsantsanoglou, there has been some discussion on the question of whether the sacrifices described in this column represent Greek or Persian cult practices. Tsantsanoglou thinks that the reference is to Persian magi, hence the cult should also be Persian.<sup>15</sup> Burkert, for his part, accepts that the reference is to Persian magi, but maintains that the author speaks about two parallel but distinct systems, that of the magi, on the one hand, and that of the 'initiates', on the other. Burkert also stresses that the relation between these two systems is analogy.<sup>16</sup> So, who are these magi and who are the initiates? And further, how are they related to each other and to the Derveni author?

Let us start with the magi. The term μάγος had a double sense in Greek usage. The word could refer either to a specific Persian priestly caste, experts on religious matters, or to people who were supposed to be able to perform

<sup>12</sup> So Tsantsanoglou (1997) 102–3.

<sup>13</sup> Tsantsanoglou (1997) 99.

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed analysis of the system of identifications, see chapter 5 below.

<sup>15</sup> Tsantsanoglou (1997) 110–15.

<sup>16</sup> Burkert (1999a) 106.

some kind of wizardry or black magic.<sup>17</sup> This latter usage practically always carries a negative connotation. In our text, by contrast, the reference is no doubt positive. Does it necessarily follow, then, that the reference in the papyrus is to Persian magi? At any rate, this is the reason why Tsantsanoglou takes the reference to be to the Persian magi and Persian religious practices.<sup>18</sup>

We receive the first set of information about the Persian magi from Herodotus. The functions Herodotus assigns to the Persian magi correspond remarkably well to the activities the author discusses in the first columns of the papyrus. Herodotus speaks about the role the magi play in sacrifices, divination (interpretation of dreams and other forms of oracular activity), and funerary rituals.<sup>19</sup> The first two of these are mentioned explicitly in the papyrus, and the presence of the third is highly probable, while its relevance is indubitable.

There is a further text that might be recalled at this point. When Diogenes Laertius discusses the lore and activity of the magi in the first book of his work, he reports, following Sotion, that 'they practise divination and predict the future, declaring also that the gods visually appear to them, and that the air is full of *eidola* which enter, down with a stream caused by exhalations, into the eyes of those who have sharp sight' (D.L. 1.7). I have left the term *eidola* untranslated intentionally. Most translators render it as 'shapes' (Hicks) or even '*simulacres*' (R. Goulet), according to its technical use in philosophical texts. If this were the correct sense of the phrase, the magi would advocate a theory of perception reminiscent of Epicurus. I doubt, however, if this is the right rendering of the text. It should be remembered that the primary meaning of the term εἰδωλον is 'phantom' or 'ghost', i.e. the insubstantial soul of the dead. This usage, attested from Homer to Plato, is much more appropriate in the context, and makes good sense: the magi claim to be able to perceive the gods and the souls of the dead, and this capacity makes them able to engage in oracular activities. If so, this description would also point to a strong concern about the souls of the dead, together with divination, that we see in column 6.

Yet a reference to the Persian magi in the papyrus might seem surprising. Why should our author go outside Greece in the interpretation of these cult practices? One possible answer is that the Persian magi, at least in

<sup>17</sup> See especially the perspicacious analysis in Graf (1994) 31–45.

<sup>18</sup> Tsantsanoglou (1997) 110 n. 25: 'But as I was unable to find the term used technically and not pejoratively of Greek religious practitioners, I limited my search to the Iranian area.' He notes, however, that 'I cannot rule out the possibility that Greek *magi* did exist as a serious religious profession before the term came to mean 'magician, impostor, charlatan'.'

<sup>19</sup> Sacrifices 1.132, 140, 7.43, 113, 191; interpretation of dreams 1.107, 119, 128, 7.19; funerary rites 1.140.

some contexts, were treated as outstanding experts on ritual activities; this is the view of Xenophon, for example, who refers to them as ‘religious professionals’ (οἱ περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς τεχνίται).<sup>20</sup> We can suppose that the Derveni author, and the Orphic initiators in general, would likewise assume towards their activities an attitude characteristic of a profession or a craft.<sup>21</sup> If so, as Tsantsanoglou has suggested, the author can bestow further authority on the cult practices of the ‘initiates’ by comparing them to those of the Persian magi.

But what about the other, non-ethnographic usage of the term μάγος? The first thing to note in this respect is that it belongs to a group of designations and is very often used in conjunction with other members of that group, such as ‘begging priest’, ‘diviner’ and ‘purifier’. Plato draws a memorable image of the itinerant religious experts of cathartic and initiatic rites in the famous passage of book two of the *Republic*, where he calls them ἀγύρται and μάντις.<sup>22</sup> The activities of these priestly figures come up in the *Laws*, where the Athenian proposes to legislate against their practices. According to Plato, these people claim to be able to manipulate the souls of the living and the dead with the help of sacrifices, prayers and incantations, and to persuade the gods for their own purposes.<sup>23</sup> The terms in which Plato describes what these people are doing are the very same that we find in the papyrus describing the activities of the magi – although, of course, Plato’s depiction is negative, whereas that in the papyrus is positive.

We find another clearly negative portrayal of the methods practised by these people in the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease*. The author of this text criticises the magi, purifiers, begging priests and quacks (μάγοι τε καὶ καθάρται καὶ ἀγύρται καὶ ἀλαζόνες) who claim a superior knowledge and great piety, and who insist that they are able to cure the ill by means of purifications and incantations. The author tries to show that the purported piety of these people is impious, and that their self-proclaimed knowledge is imposture.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Xen., *Cyr.* 8.3.11 and Eur. *Orest.* 1495 (μάγων τέχνη). See also Plato, *Alc.* 1. 122a1–3. The claim in the *Alcibiades* that *mageia* is something teachable may very well mean in the Platonic context that it can qualify as expert knowledge.

<sup>21</sup> On this point, see Burkert’s seminal essay ‘Craft versus sect’ (Burkert (1982)), with col. 20 of the Derveni text.

<sup>22</sup> Pl. *Rep.* 364b5.

<sup>23</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 909a8–b7: ὅσοι δ’ ἄν θηριώδεις γένωνται πρὸς τῷ θεοῦ μή νομίζειν ἢ ἀμελεῖς ἢ παραιτητοὺς εἶναι, καταφρονοῦντες δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχαγωγῶσι μὲν πολλοὺς τῶν ζώντων, τοὺς δὲ τεθνεώτας φάσκοντες ψυχαγωγεῖν καὶ θεοὺς ὑπὲρχνούμενοι πείθειν, ὡς θυσίαις τε καὶ εὐχαῖς καὶ ἐπωδαῖς γοητεύοντες, ἰδιώτας τε καὶ ὅλας οἰκίας καὶ πόλεις χρημάτων χάριν ἐπιχειρῶσιν κατ’ ἄκρας ἐξαιρεῖν, τούτων δὲ ὅς ἄν ὁφλῶν εἶναι δόξη κτλ.

The text that may be the earliest attested occurrence of the word μάγος in Greek literature can add something even more notable to the above. Fragment B14 DK of Heraclitus, as preserved by Clemens of Alexandria, runs as follows: 'Against whom does Heraclitus of Ephesus prophesy? Night-wanderers, magi, bacchants, maenads, initiates.'<sup>24</sup> It is true that some interpreters doubt the authenticity of this enumeration.<sup>25</sup> But if it is by Heraclitus, then the Derveni papyrus and this fragment can give support to each other by establishing a connection between magi and the participants of Dionysiac and other mystery cults.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, both fragment B14 and the Derveni papyrus mention the magi and the 'initiates' (μύσται) in a single breath. This can also be crucial for us because, contrary to the customary Athenian usage, the Heraclitean reference to the 'initiates' is unlikely to be to those who were initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries. If so, it leaves open the possibility that the 'initiates' of column 6 of the papyrus belong to an Orphic/Dionysiac cult.

From this brief survey there emerges a distinct religious and social function, which can bear several names and is associated with different but closely connected ritual activities: a religious professional who claims a certain expert knowledge in matters of sacrifice, divination, initiation, healing, eschatology and the manipulation of souls, and whose activities are manifestly external to the traditional religious life of the polis, even if he can occasionally convert a whole polis, as Plato maintains. This religious expert can be called ἀγύρτης (begging priest), μάντις (diviner), γόης (sorcerer), μάγος (magus), τελεστής (initiator), or καθαρτής (purifier). It is this complex of religious functions and activities that the first columns of the papyrus speak about. The formulations in these columns, especially the use of first person plural in column 5, also suggest that the Derveni author speaks about the art he himself practises. If this is so, we shall not be far off the mark in thinking that a contemporary would use at least some of the terms listed above to designate our author.

On this basis, it seems to me possible that when the author speaks about magi in column 6 he does not refer to Persian priests and practices

<sup>24</sup> 12 B14 DK = Clem. *Protr.* 19: τίς δὲ μαντεύεται Ἡράκλειτος ὁ Ἐφέσιος; νυκτιπόλοις, μάγοις, βάκχοις, λήναις, μύσταις.

<sup>25</sup> So e.g. Marcovich (1967) ad loc., but see Kahn (1979) ad loc. and, most recently, Pradeau (2002) ad loc., with reference to Babut (1975).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Graf (1994) 32–3, who claims that Heraclitus' magi are itinerant priests or diviners, experts of private rites, like the ones mentioned by Plato in *Rep.* 2 (364b) and by the Derveni author in col. 20. It is all the more notable as Graf wrote these lines without knowledge of col. 6 of the papyrus, which was still unavailable at that moment. Graf also calls attention to Sophocles, *OT* 387–8, where these denominations, offices and functions are treated as belonging together.

(as Tsantsanoglou and Burkert take it), but speaks about the group that would include himself. If so, the magi could designate leaders of the initiates, priests of a private religious group, and the column could thus be speaking about the parallel actions of magi and initiates within the same cult. Such an interpretation can find good external support in Heraclitus fr. B14 quoted above. It is rendered internally plausible by the fact that the author speaks in the first person plural already in the previous column where he describes what he and his 'colleagues' do for those seeking their religious services ('for them we go into the oracular shrine to inquire for oracular answers, whether it is right etc.' col. 5.4–5). This clearly shows that he considers himself as representative of a group of religious experts. And members of this group, we have just seen, can also be called μάγος. For my part, I do not think it a real problem that the term is used pejoratively in practically all those cases where it does not refer to Persian magi. We may assume that the term μάγος in Greek started out as a neutral or even positive description and self-description, just as καθαρτής and ἀγύρτης. As a self-description, it was capable also of appropriating the authority of the Persian priests, whereas it later received negative connotations through diverse attacks starting with Heraclitus.

Moreover, the general Greek term for the activity attributed to the magi in the first lines of column 6 (manipulation of souls and daimones) is γοητεία. Now there is a very strong connection between mystery religions, and Orphism in particular, and γοητεία.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, some ancient sources call Orpheus a γόης, whereas Plato in *Republic* 2 explicitly attributes goetic activities to the Orphic initiators. This again can show that the reference in column 6 is not to another group, but to the group to which the Derveni author claims to belong.

The description the author gives of his involvement in oracular activities shows that he could also be called a diviner (μάντις). Now what kind of divination is this? The reference to the oracular shrine (μα]γτεῖον, col. 5.4) is notable. It indicates that the activity of the Derveni author is connected to some cult centre of oracles. His insistence on the interpretation of dreams provides another side of the activities of the diviner. Dream interpretation, as Herodotus reports, was also a crucial aspect of the functions of the Persian magi, but it was, of course, part of the Greek practice as well.

The question of the identity of the 'initiates' has also caused some worries. Given that in literary texts the term μύσται is customarily used with reference to initiates of the Eleusinian cult, Henrichs tentatively suggests

<sup>27</sup> On this relationship, see the useful discussion in Johnston (1999) 105–11.

that the Derveni author speaks about Eleusinian initiates.<sup>28</sup> Yet, as Henrichs himself mentions in a footnote, there are notable exceptions to this usage.<sup>29</sup> First, we have fr. B14 of Heraclitus, which we have already discussed. The context makes it quite probable that Heraclitus is referring here to Bacchic, rather than Eleusinian, initiates. Another remarkable piece of evidence is the Hipponion gold leaf where *μύκται* and *βόκχοι* seem to form a single group. Tsantsanoglou calls attention to the Pherai gold leaf where the term *μύκτης* appears again in an Orphic/Bacchic context.<sup>30</sup> And even more new evidence has come to light, which was still unknown to Henrichs and was not mentioned by Tsantsanoglou. Macedonian gold leaves from Pella, found in cist graves dated to the end of the fourth century (thus contemporaneous with the Derveni tombs), also contain the word *μύκτης*. As Matthew W. Dickie argues, the gold leaf of Posidippus of Pella (possibly identical with the epigrammatist, or someone from his family) shows that he was an initiate of a Dionysiac cult.<sup>31</sup> Hence the term *μύκτης* on that leaf does not indicate initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries either. These occurrences clearly show that there is no reason to restrict the application of the term to the Eleusinian initiates in the Derveni papyrus.

#### THE INTERPRETATION OF RITUAL

Thus far I have been discussing the *realia*, the cult practices and religious and social identities of the actors. This is only one side of the text, however. For the author does not merely describe the relevant cult activities, but lays much stress on explaining them. As we can see most clearly in column 6, he provides an explanatory account of the different sacrifices. The interpretation of ritual action can be described in the general formula: 'Actor *a* performs ritual action *R* because *E*'. As Albert Henrichs has shown, the content of the explanatory account *E* could take two substantially different forms.<sup>32</sup> The traditional and much more widely practised form was to provide an aetiological explanation in which a mythical narrative presents the origin, and thus the 'historical' rationale, of the cult practice. In the alternative form, we receive a rationalising account, which should also explain the efficacy of the action. In such an account, the explanation is given not via the mythical antecedents (or mythical paradigm) of the action, but rather by listing those factors and forces that are at work in the actual current performance. Henrichs calls this the 'symbolic interpretation' of ritual.

<sup>28</sup> Henrichs (1984). <sup>29</sup> Henrichs (1984) 267 n. 48. <sup>30</sup> Tsantsanoglou (1997) 116–17.

<sup>31</sup> See Dickie (1995). See also Rossi (1996). <sup>32</sup> Henrichs (1998) 45.



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traditional, local or otherwise. It is true that in column 6 the author seems to attribute the same explanatory account to the participants in general. The magi and the initiates appear to possess a body of knowledge about the nature and behaviour of souls, daimones and Eumenides, and this is why they offer the appropriate sacrifices in the proper order. They are presented as knowing, for example, that 'the daimones are avenging souls', and that this is why there is need for a sacrifice as a sort of 'penalty'. It may very well be the case, however, that the attribution of this knowledge is fictitious, and hence that the interpretation of the rite is based, at least to some extent, on the author's personal ideas. As we shall see in the next chapters, the author shows a certain degree of inventiveness in moulding the influences received from different sources into a novel and reasonably consistent theory in the physical interpretation of the Orphic poem; he could also be employing some degree of originality in developing the eschatological aspect of his belief system.

#### SOULS, DAIMONES, ERINYES AND EUMENIDES

As the main elements of the author's eschatological theory forming the basis of his explanatory account of ritual are the souls, the daimones, the Erinyes and the Eumenides, his principal task is to characterise them and to establish some functional and other relations between them. This is what we have to try to reconstruct now.

The first column offers practically no help in this respect; it can only show (provided we accept Tsantsanoglou's supplement Ἐπιψύων) that the author has already started to speak about the Erinyes. The second column, although still very fragmented, is more helpful. The discussion of the Erinyes is clearly combined with the discussion of sacrifice. This consideration finds further support in the expression at the bottom part of the column that something is 'fitted (or adaptable) to music'. It may very well refer to the hymns or incantations accompanying the ritual.<sup>34</sup> It is important to note that there was a very strong association between rituals evoking the souls of the dead and music: singing was a crucial part of communicating with the dwellers of the underworld, as well as of the techniques to manipulate them.<sup>35</sup> This last consideration makes it highly probable, once again, that the account of the Erinyes forms part of the interpretation of the ritual.

Souls (ψυχαί) are also mentioned in line 5, and we have every reason to assume that these are the souls of the dead. This is reinforced by the fact that

<sup>34</sup> So Tsantsanoglou (1997) 104–5.

<sup>35</sup> On this point, see Johnston (1999) III–18.

in the same line we have the mention of *choai*, and, as we have seen above, *choai* were most often offered to the dead. Tsantsanoglou suggests that the souls are identified here with the Erinyes – even though the Erinyes could also refer to the agents of the dead, without being identified with them. The identification of souls and the Erinyes certainly makes sense, but the text is too fragmented to make any definite claim. Also, we should bear in mind that, as Johnston has recently shown, ‘there is no good indication that the Erinyes were considered to *be* the souls of the dead in popular belief’.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, it will be important to see whether the assumed identification of Erinyes and souls in the Derveni text is restricted to some souls, for example to those who died a violent death (βίαιοθάνατοι), as Erwin Rohde once maintained (without, of course, knowledge of the Derveni text).<sup>37</sup> Yet, as Tsantsanoglou reasonably suggests, if the identification is qualified, the restriction is more probably made on ethico-religious grounds, and singles out the souls of the ‘righteous’ and the initiates. On this reading only the souls of the ‘righteous’ (the content of this term remains to be specified) would function as Erinyes.

Tsantsanoglou does not mention an important factor that can substantially strengthen his case, namely that there was a strong association between the Erinyes and Bacchic initiates, as is amply documented in tragedy. Indeed, the Erinyes are sometimes depicted as wearing maenadic costumes, and in some texts the Erinyes explicitly call themselves maenads, while yet in other texts they are said to act like bacchantes.<sup>38</sup> It is important to note at any rate that if Tsantsanoglou’s suggestion is correct, and I think it is,<sup>39</sup> the Erinyes are depicted in our text as principally positive agents.

Column 3 supplies the third key concept: daimones. As is well known, the semantic field of the word δαίμων is distressingly wide in Greek usage. In view of both the general thrust of the first six columns and the author’s theology as developed in coll. 7–26, we can safely exclude the possibility that the term refers here to the gods of the traditional pantheon. The phrase

<sup>36</sup> Johnston (1999) 274 (her emphasis). <sup>37</sup> Rohde (1925) 178–80 and 269–71.

<sup>38</sup> Aesch. *Th.* 699: μελάνοιγίς; Aesch. *Eum.* 500: μαινάδων τῶνδε; Eur. *Or.* 411: βακχεύουσι, 835: βεβάκχευται. For an analysis of the evidence, with further references, see Seaford (1993) and Johnston (1999) 253–6.

<sup>39</sup> See however Johnston (1999) 276 where she writes ‘I do not find any reason that we should assume that the commentator (or the poet himself) equated the Erinyes with souls.’ But, as far as I can judge, Johnston is not quite prepared, except in the case of the identification of the Eumenides as souls in the last lines of col. 6, to accept that it is highly characteristic of the author to depart from traditional views. But in the case of the Eumenides, where the text is unequivocal, Johnston herself alludes to the fact that the author’s basic method consists in establishing identifications, sometimes very far from traditional ideas – as is clear from his exegesis of the Orphic poem. So why could he not do the same in the case of the Erinyes?

δαίμων γ γίνεται[ι ἐκά]στωι, if Tsantsanoglou's reconstruction is correct, would reflect the belief that there is a 'guardian spirit' to each soul.<sup>40</sup>

The expression δ]αίμονες οἱ κάτω[ is a further indication of the eschatological thrust of the text, for as we are reminded in another context by Johnston, the term οἱ κάτω commonly refers to the dead.<sup>41</sup> Supplementing .]υ δεχόμενοι (or δέχον[ται, as suggested by Janko), which I consider clearly preferable to Tsantsanoglou's το]ῦδε χοῦ[, these daimones are supposed to receive something. It is reasonable to assume that what they receive is an offering. The .]υ preceding δεχόμενοι could preserve the last letter of a genitive ending, defining the source or (with a partitive genitive) the substance of the offering.<sup>42</sup> But it is also possible that the daimones of the netherworld receive the soul of the recently deceased.

It is plausible that the group of the chthonic daimones is constituted by the souls of (some of) the dead. If so, one may wonder how the category of the Erinyes relates to the category of the daimones. Now, the next legible bit of the text 'and are called assistants (ὑπηρέται) of the gods' (col. 3.7) still refers, I suppose, to the daimones. This expression strengthens the possibility that the category of the Erinyes is coextensive with, or alternatively, is included in the wider category of daimones. The author's assertion 'and are called assistants of the gods' can have within its scope the Heraclitean description of the Erinyes, Dike's guardians, auxiliaries or aids (ἐπίκουροι), which we shall encounter in the next column. Moreover, Johnston calls attention to Porphyry's commentary on the *Iliad*, in which the Erinyes is called assistant (ὑπηρέτης) of Hades.<sup>43</sup> It is important to note, however, that because of the passive construction 'are called', it is not certain that the author subscribes to the description 'assistants of the gods'; indeed, in view of his commentary on the Orphic poem we have to assume that he does not accept the plural in 'gods'.

Among the first six columns, column 6 provides the longest chunk of text uninterrupted by lacunae. It is also in this column that we find together most of the eschatological agents. The text mentions souls, daimones and the Eumenides. Here, finally, we have clear identifications. In lines 9–10 the Eumenides are plainly identified as souls. On the other hand, the first lines appear to identify also the angry daimones as souls. Here, however,

<sup>40</sup> So Tsantsanoglou (1997) 105. The concept is well-documented; just to quote one example, see Pl. *Phd.* 107d5–7: λέγεται δὲ οὕτως, ὥς ἄρα τελευτήσαντα ἕκαστον ὁ ἕκαστος δαίμων, ὅσπερ ζῶντα εἰλήξει κτλ.

<sup>41</sup> See Johnston (1999) 74 with references in nn. 114 and 115. Because of this usage, I do not find Tsantsanoglou's supplement οἱ κάτω[θεν necessary, although, of course, it is not impossible either.

<sup>42</sup> Janko suggests that it is a negation (ο]ύ), which cannot be excluded either.

<sup>43</sup> Johnston (1999) 276–7, with reference to Porphyry ad *Il.* 9.571.

there is some uncertainty. The question depends to some extent on the supplement one accepts for the last word in δαίμονες ἐμπο[δών ὄντες εἰς | ψ[υχὰι . . . ]ροί. I fully agree with Janko that the supplement τιμω]ροί 'avenging' is clearly preferable to ἐχθ]ροί finally opted for by Tsantsanoglou. It is a set expression which gives perfect sense in the context. If so, the 'impeding daimones' are also identified as souls. But, indeed, we don't even need to build everything on this supplement, for the preceding sentence, 'prayers and sacrifices appease the souls, and the enchanting song of the magi is able to remove the daimones when they impede', although less unequivocal, has the same effect.

The outcome, I suggest, is that all daimones are souls. Further, daimones can take on different functions, and hence receive different denominations. The Erinyes constitute one such functional sub-group, possibly the most important one. They may or may not be identical with the sub-group of 'impeding daimones' (δαίμονες ἐμπο[δών) of col. 6. The supplement τιμω]ροί 'avenging' would reinforce the feeling that they are indeed the same group, for Erinyes are generally thought of as avenging.

The last question concerns the identity of the Eumenides. They are explicitly said to be souls, and they no doubt qualify as daimones. The question, then, is whether they are also identical with the Erinyes when these are appeased, or whether they are a separate group. As Henrichs has shown, although the two groups were not originally identical, they could be thought of as showing contrasting aspects of the same beings by the middle of the fifth century.<sup>44</sup> Hence, this is an identification that the author could take from traditional ideas.

Can we say anything further about the possible ritual context of the text on the basis of what we have been able to recover from the author's eschatological beliefs? There are at least two possibilities, and both are germane to the textual and archaeological context of the papyrus. One is that the author is speaking about rites that should secure the safe passage of the soul of the dead to the underworld, and to the most blissful part of it. The mention of impeding daimones is entirely relevant in such a discussion; the avenging, angry daimones could block a safe journey to the underworld. The other possibility is that the author is speaking about initiation. Remarkably, frightful and impeding daimones are also supposed to be present at initiations. As Johnston shows, the vindictive daimones could be present at the initiation in order to frighten the initiand and possibly also to hinder the initiation process, especially if the initiand is not pure because of guilt.

<sup>44</sup> See Henrichs (1994).

According to some sources, they were present at initiations also to show what happens to the uninitiated in the underworld.<sup>45</sup> The presence of the initiates mentioned in col. 6 can allow two interpretations according to the option we take. It can either refer to the initiands as joining the group of initiates, or it can designate the thiasos, the group of initiates, as they participate in the funerary rite of one of their fellow members.

But, of course, these two ritual contexts, initiation and funerary ritual, are closely connected. The initiation prepares the blissful post mortem existence of the soul, whereas at death the individual so to speak cashes in the advantages gained by initiation, and the funerary rite is supposed to guarantee this privileged status by reminding the powers of the underworld that the person is an initiate.

#### UNDERSTANDING AND THE RIGHT BEHAVIOUR

A further significant aspect of column 3 is its ethical perspective. Although the text is too fragmented to allow any more specific hypotheses, the expressions '(they) are, like unjust men . . . and they are responsible' in lines 7 and 8, indicate clearly that the thrust of the argument is ethical.<sup>46</sup> We can guess that the author is speaking now about the disciplining role of the daimones and/or Erinyes. This suggestion is made even more plausible by the topic of the next column. In the first lines of column 4 the author appears to carry on the discussion of the penalisation of evil behaviour, to continue with the claim that the same rules apply not only in the sphere of humans, but also in the cosmos as a whole: 'Is it not on account of these that the cosmos possesses order?' (col. 4.4). This is the claim that occasions the quote from Heraclitus, in which the Erinyes, described as auxiliaries of Dike (Justice), are said to capture the Sun should it transgress its boundaries. The last legible words of the column ('. . . would make a transgression . . . of justice . . .') indicate that the discussion is still within the sphere of improper behaviour-justice-punishment.<sup>47</sup>

In column 5 the author seems to elaborate further on the same subject by bringing in different signs that should make people recognise what they should and what they should not do. First, there is oracular activity.

<sup>45</sup> Johnston (1999) 130–9. Especially interesting is the figure of Empousa – from the same stem as ἐμποδών 'impeding' used of the daimones in col. 6 – who appears also in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 293 where she tries to frighten and obstruct the passage of the initiates in the underworld.

<sup>46</sup> It is true, however, that the subjects of the sentence are compared with (ὅπως περ), and not identified with, unjust men.

<sup>47</sup> I shall discuss the place of the Heraclitus quote more in detail in chapter 8.



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## CHAPTER 3

### *The reconstruction of the poem*

From the second half of col. 7 onwards and up till the end of the extant text, the Derveni author quotes and discusses hexametric verses. According to the near-consensus of the literature, most of these verses belong to an Orphic poem. The poem is usually described as a theogony. Moreover, the fact that the width of the individual columns was set to correspond to the length of a verse in hexameter suggests that the discussion of such verses was one of the main purposes of the entire text.<sup>1</sup>

The reconstruction of the poem, however, has proved to be notoriously difficult, and a number of crucial questions are still far from being settled. It seems obvious, on the other hand, that for a balanced evaluation of the exegetical methods as well as the theological and cosmological ideas of the Derveni author we have to have, as far as possible, a clear grasp of the poem commented on. As a matter of fact, the considerable variance between the particular reconstructions of the poem suggested by different scholars could, and indeed does, result in significantly different accounts of the Derveni author's own contribution, and, vice versa, different assessments of the author's exegetical method have instigated different reconstructions of the form and content of the poem.

Without in any way pretending to be able to settle once and for all the vexed questions of the reconstruction, I shall now give an overview of the problems related to it as well as the different possible solutions proposed in the literature. I shall also try to argue for those solutions which I find more probable myself. When I think, however, that the arguments for the solutions I prefer are not strong enough completely to discredit alternative views, I shall not ignore these other views in my analysis of the Derveni author's own contribution. All in all, the main purpose of this survey is to make clear what points we can take for granted, what can be considered probable, and what is hardly more than conjecture. This procedure seems

<sup>1</sup> So, e.g., Obbink (1997) 44 n. 9.



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Apart from the aforementioned reference to the *Hymns*, and the reference to Heraclitus in col. 4, the Derveni author does not name the source of his lemmata. When he speaks about the words he is commenting on, he most often refers to the poet of the line quoted by simply using the third person singular (e.g., *κη]μαίνει δ' ἐν τοῖς ἔπεσι το[ῖςδε]*. col. 17.11; *λέγων ὧδε*. col. 19.9 etc.). These features strongly suggest that the author is speaking about the same poet.<sup>21</sup>

Who is the poet then? Apart from those names which obviously refer to gods (characters of the poem itself), there is only one suitable proper name in the papyrus. In col. 18, we read the following:

Now Orpheus named this breath Moira. But all other men according to the common usage say that Moira spun for them and that those things which the Moira has spun will be, on the one hand speaking correctly, but on the other hand not knowing either what Moira is or what spinning is. For Orpheus called wisdom Moira. This seemed to him to be the most suitable out of the names that all men have given etc.

The combination of two facts – that, first, some of the verses from the poem commented upon can only be found in poetry transmitted under the name of Orpheus,<sup>22</sup> and, second, that the only name in the surviving text to which such a poem can be attributed is the name of Orpheus – leads to the conclusion that the Derveni author attributed the subject of his exegesis to the mythical poet Orpheus.<sup>23</sup>

Philochorus (*FGrHist* 328 F 185), as quoted by Philodemus (*De piet.* 248 I. pp. 63+23 Gomperz), used the Derveni text. Philodemus says that *κάν] | τοῖς Ὑμνοῖς δ' Ὀρφεύς | π]αρά Φιλοχόρῳ Γῆν [κ]αὶ Δήμητρά τῆν || αὐτὴν ἔστιναι*. For Burkert's approval of Obbink's hypothesis, see Burkert (1997) 174 n. 32 and (1999a) 79. Nevertheless, I do not find Obbink's arguments entirely convincing, especially when he concludes in Obbink (1997) 49 n. 16 from the same material that 'This shows that the Derveni text was known and used by authors later in the fourth century, and may now be considered a true literary text: it was consulted by scholars and historians, and had a relatively wide audience, rather than the idle scribbles of an unknown person for merely private purposes. It was a book.' As against this, it can be the case, for instance, that the Derveni author and Philochorus drew on the same source. Moreover, given Philochorus' specific role and interest, even his assumed knowledge of the Derveni text cannot be taken as evidence for a 'relatively wide audience'. It seems to me that there are a number of possibilities between 'a true literary text' and 'the idle scribbles of an unknown person for merely private purposes'.

<sup>21</sup> Henry (1986) 150, in her attempt to define the text as a 'commentary on multiple texts', treats, first, the term 'text' in a very wide sense, including dreams, oracles, sacrificial rites and initiatory rites. Second, she gives too much weight to Rusten's hypothesis that col. 20 is a long prose quotation from another text. Finally, she passes too lightly over the eventuality that an author can refer to other texts in support of his or her argument even if he or she is basically concentrating on one text.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the parallels for *L12* and *L13* above.

<sup>23</sup> Picard's claim (1966) 739 to the effect that 'le texte paraît plus sûrement appartenir à tout ce qui groupe, peu à peu dans les séries dites *hésiodiques*, si largement dispersés au cours des siècles' is based on a very limited part of the text, provided by Kapsomenos (1963).



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