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Valeria Piano, *Il papiro di Derveni tra religione e filosofia. Studi e testi per il Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini (STCPF)*, 18. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki editore, 2016. Pp. xxiv, 406; 8 p. of plates. ISBN 9788822264770. €50.00 (pb).

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Since its spectacular discovery more than half a century ago, in 1962, the text of the Derveni Papyrus has not ceased to fascinate and disconcert scholars. In the intervening years, cols. VII-XXVI, devoted to the allegorical interpretation of an Orphic poem, have been studied in depth from different angles (reconstruction of the poem, exegetical technic, and physical cosmogony). The principal stumbling block remains the meaning of the first columns (0-VI), involving various rituals aimed at intermediate divinities, and their link to the rest of the papyrus, which concentrates on the commentary of the poem (cols. VII-XXVI). The monograph by Valeria Piano represents a decisive breakthrough in the reconstruction and interpretation of the first columns and in our understanding of the work's unity and purpose. For her, the anonymous author of this papyrus text, a religious professional with robust philosophical training, observes signs present in certain rites, in which he claims to discover how a divine force, the Νοῦς or ἀήρ, manages to ensure that human behaviour is correct. His method is analogous to that used in cols. VII-XXVI: by investigating the hidden meaning of Orpheus' sacred words, the Derveni author explains how this force enacted the formation of the world.

The book appeared as vol. 18 in the *Studi e Testi* series for the *Corpus dei Papiri Filosofici Greci e Latini*, where ten years ago the *editio princeps* of the Derveni Papyrus was published as vol. 13 (Kouremenos, Th.– Parásoglou, G. M.–Tsantsanoglou, K., *The Derveni Papyrus. Edited with Introduction and Commentary*, Firenze, 2006). As part of the same series, Piano plans to publish *L'inizio del Papiro di Derveni. Il rotolo e il testo* (vol. 17), an exhaustive papyrological, palaeographic and textual study of cols. 0-VI, which forms the basis of her present reconstruction and analysis. The volume opens with a laudatory "Preface" in which G. Betegh highlights its main contributions and novelties. In a "Premessa," Piano summarises the history of research on the first columns and outlines the main theories and debates it has stirred up, many of them still unresolved.

The book is divided into eight chapters grouped into three large blocks: the context of the papyrus' discovery, the first columns, and the production of the

text (intellectual milieu and tradition). Since it is impossible to cover the wealth of themes present in the book, I focus on what I consider to be the most interesting aspects.

The first chapter is dedicated to the archaeological context in which the papyrus was found, the tomb of a Macedonian warrior dated to the final decades of the 4th century B.C. An analysis of similar tombs from the same region and period shows a fusion between religious concerns and philosophical interests. Examples include the tomb of Lefkadia/Mieza with a painting of the judges of the underworld, inspired by the eschatological myth of Plato's *Gorgias*, several tombs with images of Hades and Persephone in Vergina or the so-called "philosophers' tomb" in Pella. Piano concludes that the papyrus' presence among funerary objects did not occur by chance: its use was motivated by the eschatological expectations of the deceased or of his family, and by his interest in cosmology, a typical combination of Macedonian culture in the late 4th century.

Chapter 2 contains the edition of columns 0 to VI, providing in some cases several alternatives, with an exhaustive apparatus of readings and a translation. The reconstruction is based on a meticulous papyrological study of the fragments and autopsy examination. The proposed text, although uncertain and debatable in certain points, is highly convincing, since it generates a full meaning and is coherent with the thought and style of the Derveni author. There are novelties in all the columns, but the most notable are in col. III (especially in the sequence 4-5 ἢ | γὰρ Δί|κη ἐξώλεας [οὐ μ]έτρισι ἐκ[ὰς] Ἐρινύω[ν and 7 ἀ[νδρὸς]ἀδίκου) 1 and in the Heraclitus quotation in col. IV, which corresponds to fragments 3 and 94 DK: Piano was able here to decipher a *mu* that allows for a fairly certain reconstruction of the term κόσμου (already proposed by A. Lebedev in *ZPE* 112, 1989, 39): ἥλιο[ς κόσ]μουκατὰ φύσιν... "The sun, according to the nature of the world..."; furthermore, the Derveni author has omitted the words referring to the Erinyes, the "servants of Dike," although this function is implicit. In col. V 5-6 Piano reads εἰ θέμι[ς προσ]δοκᾶν | ἐν Ἄιδου δεινά, which has some close parallels.

In chapter 3, Piano tries to recover the thematic elements present in columns 0 to 2. Since the text is so scanty, speculation is inevitable in some points. Piano's main proposal consists in connecting the author's interest in interpreting signs (σημεῖα) observed in ritual (cols. 0-VI) and his efforts to decipher the hidden meaning present in the Orphic poem in cols. VII-XXVI, where he frequently uses the term σημαίνω (91, 99). These elements, like fire and water, seem to form part of a system of signs that the initiates have to interpret in order to verify the ritual's outcome (101) and to establish a genuine relationship with the divine (102).

Chapter 4, on demonology and justice in cols. III and IV, contains some of the book's most important contributions. Piano identifies a mechanism of retribution that involves three kinds of entities: (1) a superior goddess (Dike, l. 5); (2) subordinate divinities (Erinyes, subterranean daimons, ll. 5-6), who are servants of the gods (θεῶν ὑπηρέται, l. 6), and (3) guilty human beings (αἰτίην [τ' ἔ]χουσι, l. 9), who are punished, apparently for having falsely sworn (ἐξώλεις, 'utterly destroyed', l. 5) and been unfair (ἀδίκου, l. 8) (148-

149). The quotation from Heraclitus is of enormous importance in understanding both parts of the papyrus, because it shows the confluence between eschatology and cosmogony in the function of the Erinyes, who have shifted from being deities that punish those guilty of blood crimes, as they are in the literary tradition, to appearing as guardians of the cosmic order who monitor the sun's dimensions (173-175).

Chapter 5 is dedicated to columns V and VI, although V is studied in more depth in chapter 3 (102-106). The author examines the rites described in column VI in great detail, which consist in libations with water and wine and sacrifices of cakes. Piano convincingly demonstrates that they are Greek rites documented in various contexts, above all in preliminary sacrifices, and she reveals the weak points of the theory that considers that both the priests (μάγοι) and the rites are Iranian (216-228).

In chapter 6, Piano tries to offer a complete picture of the Derveni author's demonology and to situate it within his cosmological system. In the Derveni Papyrus, three types of entities can be distinguished: gods, intermediate divinities or daimons, and souls. The conception of the divine is made clear in the commentary of the Orphic poem, where Zeus is nothing more than the mythical name for an intelligent physical force that the Derveni author calls Νοῦς and ἀήρ, which formed the universe with a teleological design. Piano considers the daimons (including Erinyes and Eumenides) to be the auxiliaries and agents of divinity, particularly to control the moral conduct of men. The Derveni author probably conceives of them as manifestations or propagations of the divine and formed from air; souls, too, are derived from this element, an idea upheld by various pre-Socratic authors. Some of these souls, those belonging to the wisest and fairest men, have the privilege of uniting with the Νοῦς that governs the cosmos and turning into its agents to maintain the universal order.

This explanation may be a somewhat speculative interpretation, but it is coherent with the Derveni author's physical postulations and very attractive as a global explanation of the papyrus. Two objections can be made:

- The obstructing daimons (col. VI 2-5) cannot be considered as mediators between men and gods, rather quite the contrary, since they stop human beings from acting and as such must be placated and moved out of the way through a ritual. They do not transmit the mortals' actions to the gods; rather, they are the addressees of the ritual, like the Eumenides. Nonetheless, they can be considered guardians of the cosmic moral order, as they demand the expiation (ποινή) of guilt in order to stop bothering the culpable party.
- Given that the Derveni author interprets the Eumenides as souls (col. VI 9-10) and almost certainly also considers the hindering daimons as souls (col. VI 3-4), it appears that he conceives of a bipartite and not tripartite division between intelligent beings: on the one hand, the Νοῦς-ἀήρ and, on the other, souls, some of which, perhaps by virtue of their moral excellence, would be elevated to a higher category as auxiliaries of the divine, above all in the case of the Erinyes.

In the part of the book dedicated to the production of the text, chapter 7 offers a panoramic overview of various Greek thinkers datable between the 6th and 4th century who have shown an attitude to poetry similar to that of the Derveni

author. These include the first allegorists (Theagenes, Stesimbrotos, Metrodorus), the pre-Socratics (Pherecydes of Syros, Empedocles, Diogenes of Apollonia), priests with rational tendencies outlined in certain Euripidean passages (Tiresias in Eur. *Bacch.* 274-284; Theonoe in *Hel.* 865-867, 1013-1016) and μετεωρολόγοι, intellectuals interested in atmospheric phenomena (Aristoph. *Nub.*; Pl. *Crat.* 396bc, 401b, 404c; 396de on Euthyphro).

Lastly, chapter 8 compares the Derveni author's hermeneutic method and his physical conceptions with those of the first Stoics, and correctly sees irreconcilable differences between the two. The ideas about the air are more in keeping with the pre-Socratic tradition, as is indicated by the close parallels with Anaximenes, Diogenes of Apollonia and Philolaus.

The book closes with a small epilogue with a panoramic overview (349-356), an ample and very up-to-date bibliography, an index of passages and eight great quality images of the tombs studied in chapter 1.

In summary, this book represents a significant advance in our knowledge of the Derveni Papyrus, thanks to the new edition of the first columns, the detailed analysis of the beliefs (col. III-V) and rites (col. VI) they mention, and the links that connect them with the commentary. The two parts are more coherent than they might appear and can be explained as manifestations of the same exegetic attitude and cosmological system, in which the Derveni author tries to interpret rationally – often using a linguistic method – the signs present in certain rites and in the word of Orpheus, in order to reveal what they can teach us about the human soul, divine beings and the cosmos.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that this book is only useful to better understand the first columns. Piano offers perspicacious analyses of various passages of the papyrus (pp. 107-110: col. XX; pp. 118-119: col. XXII; chapter 8: the nature of Νοῦς-ἄήρ in cols. XVIII and XIX) and brilliant formulations regarding the Derveni author's personality and the nature of the work (f. ex. 111, 127-129). For evidence of this, I recommend reading the inspired pages 125-126, dictated by an authentic ἐνθουσιασμός, in which she describes the Derveni author's project as an effort to decipher the signs of the ritual and the Orphic poem, recognising divine intervention in the human and physical realm and thus articulating a combined theory that aspires to integrate the microcosmic within the macrocosmic.

Table of Contents

Avvertenza

Preface (Gábor Betegh)

Premessa

PARTE I. IL CONTESTO

1. Derveni e i ritrovamenti funerari in Macedonia

Parte II. Le prime colonne. Testo e interpretazione

2. Il nuovo testo delle prime colonne

3. Tra sacrifici e divinazione: l'inizio del testo

4. Demonologia e giustizia retributiva: coll. III e IV

5. Egesi del rituale e prospettive soteriologiche: coll. V e VI

6. Umano, demonico e divino

PARTE III. LA PRODUZIONE DEL TESTO

7. Esegesi poetica e allegoria filosofica

8. Allegorie etimologizzanti in P.Derveni e nella prima Stoa

Alla fine del discorso

Notes:

1. A parallel for this verb is offered by Alc. fr. 129, 13-15: πα[ῖδ]α πεδελθέτω κήνων'Ε[ρίννου]ς, quoted in p. 146 n. 42. ἐκ[ὰς] is a proposal by G. W. Most.

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