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Derveni Papyrus: In Search of the Author and of a Second Book

Focusing on the question of authorship and of the overall structure of the work helps sharpen the interpretative inquiry into the content of the text.

The author appears to be a philosopher or philosophizing spirit who contrasts his approach to religious symbolism to both that of the official state cults (mysteries) and that of consecrated persons, possessors of the *holy art*, institutors and performers of sacred rites with an explanatory rationale (the *technēn poioumenos ta hiera* closely corresponds to the Platonic *tōn hierēōn te kai tōn hierēiōn osois memelēke peri ōn metaxeirizontai logon oiois t'einai didonai*). The philosopher accepts life after death, and construes disbelief in it as inability to learn the truth. He also acknowledges the efficacy of special ritual. I'll argue that he is an Anaxagorean of the Archelaean type: neither Atomism nor Eleatism nor Empedocleanism can fit his philosophical theory of reality. Archelaus comes close to it. The author might have likely been connected to Lampsacus.

The Orphic theogony allegorized in the Derveni Papyrus seems to presuppose the sequence Night- Phanes- Ouranos- Kronos- Zeus- (Dionysus). The philosophical interpretation of the cosmogonic process is strongly heliocentric. This may be related to the Orphic heliolatry testified by Aeschylus according to sources. We might be tracing the beginning of solar theology.

Important implications may follow from a comparison of the text with the pattern of Parmenides' and Empedocles' works- the latter according to my reconstruction of a unitary Empedoclean poem (in A. L. Pierris (ed.), *The Empedoclean Kosmos: Structure, Process and the Question of Cyclicity*, 2005). The Derveni roll ends at Zeus' coition with the Great Mother. In Orphism this would continue with the birth of Persephone, a second illicit conjugation, Zagreus' nativity, his dismemberment and the Titanic generation of humankind. These developments could probably constitute the subject of a second book in another roll, which would thus provide the philosophical justification of the Orphic account of soul's destiny and salvation, also implicated in the understanding of ritual treated in the prooimion of the first book. Eschatology would therefore be based on (physical) ontology. (Truth saves).

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