

## THE DERVENI PAPYRUS AND EARLY STOICISM\*

*Gábor Betegh*

### 1.

The most exciting recent development in the interpretation of the Derveni papyrus, to my mind, is the hypothesis that the text might have been composed under Stoic influence or, indeed, it was written by a member of the Stoic school. The first step comes in Fabienne Jourdan's French book on the Derveni papyrus. In the Introduction to her book, in the section entitled *L'auteur?*, Jourdan remarks that the affinities with Stoicism may be stronger than with any of the Presocratic authors regularly mentioned in connection with the Derveni text.<sup>1</sup> She does not develop the remark and does not elaborate on the wider consequences of the suggestion, but here and there in the book she points out some resemblances. So, for example, in her annotated *index verborum* in the three sentence entry on *πνεῦμα*, she reminds the reader that this term is very important in Stoic physics and in her notes on col. XVIII she remarks that Moira

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\* I presented successive versions of this paper at the workshop at the University of Crete, at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico at the conference 'Dios y el Cosmos en la Filosofía Estoica' organized by Ricardo Salles, at the University of Chicago, at Bryn Mawr College and at the University of Toronto. I thank my audiences at all these occasions for helpful discussions. I am especially grateful to Francesc Casadesús for sending to me his forthcoming paper discussed below and André Laks for written comments. I would also like to thank Chloe Balla for organizing the workshop in Crete.

<sup>1</sup> Jourdan (2003), XXV: 'Une influence directe, sur sa philosophie, de l'Intellect d'Anaxagore ou de l'air [de] Diogène d'Apollonie demeure incertaine. Sa physique semble davantage le rapprocher des stoïciens dont l'ensemble du système, rappelons-le, est facile d'accès à un non spécialiste. En citant la théogonie orphique et en donnant l'analyse étymologique des noms propres qu'il y rencontre, il faut aussi inévitablement penser au Pseudo-Aristote de *De Mundo*.'

in her function of deciding the way things are and come to be and cease to be is similar to the stoic *heimarmenê*. Finally, she compares the Derveni author's remarks on naming in the first lines of col. XIX to the Stoic idea according to which the god receives different names according to the different ways he (or she) affects changes in matter.

In a second step, at a conference on Orphism in January 2005 in Mallorca, two papers dealt with this topic in a more or less detailed manner. First, Francesc Casadesús presented a detailed and rich inventory of Stoic texts, with a minimum of interpretative remarks, to show the similarities between the Derveni text and Stoicism. In the final version forthcoming in the proceedings of the conference, he offers an even more impressive collection of similarities and parallels both doctrinal and methodological. Because of problems of dating (on which see below), he refrains from formulating any historical hypothesis concerning the relationship between the papyrus and the early Stoics, but emphasizes that this connection constitutes one of the most important and perplexing aspects of the papyrus, and should be given place of prominence in its general characterization and interpretation.<sup>2</sup>

At the same conference Luc Brisson's paper focused on col. XXVI of the Derveni papyrus.<sup>3</sup> Brisson maintained first that Zeus in the physical interpretation of the author of the papyrus is both air and fire, and, moreover, is an intelligent breath that determines the process of generation. The two elements of, or in, the god, continues Brisson, have two contrary effects on matter: fire makes things to dissociate, while air cools them down and helps them coagulate. All these features, concludes Brisson, create strong similarities between the doctrine of the Derveni author on the one hand, and the early Stoics on the other. Moreover, both the author of the papyrus and the early Stoics share the same '*goût pour l'interprétation allégorique*'. Finally, without offering a more detailed comparative analysis, Brisson invokes the last chapter of the *De Mundo* and points out that this text shows notable correspondences with the papyrus. Brisson finally concludes that

Pour toutes ces raisons, il ne me semble pas absurde de penser que la rédaction du commentaire consigné sur le *Papyrus de Derveni* puisse être contemporaine des débuts du stoïcisme, fin IV<sup>e</sup>, début III<sup>e</sup> av. J.-C. Cela ne signifie pas que le commentateur était stoïcien; il a pu se contenter d'emprunter au stoïcisme naissant sa méthode d'interprétation des mythes, pour l'accommoder à son dessein dans le

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<sup>2</sup> Francesc Casadesús kindly sent to me the final version of his paper. I, however, received it too late to discuss it more fully.

<sup>3</sup> Brisson (forthcoming).

cadre d'une distinction entre ceux qui savent et ceux qui ne savent, entre les initiés et les gens ordinaires.

Luc Brisson then returned to the question in his review of my book,<sup>4</sup> and one of the two critical remarks he develops at some length concerns the assumed Stoic connection. (The other one is the interpretation of the word *aidoion* in col. XVI.) He briefly refers to the arguments I have just quoted from his conference paper, and what he takes to be clear evidence of Stoic influence, and then draws the necessary conclusions:

To situate the writing of this commentary a century after Plato (438–348) and after Aristotle (384–322), in a Stoic context (Zeno lived between 335 and 263) radically modifies the interpretation: it focuses attention on the importance of allegory and on the development of a cosmology involving warm breath (*πνεῦμα*) associated with Zeus.

Now it is easy to agree with Brisson's conclusion I have just quoted. *If* a historical connection with early Stoicism can be shown conclusively, or at least can be made probable, then much that has been written on the intellectual, cultural and religious background of the author may be in need of serious revision. Yet, as you will see, I think that even if the similarities and parallels are not negligible and worthy of serious consideration, they are much less striking than Casadesús, Brisson and Jourdan claim them to be. I do not think that they are sufficiently strong to require a complete reassessment of the nature of the text as Casadesús suggests, and certainly not powerful enough to warrant a later dating as Brisson recommends.

## 2.

The first immediate objection to Brisson's hypothesis according to which the author of the papyrus is influenced by Stoic ideas is that it does not square with the standard dating of the papyrus. So let us deal with that question first. The hypothesis would require that we first of all readjust the dating of the *burials* that constitute the archaeological context of the scroll, then, second, that of the *scroll*, and thirdly that of the *text* preserved on the scroll. Surely, this is a complication, but, as far as I can see, not an insurmountable obstacle; if we found sufficiently strong reasons to do that, it would be possible to reassess the dating of the scroll within reasonable temporal limits. Now, the current scholarly consensus fixes the date of the papyrus to the second half of the

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<sup>4</sup> Brisson (2006).

fourth century BCE. Tsantsanoglou and Parássoglou offered the more precise dating 340–320 BCE in one of their first publications on the papyrus some twenty years ago,<sup>5</sup> and they retain the same dating, with qualifications, in their introduction to the *editio princeps*.<sup>6</sup> Obviously, such dates would be too early to allow the Stoic hypothesis.

I claim no expertise in palaeographic dating of papyri, but I have some doubts as to how accurate this method can be. My grandmother was born in 1911, went to school in 1918 and this is when she learnt the beautiful script she used until she died in 2004. Her handwriting naturally changed with age, but the characters on letters she wrote in the late twenties and those she wrote in the late nineties resemble remarkably – and that is a seventy-year period. And of course early literary papyri are very scant. The Timotheus papyrus dated to the third or second quarter of the fourth century<sup>7</sup> can offer some comparative evidence, but I do not know how precise a dating can be founded on such meagre evidence. Moreover, I think it is perfectly conceivable that a scribe intentionally uses an archaic handwriting for a document like the Derveni papyrus in order to enhance the authority of the text. This is of course sheer speculation, but indicates how difficult the palaeographical dating of such a text can be. In view of such considerations, I would be reluctant to date a piece of writing within a twenty-year period.<sup>8</sup>

As opposed to the palaeographical dating, the archaeological dating is normally considered to be decisive in providing a *terminus ante quem* for the scroll. I wonder, however, if it could not be modified or stretched so that it would not render the Stoic influence impossible. One object that is often referred to in fixing the date of the archaeological context of the papyrus is a coin of Philip II found in the neighbouring tomb – but this again can only fix a *terminus post quem*, and even not for the tomb on which the papyrus was found. Moreover, given that the remains of the papyrus were found not in the tomb, but on top of the covering slabs of the tomb, it is at least a theoretical possibility that the charred papyrus got there at a later moment.

I have now sketched some arguments to show that the standard archaeological and papyrological dating of the find are not fixed with absolute

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<sup>5</sup> Tsantsanoglou and Parássoglou (1988).

<sup>6</sup> KPT, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Hordern (2002), 67, comparing the script also to the Derveni papyrus.


<sup>8</sup> When I first presented this paper on Crete, I had no knowledge of the new edition. I was happy to see that KPT, 9 qualify their suggested date on the basis of very similar arguments.

certainty and precision so that, at least theoretically, the Stoic hypothesis is still a possibility. And, after all, if there were any evidence in the text of the papyrus that could indubitably show some Stoic influence, then that evidence must have the force to override the archaeological and papyrological dating.

### 3.

Having shown that the primary objection to the Stoic hypothesis can be disarmed, let us now turn to the reasons for the hypothesis. In the following list I collect the main assumed points of contacts mentioned by Jourdan, Brisson and Casadesús, to which I add one further entry that I shall discuss below<sup>9</sup>:

1. Physical allegory of a poetic text of authoritative status
2. Etymologies
3. Collapsing the gods of the traditional pantheon into the figure of a single godhead
4. The use of an Orphic poem for such purposes
5. A cosmic theology with a supremely rational god at its centre
6. The cosmic divinity is immanent in the cosmos and can be described in terms of physical elements
7. The god determines the way things are and will be
8. The role ascribed to *pneuma*
9. The pre-eminence of fire and air conceived as the two active elements
10. A cosmogonical phase in which fire dominates
11. A cyclical cosmology?
12. The present world order is the result of the purposeful cosmogonic activity of the intelligent cosmic divinity

 this stage, this list is simply a ragbag. It is quite long and impressively diverse, so that, at least at first blush, it certainly has some cumulative force. Many items on the list, however, are clearly not at all specific to the papyrus and the Stoics, but were shared by a number of different authors from the Presocratic period to Hellenistic times. It would go far beyond the limits of this

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<sup>9</sup> I have to emphasize that this list cannot do justice to the richness of the material presented in Casadesús' paper. In particular, I do not consider here the assumed parallels in the approach to ritual, views on daemons and a pronounced interest in Heraclitus. Even if these additional points can have further cumulative force, I do not think they affect the substance of my argument.

paper to go through each item on the list in full detail. Yet, I shall try to say at least something about each of the points. First, I shall treat the first four items, which concern the method and form of the text, and then turn to the doctrinal points that concern theology and physics (5–12).

#### 4.

*Pace* the formulations of the proponents of the Stoic hypothesis, and especially those of Jourdan and Brisson, I do not think that physical allegory is all that specific to the early Stoics. The available evidence about authors such as Theagenes of Rhegium, Metrodorus of Lampsacus, and Stesimbrotus of Thasos is admittedly meagre, yet is sufficient to show that physical allegory was practiced well before the Stoics entered the scene. Apart from these authors, who are primarily known for their exegesis of Homer, allegorical interpretations turn up in the texts of other authors, such as Hippias, Plato and Aristotle. Physical allegory was neither the invention nor the prerogative of the Stoics. As Félix Buffière and A.A. Long have convincingly argued against the former scholarly consensus, Heraclitus the Rhetor, our most extensive source on physical allegories of Homer, was not, and did not need to be, a Stoic.<sup>10</sup> It is not even clear that *allegorēsis* was the favoured method of the early Stoics to interpret Homer and the other poets. Indeed, Steinmetz and Long have shown that the available evidence does not favour the formerly widespread view that the Stoic Zeno's *Homeric Problems* made much use of allegory,<sup>11</sup> even if it is the case that Zeno presented a cosmogonical allegory of at least the first phases of Hesiod' *Theogony* (cf. *SVF* I.103–104).

It is true on the other hand that the Derveni author's specific way of practicing allegorical interpretation is most closely paralleled by the Stoics' cosmological interpretation of traditional divinities. What we find in the majority of the early evidence about allegorical interpretations, the authors tend to establish one-to-one correspondences between parts of the physical world (or the human organism) on the one hand and the divine names on the other. Zeus is fire, Hera is air, and so on. As opposed to this practice, the Derveni author interprets the different divine names in the poem as the different cosmic functions of his one god. This procedure is most closely paralleled in the cosmological interpretations of divine names that Diogenes Laertius attributes to the Stoics in VII.147<sup>12</sup> – but again, there is no indication that this Stoic

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<sup>10</sup> Buffière (1962), xxxi-xxxix and Long (1992), 45–47.

<sup>11</sup> Steinmetz (1986) and Long (1992), 60–61.

<sup>12</sup> I discussed this point more fully in Betegh (2004), 202–205.

cosmological interpretation of divine names is at the same time an allegorical interpretation of a poetic text. More generally, a cosmological interpretation of divine names which understands all these names as descriptions of the different cosmic functions of a unique cosmic god, is the natural outcome of the conjunction of two doctrinal elements. First, a certain theology that works with one supreme cosmic divinity and, second, an effort not to lose the theological relevance of the traditional divine names. The Derveni author and the Stoics share both of these views, yet neither of these views in itself is specific to these authors. Furthermore, I have suggested elsewhere that the Derveni author's procedure might have been influenced by the known practice of the *Orphic Hymns*, which is to lump the names of traditional gods together, treating them as *epiēseis* of one god. Therefore, the undeniable similarity between the specific way *allegorēsis* is practiced by the Derveni author on the one hand, and by the Stoics on the other can be explained from their respective theological stances and without assuming a direct influence in one way or another.

What I have said about allegory applies even more clearly to etymology: etymology is neither the invention nor the exclusive privilege of the Stoics.<sup>13</sup>

Now what about subjecting specifically *Orphic* poetry to allegorical interpretation? Casadesús starts his inventory of parallels by pointing out that the early Stoics, and especially Chrysippus, tried to assimilate the poetry of Orpheus to their own philosophy by means of physical exegesis. It seems to me however that the evidence marshalled by Casadesús is unable to establish that the early Stoics in general, and Chrysippus in particular, granted a place of privilege to Orpheus. Casadesús lays much weight on the testimonies of Philodemus and Cicero that mention the name of Orpheus. Let me only quote Philodemus here, because Cicero in *De Natura Deorum* I.41 is clearly putting into the mouth of his Epicurean spokesman what he found in Philodemus<sup>14</sup>:

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<sup>13</sup> It does not immediately concern the question of similarities with the Stoics, but let me take this opportunity to make a more general remark about the nature of etymologies in the Derveni papyrus. As far as I can see, there is only one etymology in the papyrus, the explication of the name of Kronos as *krouōn nous* in col. 14, that falls in the pattern of the more complex, of if you prefer, more *recherché*, etymological interpretations documented in the *Cratylus* and elsewhere. The force of a skilful etymological explanation comes from the fact that it strikes a good balance: it is neither too obvious, nor completely far-fetched. The remaining etymological explanations in the papyrus – interpreting the name of Aphrodite by the verb *aphrodisiadzō*, that of Peitho with *peithō* and that of Deio with *dēioō* – are so obvious that they do not quite seem to play the same game.

<sup>14</sup> So Long (1992), 49–50.

In the second book [of *On the Gods*], like Cleanthes, he (sc. Chrysippus) tries to accommodate the things attributed to Orpheus and Musaeus, and the things found in Homer, Hesiod, Euripides and other poets, to their (sc. the Stoics') views.<sup>15</sup> (trans. Obbink)

It is worth noting that Orpheus and Musaeus are treated differently in this text than the other poets. The 'things' that are the objects of Chrysippus' interpretation are found in the other poets (*para* + dat.), but are attributed to (*anapheromai eis* + acc.) Orpheus and Musaeus. This distinction, whether it goes back to Chrysippus or stems from Philodemus,<sup>16</sup> certainly does not indicate a privileged status granted to Orpheus and Musaeus, but rather that there is a question about the authenticity of texts circulated under their names.

More important is that the list of poets in Philodemus' testimony is almost identical to what we find in the *incipit* of Hippias of Elis' *Synagōgē*:

...some of these things have probably been said by Orpheus, some by Musaeus, briefly here and there, some by Hesiod, some by Homer, some by other poets, some in the prose works, some by Greeks and some by Barbarians. From all these, I have collected what are the most important and what belongs together to compose this new and many-sided work.<sup>17</sup>

In the wake of Bruno Snell's original paper, Joachim Classen, Andreas Patzer and Jaap Mansfeld have shown that Hippias in this work presented a fairly extensive doxographical material, together with an interpretation that identified the different gods of the poets with different elements. On the basis of this exegesis, he then claimed that groups of authors professed the same doctrine. Hippias' doxographical material, together with the interpretation he offered of the poetical and prose texts, became the starting-point for the allegorizing theological and philosophical interpretation of these authors. Hippias' material pops up in Plato's *Cratylus* and *Theaetetus* and Aristotle's doxographical surveys. More important for us, Eudemus' survey on the early

<sup>15</sup> Philodemus, *De Pietate* c. XIII = SVF II.1078 ἐν δὲ τῷ δευτέρῳ (scil. περὶ θεῶν) τὰ τε εἰς Ὀρφέα καὶ Μουσαῖον ἀναφερόμενα καὶ τὰ παρὰ Ὀμήρῳ καὶ Ἡσιόδῳ καὶ Εὐριπίδῃ καὶ ποιηταῖς ἄλλοις, ὡς καὶ Κλεάνθης, πειρᾶται συνοικεῖον ταῖς δόξαις αὐτῶν.

<sup>16</sup> This otherwise rare expression is recurrent in Philodemus' texts.

<sup>17</sup> Hippias 86B6 DK = Clem. Alex. *Strom.* VI.2.15 τούτων ἴσως εἴρηται τὰ μὲν Ὀρφεῖ, τὰ δὲ Μουσαίῳ κατὰ βραχὺ ἄλλω ἀλλαχοῦ, τὰ δὲ Ἡσιόδῳ, τὰ δὲ Ὀμήρῳ, τὰ δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις τῶν ποιητῶν, τὰ δὲ ἐν συγγραφαῖς, τὰ μὲν Ἑλλήσι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροις ἐγὼ δὲ ἐκ πάντων τούτων τὰ μέγιστα καὶ ὁμόφυλα συνθεῖς τοῦτον καινὸν καὶ πολυειδῆ τὸν λόγον ποιήσομαι.



theologians is probably based, at least partly, on Hippias' work.<sup>18</sup> It has also been claimed, and I think with good reasons, that Philodemus in his *De Pietate* drew as well on the doxographical material found in Eudemus, going back to Hippias.<sup>19</sup>

Now Anthony Long has argued that the modern view on Stoic allegorical interpretation is based on Cicero's hostile modification of Philodemus' already hostile anti-Stoic polemics. Long has argued that Philodemus' original text does not indicate that Chrysippus took the early poets crypto-Stoics or, to use Long's terminology, strong allegorists. I would go one step further. It seems to me that there is nothing in Philodemus' text to indicate that Chrysippus in his *On the Gods* presented an original exegesis of the early poets. It seems to me rather that Chrysippus did what Philodemus himself did in the relevant doxographical section of the *De Pietate*: he used the material available in Eudemus' survey of early 'theologians' going back to Hippias.

I know of only one piece of evidence that may indicate Chrysippus' interest in the Orphic theogony. It is again Philodemus, who in *De Pietate* 14 reports that Chrysippus in the first book of his *Peri phuseōs* said that Night is the first goddess.<sup>20</sup> This probably is an echo of one of the early versions of the Orphic theogony. But yet again, this piece of information does not lead us anywhere beyond the Eudemian material mentioned above. Indeed, the only thing we know Eudemus knew about the Orphic theogony is that it started with Night.<sup>21</sup> And this is also no more and no less than what Aristotle reports about the 'theologians' in *Metaphysics* Λ.<sup>22</sup> And finally even this testimony does not say that Chrysippus offered a cosmological allegorical interpretation of Night, only that Night is the first goddess.

It remains true of course that Chrysippus made ample use of poetic texts in developing and arguing for his own position. As Apollodorus of Athens, another Epicurean, said in comparing the respective styles of Chrysippus and Epicurus: 'If one were to strip the books of Chrysippus all extraneous quotations,

<sup>18</sup> I have examined Eudemus' survey of early 'theologians' in Betegh (2002).

<sup>19</sup> Henrichs (1972), 78 n. 28 and 80–81.

<sup>20</sup> Philodemus, *De Pietate* 14 (col. XVIII) = SVF II.636: [καὶ δ]ὴ κὰν τῶι πρώτ[ι] τὴν Νύκ[τ]α θεάν φησιν [εἶ]να[ι] πρωτίστην.

<sup>21</sup> Eudemus fr. 150 Wehrli = Damascius, *De princ.* 319.8 (Ruelle): 'Ἡ δὲ παρὰ τῷ περιπατητικῷ Εὐδήμῳ ἀναγεγραμμένη ὡς τοῦ Ὀρφέως οὖσα θεολογία ... ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς Νυκτὸς ἐποιήσατο τὴν ἀρχὴν (...).

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle, *Metaph.* Λ.6 1071<sup>b</sup>26–7: καίτοι εἰ ὡς λέγουσιν οἱ θεολόγοι οἱ ἐκ νυκτὸς γεννώτες (...).

his pages would be left bare' (D.L. VII.180, trans. Hicks). But there is no reason to think that Chrysippus' use of poetic texts, criticised by Philodemus, Cicero and Apollodorus, were *allegorical* interpretations. Just to refer to the most famous example, Chrysippus could provide an interpretation of Euripides' *Medea* in order to explain and to reinforce his own doctrine of passions without giving an *allegorical* exegesis of Euripides' text.<sup>23</sup> It is remarkable that among the many examples Galen quotes of Chrysippus' use of poetic material for argumentative and dialectical purposes there is almost none that could count as straightforwardly allegorical. To quote Teun Tieleman, who has provided the most recent detailed study of Chrysippus' use of poetry, 'The Stoics are often said to have practiced *allegorēsis*. But it is worth noting that Chrysippus' mode of interpretation is almost invariably non-allegorical.'<sup>24</sup> Thus, when Philodemus and following him Cicero sardonically say that Chrysippus tried to 'appropriate' (συννοικειοῦν, *accomodare*) the poets to the doctrines of the Stoics, we do not need to think that this was done by way of providing allegorical interpretations of the poems. In fact, the same may apply to Cleanthes as well. For example, as Athenaeus informs us, Cleanthes referred to the fact that in Homer even the heroes cook and serve food, and are proud of it, in order to defend the Stoic doctrine of the industrious god<sup>25</sup> – but this reference to the culinary skills of heroes in the epic is not an instance of allegorical exegesis.

I do not of course want to claim that Chrysippus did not occasionally have recourse to physical interpretations of traditional mythical themes – yet that is true of Plato and even of Aristotle. And even the one clear piece of evidence which shows that Chrysippus<sup>2</sup> used cosmological, physical allegory does not speak about the interpretation of a poetic text, but refers to the exegesis of the indecent painting in Argos (and/or Samos), depicting Zeus and Hera in oral intercourse.<sup>26</sup>

To sum up, I could not find sufficient evidence to show either that Chrysippus, or other early Stoics, had a strong interest in Orphic poetry or that

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<sup>23</sup> On Chrysippus' interpretation of *Medea*, see Gill (1983).

<sup>24</sup> Tieleman (1996), 221.

<sup>25</sup> Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* I.18b = SVF III.708.

<sup>26</sup> SVF II.1071–4. According to D.L. VII.187, Chrysippus offered this interpretation in his *On the Ancient Natural Scientists*. This however may not warrant Hahm's claim that the work as a whole was on the the physical allegories of early poets. ('Moreover, Chrysippus wrote a work allegorizing old myths into Stoic physics (*On the Ancient Natural Scientists*)' Hahm (1977), 231).

he, or other early Stoics, made extensive use of cosmological allegory of poetic texts. And there is also a more general consideration. No matter whether or not the Derveni author wrote his text later than the early Stoics, I think it is highly unlikely that his interest in Orphic poetry was motivated by the alleged Stoic interest in Orphic poetry. I know that it is a controversial issue but I remain convinced that the Derveni author was strongly attached to Orphism and was most probably himself one of the *orpheotelestai*. If so, he surely did not need the Stoics to raise his interest in Orphic poetry.

### 5.

Let us turn next to the doctrinal items on the list. For it can still be the case that the author of the papyrus, with his own interest in the Orphic poem and with his own motivations to interpret it allegorically, used Stoic material in his physical, cosmological exegesis. The envisaged scenario is entirely possible, but raises all kinds of methodological problems when it comes to demonstrating or falsifying it. What would optimally be needed for establishing the case of Stoic influence, direct or indirect, is the presence of at least one specific, recognizable Stoic doctrine, concept, or term. Something comparable to the way the presence of the cosmic divine Mind in the papyrus establishes the direct or indirect influence of Anaxagoras. It is to be seen whether there is anything comparable for the Stoic hypothesis.

Yet even in the absence of such a specific doctrine, concept or term, the advocate of the Stoic hypothesis can also base his or her case on a considerable amount of cumulative evidence. Now just what counts as 'a considerable amount' is largely a matter of personal taste and temperament; but it would be difficult to deny that the accumulation of pieces of independently non-conclusive evidence may eventually tip the case. But yet again, what is to be accumulated must be sufficiently specific, or somehow form a certain constellation of ideas, if it is to have any force at all. It is not enough to show that both A and B adhere to theses *p*, *q* and *r* to establish that there is a stronger, historical connection between the two of them. Comparative studies, and especially trying to establish affiliations and influences, require much caution and a very careful methodology.

However, the advocate of the Stoic hypothesis can emphasize that the author of the papyrus did not need to be a doctrinaire Stoic, but could simply be influenced by some general Stoic ideas. The onus of proof is still on the proponent of the Stoic hypothesis, yet the envisaged scenario of a loose form of influence does not make the objector's position easy. For on this version of the hypothesis, the Derveni author shows no commitment to the relevant Stoic doctrines in bulk, with all their niceties and intricacies, but may pick

out, adopt and freely modify certain tenets, and could at the same time profess some other doctrines that no Stoic would ever accept. If so, we cannot simply falsify the Stoic hypothesis by showing that certain views of the Derveni author are not in conformity with the relevant Stoic doctrines or that he holds other doctrines that are contrary to some fundamental Stoic tenets. Thus, it will not suffice to show, for example, that there is no suggestion in the description of the fire dominated phase of the Derveni author's cosmogony that in that phase everything turns into fire as a Stoic would hold. Quite the contrary, the distinction between fire and 'the others' is maintained but the idea is that the heat of fire does not let things to solidify.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, it is clear that, contrary to the Stoic idea of *ekpurōsis*, air continues to exist all the time,<sup>28</sup> and therefore also when fire dominates things. What we have here is clearly not the same thing as the Stoic idea of universal conflagration, but this cannot hinder the proponents of the Stoic hypothesis to add the cosmogonical role of fire, and that there is a fire dominated phase of the cosmos, to the list of assumed correspondences.

Similarly, the fact that fire is supposed to be the more important, divine, demiurgic element in Stoic cosmology, whereas the Derveni author privileges air, cannot in itself disprove this looser form of the Stoic hypothesis. What the advocates of the hypothesis emphasize is that the focus on the two active elements, air and fire, is an undeniable point of contact between Stoic physics and that of the Derveni author. On the Stoic hypothesis, all we should say is that the Derveni author has adopted from the Stoics the doctrine of the two active elements, but then, for whatever reasons, decided to privilege air instead of fire. Without denying that both the Stoics and the Derveni author took air and fire to be the active elements, what I would stress in reply is that the respective cosmological and cosmogonical roles assigned to these two elements, as well as the relative hierarchy established between them, create a strong contrast that render the assumed similarity rather superficial. Such a weak form of similarity does not recommend any stronger connection, historical or theoretical, between the two systems.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. col. IX.5-6: γινώσκ[ω]ν οὖν τὸ πῦρ ἀγαμειγμένον τοῖς | ἄλλοις ὅτι τάρασσοι καὶ κ[ωλ]ύοι τὰ ὄντα συνίστασθαι | διὰ τὴν θάλψιν, ἐξαλλάσσει ὅσον τε ἰκανόν ἐστιν | ἐξαλλαχθὲμ μὴ κωλύειν τὰ] ὄντα συμπαῆναι. If not otherwise indicated, I quote the text of the papyrus from KPT, retaining however the consonant assimilations as written in the papyrus.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. col. XVII.2-3: ἦγ γὰρ καὶ πρόσθεν ἴ[ε]ών ἢ τὰ νῦν ἑόντα συσταθῆναι | ἀήρ καὶ ἔσται ἀεὶ· οὐ γὰρ ἐγένετο, ἀλλὰ ἦν (my text).

Moreover, the Derveni author could have his own reasons for privileging these two elements. One possibility, which is controversial but I still find promising, is that the motivation comes from the poem itself. For it seems that Night and Aither were the first couple in the theogony of the Orphic poem. The author then identifies Night with air, and – although it is not explicit in the extant part of the papyrus – it is fairly certain that he identified Aither with fire. The Derveni author's view might just as well have been influenced by Anaxagoras' cosmogony, where air and aither are the first elements to separate out. ~~Let me also add that~~ it is not at all clear that the Derveni author adopted the four-elements view.<sup>29</sup>

Let me now turn to what seems to be Brisson's main reason to maintain the Stoic hypothesis. As I mentioned above, the argument focuses on the interpretation of col. XXVI:

To these negative arguments, positive ones may be added in favor of a Stoicizing influence: they are as follows. In column XXVI of the Derveni papyrus, the commentator hastens to explain that Zeus does not wish to unite with his own mother, but with that good mother known as the intellect (Νοῦς), which, as mother of all things, must be identified with Destiny (Μοῖρα), which is in reality the thought (φρόνησις) of Zeus, identified with the air. Zeus is simultaneously the fire that makes the elementary particles surge forth, and the air, which, by its cooling action, makes them combine to constitute existing realities, in the same way as Aphrodite and Peitho do on the sexual level. In this perspective, fire is on the side of the masculine and of ejaculation, whereas air is on the side of the feminine and of embraces. In this Zeus, a warm and intelligent breath, we find, it seems to me, an allegorical interpretation of the physical type akin to that promoted by the first Stoics, and of which we find traces in the treatise *De mundo*, attributed to Aristotle, but of Stoic inspiration. (Brisson 2006, 10)

Let me first state that I tend to differ from Brisson's interpretation at some points of detail. So, for example, I would not agree with Brisson that the outcome of the commentator's interpretation is that Zeus wants to unite with that good mother which is the intellect (νοῦς). It seems to me that the commentator wants to convince us that there is no question of unification at all, because there are no two separate entities, Zeus on the one hand, and Mind, that good mother on the other. He wants to say rather that Zeus, the god, Mind, and Rhea, and many other names refer to one and the same entity; there is no question of unification because there has never been two entities to start with, only the different functions and the corresponding different names of the same entity.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. KPT, 34.

More important for our present concerns, I do not find any indication in the papyrus for Brisson's claim that Zeus is also fire. The author speaks about the relationship between fire and the cosmic divinity in col. IX. He says that

Now, *knowing that fire*, when it is mixed with the others, agitates the things that are and hinders them from getting set together because of its heat, he *removed it* to an adequate distance [*or: altered it*], so that once it is removed, it does not hinder the things that are from coagulating.<sup>30</sup>

When the text says that the god knows something about fire and that he removed (or altered) it, I do not think that these phrases express that the god knows something about himself or removed (or altered) himself. Fire is not identical with the god, but is rather the primary object of the god's demiurgic activity.<sup>31</sup> There is no reason to follow Brisson's suggestion that Zeus is also fire, and hence we do not need to accept from him that Zeus is a *warm* breath.

The passage that receives special attention from Jourdan, Casadesús and Brisson is the one which discusses the relationship among, Moira, Zeus, *pneuma* and *phrones*, in coll. XVIII and XIX. In the final analysis, these lines may constitute the most crucial piece of evidence for the Stoic hypothesis. The text runs as follows:

... and those moving downwards. But speaking about [...] he means that this [?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 ...

... existing things have been called each single name by reason of what dominates (them); all things were called Zeus according to the same principle. For the air dominates all as far as it wishes. And when they say that the Moira spun they say

<sup>30</sup> My emphasis. For the Greek text, see n. 27 above.

<sup>31</sup> On the way I understand the relationship between fire and the divine air/Mind, see Betegh (2004) 273–274. See also the characterization of the Derveni author's cosmology in KPT, 28–32.

that the wisdom of Zeus ordains how the things that are and the things that come to be and the things that are going to be must come to be and be and cease.<sup>32</sup>

There has been some discussion in the literature whether *pneuma*, or rather its poetic form, *pnoiē*, was used by the poet, or was introduced by the commentator.<sup>33</sup> But whether or not *pneuma* was introduced in the text by the Derveni author, I find no reason to think that this *pneuma* is dependent on the technical Stoic concept. *Pneuma* in these passages is presented as a particular form or manifestation of air.<sup>34</sup> The fact that the word *pneuma* appears alongside air does not need to cause any surprise. Indeed, they appear side by side already in Anaximenes B2, the first extant evidence for a cosmology in which air is the most important element.

<sup>32</sup> Col. XVIII.1–10: καὶ τὰ κάτω [φερό]μενα ἴτην δὲ Μοῖραν φάμενος [δηλοῖ] τήνδ[ε γῆν] καὶ τὰλλα πάν[τ]α εἶναι | ἐν τῷ ἀέρι [πνε]ῦμα ἐόν. τοῦτ' οὖν τὸ πνεῦμα Ὀρφεὺς | ὠνόμασεν Μοῖραν. οἱ δ' ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι κατὰ φάτιμ Μοῖραν | ἐπικλῶσαι φασί[ν] σφίσιγ καὶ ἔσσεσθαι ταῦθ' ἄσσα Μοῖρα | ἐπέκλωσεν, λέγοντες μὲν ὀρθῶς οὐκ εἰδότες δὲ | οὔτε τὴν Μοῖραν ὅ τί ἐστίν οὔτε τὸ ἐπικλῶσαι. Ὀρφεὺς γὰρ | τὴν φρόνησ[ι]μ Μοῖραν ἐκάλεσεν· ἐφαίνετο γὰρ αὐτῷ | τοῦτο προσφερέστατον εἶ[ν]αι ἐξ ὧν ἅπαντες ἄνθρωποι | ὠνόμασαμ. πρὶμ μὲν γὰρ κληθῆναι Ζῆνα, ἦμ Μοῖρα | φρόνησις τοῦ θεοῦ αἰεὶ τε καὶ [δ]ιὰ παντός.

Col. XIX.1–7: ἐκ [τοῦ δ]᾽ [τ]ὰ ἐόντα ἐν [ἐκ]αστῷ κέκ[λητ]αι ἀπὸ τοῦ | ἐπικρατοῦντος, Ζεὺς[ς] πάντα κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν | λόγον ἐκλήθη πάνταγ γὰρ ὁ ἀήρ ἐπικρατεῖ | τοσοῦτον ὅσομ βούλεται. Μοῖραν δ' ἐπικλῶσαι | λέγοντες τοῦ Διὸς τὴν φρόνησιν ἐπικυρῶσαι | λέγουσιν τὰ ἐόντα καὶ τὰ γινόμενα καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα, | ὅπως χρὴ γενέσθαι τε καὶ εἶναι κα[ὶ] παύσασθαι.

<sup>33</sup> Merkelbach, Boyancé, Janko and Bernabé think that the phrase Ζεὺς πνοιή πάντων that we find also in the hymn to Zeus at the end of the *De Mundo* is the object of the author's interpretative remarks. The second part of the verse could continue as [Ζεὺς πάντων ἔπλετο] μοῖρα so that even the identification of *pneuma* and Moira could be taken from the poem itself. Martin West and I, on the other hand, have opted for the second solution according to which only the name Moira was in the poem and the term *pneuma* is already part of the Derveni author's physical exegesis. This second option would naturally suit the proponents of the Stoic hypothesis better, for it would indicate that the Derveni author found the concept of *pneuma* important enough to import it into his commentary.

<sup>34</sup> True, some sources allow that only one of the two active elements is enough to form *pneuma* also for the Stoics. See Galen *De causis contentivis* 1, with Sorabji (1988), 85–89.

Just as our soul, which is air, keeps us together, so do the breath and air encompass the whole world.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, as mentioned above, I remain unconvinced that the *pneuma* in the papyrus is a mixture of air and fire, and consequently I see no reason to think that it is *warm* breath. Indeed, the way I understand the interplay between the two active elements in the papyrus makes me think that this breath or breeze, consistently with the original and more widespread understanding of the word, is refreshing and cooling.<sup>36</sup> And even if one wants to stick to the idea that the Derveni author's *pneuma* was warm, even that would not lead us immediately to Stoic physics, as one can clearly see from Gad Freudenthal's discussion of the Aristotelian concept of *pneuma* and its predecessors in the Hippocratic corpus and elsewhere.<sup>37</sup> What is more, many interpreters, both ancient and modern, have maintained that Diogenes of Apollonia thought that air must be (relatively) warm to be intelligent,<sup>38</sup> and Diogenes is the author who is most often referred to in discussions of the intellectual background of the Derveni author.

But what about the cognitive function attributed to *pneuma*? Isn't it a striking similarity with the Stoic doctrine that the Derveni author calls this *pneuma*, through its identification with Moira, also the *phronēsis* of the god? This feature, again, I think, may simply follow from the previously established doctrinal elements of the Derveni author's system. Because he claims that air itself is intelligent, he does not need the Stoic theory to maintain that breath, which is a form, manifestation or aspect of air, also has cognitive capacities. In so far as breath is air in action or movement, *phronēsis* seems to be the

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<sup>35</sup> Anaximenes B2 DK: οἶον ἢ ψυχῆ, φησίν, ἢ ἡμετέρα ἀήρ οὔσα συγκρατεῖ ἡμᾶς, καὶ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον πνεῦμα καὶ ἀήρ περιέχεις. Admittedly, there are doubts about the authenticity of the fragment. For a detailed discussion of the fragment, see Alt (1973). Alt demonstrates that the fragment does not show Stoic influence, but then concludes, less convincingly, that it was mistakenly attributed to Anaximenes instead of Diogenes of Apollonia.

<sup>36</sup> For some of the early evidence, see Jouanna (1987).

<sup>37</sup> Freudenthal (1995), chaps. II and III.

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Barnes (1982), 582. The view is based on Diogenes of Apollonia B5: καὶ πάντων τῶν ζώων δὲ ἡ ψυχὴ τὸ αὐτὸ ἐστίν, ἀήρ θερμότερος μὲν τοῦ ἔξω ἐν ᾧ ἐσμεν, τοῦ μέντοι παρὰ τῷ ἡλίῳ πολλὸν ψυχρότερος. Porphyry and Nicolaus of Damascus even thought that the *archē* for Diogenes is the intermediary between air and fire. Cf. Simplicius' comments on Aristotle's *Physics* 187<sup>a</sup>12–16.



appropriate word to describe the active involvement of the cosmic Mind with individual things.

Moreover, if we accept the current scholarly consensus that it was only Chrysippus who made *pneuma* central in Stoic physics and cosmology, then the proponents of the Stoic hypothesis may need to modify the dating of the papyrus with not merely one or two decades, but with almost a century. And that may be a difficulty even with a very permissive approach to the dating of the papyrus.

## 6.

Let me finally turn to 12 on the list: ‘The present world order is the result of the purposeful cosmogonic activity of the intelligent cosmic divinity’. It is not mentioned by Jourdan, Brisson or Casadesús, but is my own addition. Indeed, it seems to me that it could be a powerful argument for the Stoic hypothesis – perhaps more powerful than the ones we have considered so far. A number of passages testify for the teleological conception of the author of the papyrus. The most explicit of them concerns the central cosmogonic activity of the god and is phrased as a counterfactual hypothesis:

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.<sup>39</sup>

This text establishes, first, that the god had an active and fundamental role in the formation of the world as we now have it. Second, the text clearly ascribes intentions and planning to the god. The creation of the sun was a conscious, well thought-out action, as the author explains also in col. IX, that we have considered above. This is clearly an agent-centred cosmic teleology involving planning in advance and direct active involvement in the cosmic processes. To all this we can add what we saw in col. XVI, i.e. that the cosmic Mind *qua* mother is good, and a provider of good things. This is a clear indication of the providential nature of the divine Mind.

Considering that the cosmic Mind of the Derveni author is acting in a teleological and providential way, we can imagine that, at least on this account, the Derveni author would fare much better in the eyes of the Socrates of the *Phaedo* than Anaxagoras or any other Presocratic author. True, Socrates would

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<sup>39</sup> Col. XXV.9–12: τὰ νῦν ἔοντα | ὁ θεὸς εἰ μὴ ἤθελεν εἶναι, οὐκ ἂν ἐποίησεν ἥλιον. ἐποίησε δὲ | τοιοῦτογ καὶ τ[ο]σοῦτον γινόμενον οἷος ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ λόγου | διηγείτ[αι].

probably not like the idea that the Derveni author identifies god with air, but he could still appreciate that this god is a full-blown cosmogonic agent, working on reasons for good goals. It seems to me that the creationist, teleological language is more explicit in these passages of the Derveni papyrus than in any Presocratic text we have.<sup>40</sup> So *if* there is one good reason to think that the Derveni text is later than Socrates, or for that matter Plato's *Phaedo*, then, I think, this is the one. On this scenario the Derveni author would learn the Socratico-Platonic lesson of what a true agent-centred teleology and theology should look like, but would, for whatever motivations, stick to the idea of an immanent, physical divinity. Note that this scenario would still not necessitate a revision of the dating of the papyrus or its archeological context.

On the Stoic hypothesis, the same features of the Derveni papyrus would receive the following explanation. After the Platonic critique of the Anaxagorean concept of Mind, and the Platonic elaboration of a truly agent-centred demiurgic cosmic teleology in the *Timaeus*, the Stoics took over much of the emerging new theology, but refused the idea of a non-corporeal, transcendent divinity, and reverted to the conception of the immanent, corporeal, physical demiurgic fire. It is only at this point that the Derveni author would enter the scene. He would take up much from the Stoic conception, but would posit an airy providential demiurgic god instead of a fiery one.

Yet, once again, it remains open to discussion whether for the type of agent-centred creationist cosmology that we find in the papyrus we necessarily need to pass through Socrates and Plato in the first place. It remains entirely conceivable, I think, that an author who assimilates something of the Anaxagorean conceptions, directly or indirectly, but whose starting point is fundamentally theological and whose main aim is to show the supreme power and goodness of the cosmic divinity, may arrive, even with his limited theoretical resources and independently of the Platonic criticism of Anaxagoras, at such a creationist view.

To conclude. It seems to me that Jourdan, Brisson and Casadesús are entirely justified in calling attention to the points of contact between Stoicism and the views of the Derveni author. Yet, as I have tried to show, the relevant features of the papyrus can be explained from the internal dynamics of the Derveni author's ideas and with reference to late Presocratic cosmological ideas. Thus, I remain unconvinced that the assumed and real parallels with

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<sup>40</sup> This, I think, remains true even after David Sedley's reappraisal of creationism in the Presocratic period in Sedley (forthcoming).

the early Stoic doctrines would necessitate a radical reassessment of our views about the intellectual world of the Derveni author. In particular, I found nothing that would require us to readjust the dating of the papyrus in order to make the reception of Stoic influence possible; I think there are good reasons to stick to the standard view that the papyrus is earlier than the early Stoics, and especially Chrysippus. Should we then perhaps return the direction of influence and claim that the early Stoics were influenced by the Derveni text? Nothing is impossible, but especially as we do not know who and how well known the Derveni author was, I doubt that we could or should establish such a direct connection. My own view is that the papyrus may interest students of early Stoic theology and cosmology in so far as it can provide some further information about the general religious, intellectual and cultural background from which Stoicism, with its complex theology, cosmology and physics, emerged.

Department of Philosophy  
Central European University  
Nádor utca 9  
H-1051 Budapest  
Hungary

<beteghg@ceu.hu>

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