EARLY THEORY OF LANGUAGE AND SOPHISTIC ARGUMENTATION IN THE DERVENI PAPYRUS

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ABSTRACT. The article discusses the impact of the early sophistic theories of language on the style and argumentation of the Derveni author and shows that he engages deeply with the problematics of semantics as discussed by the sophists, in particular the notions of correct speech, the proper meanings of words, synonymy and homonymy. Aristotle notes that the main device of the sophists is homonymy, the use of which permeates the style and argumentation of the text of the papyrus. According to Aristotle, the concept of homonymy includes general notions. Such an approach can already be observed in the Derveni papyrus, in particular regarding the notion of sameness (τὸ αὐτό) which the author uses in three different ways while playing with its polysemy: the sameness of one and many, the sameness of the opposite aspects of one process and the sameness of synonyms. The article suggests how this sophisticated approach of the author may correspond to earlier hermeneutic traditions related to the orphic theogonic poems.

KEYWORDS: the Derveni papyrus, the sophists, Prodicus, Aristotle, proto-linguistics, semantics, correct speech (orthoepeia), homonymy, synonymy, ambiguity.

1. Introduction

Study of the Derveni papyrus, a text found in a fourth century BC grave and dated to the beginning of the fourth century BC at the latest and more likely to the end of the fifth century BC,[1] is a highly complex task, primarily and most evidently due to its fragmentary character. The first three columns cannot be reconstructed and the upper part of cols. III–VI (according to the edition of Kouremenos (2006) [=KPT]) has been reconstructed with a high degree of uncertainty (including the number of columns); from col. VII to col. XXVI we can read the upper part of the

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[1] Laks, Most (2016) 374.

text, while the lower part is burnt.[2] However this fragmentary material is so intriguing, rich and complex that its interpretation presents the next challenge for those studying this text. While the first six columns are devoted to discussing certain Orphic rites, starting from col. VII, the author interprets a mythical cosmogonical poem of Orpheus, occasionally using verses from other poetic sources.[3] The poem itself poses considerable questions in terms of its reconstruction, but it is clear that it bears distinctive traces of Mesopotamian influence.[4] The author's pivotal exegetical strategy lies in interpreting all deities (and even words and expressions) mentioned in the poem as aspects of the single entity – Zeus (a temporary designation), who is also identified as air and Mind (which are eternal substances).[5] The identification of Zeus with air and Mind reveals the influence of Diogenes of Apollonia and Anaxagoras.[6] However, ongoing study of the text highlights the commentator's skilful use of numerous other Greek philosophic doctrines, demonstrating an impressive familiarity with Greek philosophy.[7] Accordingly, researchers must grapple with the multi-layered and highly complex structure of this fragmentary text, with various aspects requiring focus on different elements of its background. Hence, over the more than thirty years of its study, a range of approaches to evaluating the commentator's profile and message of this text have emerged. The interpretations overwhelmingly perceive the text as a synthesis of the author's physical exegesis and Orphic faith (as encapsulated in Gabor Betegh's seminal book).[8] However, some are sceptical about the author's religious motivations and seek to connect the author's endeavour with the agonistic context of fifth century Athens, rather than with the religious milieu in the strict sense.[9] Lebedev challenges the mainstream approach to the author's profile, referring to him as a "skilful irreligious rationalist", and argues that Prodicus was the author,

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[2] Laks, Most (2016) 374–75.

[3] For example, he refers to "the Hymns" in col. XXII 12–13.

[4] Betegh (2004) 119–121; Burkert (2004) 70, 73, 100.

[5] Betegh (2004) 203 ff; Matusova (2016) 127–29; Kotwick (2019b) 177–78.

[6] Betegh (2004) 278–324; Frede (2007); Matusova (2016) 133–39.

[7] On Heraclitus, see Sider (1987), Vassallo (2017); Betegh/Piano (2019), On Empedocles, see Kotwick (2019); On Parmenides, Burkert (2004) 103, Janko (2016), and Kotwick (2017); On the atomists, see Burkert (1997).

[8] Betegh (2004). Betegh/Piano (2019). See also, for example, Laks (1997); Obbink (1997); Piano (2016); Kotwick (2019b) 183–84.

[9] Henrichs (1984) esp. 255; Rusten (1985; 2014, 140); Janko (1997; 2001 (referring to the author as ἄθεος); Kouremenos (KPT 2006) 52; Edmonds III (2018) suggests that it is "a textual example of the kind of sophistic debate" in which the author demonstrates his skills "in the market-place contents" (89).

basing his argument on discussion of his theological views.[10] While I do not aim to discuss the aforementioned approaches systematically or to provide a definitive answer to the question of the pragmatics of the text in this article, I wish to highlight the persistent imbalance in the scholarship on the Derveni papyrus. While numerous studies are devoted to the physical background of the commentator's thought in terms of Presocratic philosophy (with the implication that those investigations contribute to understanding how the author viewed the world), only a few works and rare observations in the commentaries address the contextualisation of the author's interpretative approaches within the educational milieu of the time.[11] That is not entirely justified and, in my opinion, hinders the development of an impartial, well-defined and well-balanced opinion of the nature of the text and the author's profile and intentions. There are two undisputable facts regarding this text: first, as mentioned above, the author reveals an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of material pertaining to physical philosophy; second, the commentary is dated to the age of the first sophists.[12] We may reasonably ask how someone who had gained possession of an *encyclopaedic* knowledge of philosophy at that time could possibly have remained untouched by the general principles of the flourishing sophistic education, which left salient marks in all areas of culture – language, rhetoric, literary criticism and, last but not least, philosophy.

The scope of this article does not allow me to touch upon all aspects of this text deserving more nuanced study in terms of their literary and educational context; rather, I will approach this question through the lens of a field in which the impact of the sophists was most specific and seminal, namely the sophistic theories of language pertaining to semantics[13] (sometimes called "proto-linguistics") and their use in arguments. My aim is to show that the author engages deeply with the problematics of semantics as discussed by the sophists and to exemplify how he implemented their theories in his style, interpretation of poetry and philosophical argumentation. That approach will highlight the commentator's professional skills and

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[10] Lebedev (2019) 497.

[11] Rusten (2014) draws attention to the methods of literary criticism current in the fifth to fourth centuries BC; Edmonds III (2018) also compares the methods used by the author of the Derveni Papyrus with those used in the discussion of Simonides in Plato's *Protagoras* and expands our understanding of the context by drawing attention to the Hippocratic corpus, which was profoundly influenced by sophistic ideas.

[12] The contemporaneity with Socrates is rightly stressed by Lebedev (2019) 495.

[13] The subject of the author's use of semantics only rarely and fragmentarily draws the attention of researchers (Betegh (2004) 212; Kotwick (2019b) 177–81). An attempt to consider it as a system, albeit brief and lacking contextualization in the system of notions relevant to the fifth to fourth centuries BC, was made by Henry (1986).

important aspects of his philosophic methodology, but ultimately it will also cast new light on the connection between the specific features of his exegesis and the original Orphic material which may have been at his disposal, thus providing a link between contrasting perspectives on this text.

In my analysis, I will draw upon the cumulative evidence of the theory and practice of the sophists as represented by Plato, Aristophanes and some late fifth to early fourth BC century orators, but most importantly upon the recapitulation of their theories by Aristotle in the *Organon* (especially *On Sophistical Refutations*) and in his other works.

A few words are in order regarding this approach. Reconstruction of the sophistic theories of language remains an incomplete field of study. Our knowledge of those theories would benefit both from the inclusion of new material and from more systematic harmonization of the pieces of evidence scattered across the sources. I consider the Derveni papyrus a new piece of evidence from the period, offering a lens through which a more coherent understanding of the related material can be achieved. The approach of integrating its content with roughly contemporary texts and even with Plato, describing or using sophistic themes, does not need special justification (when elements in Aristophanes, the fifth century orators and Plato allow for alignment, it is strong confirmation of Plato's ability to grasp essential features of the context he describes). However, drawing on the theoretical works of Aristotle, where the sophistic attitude to language and its use in argumentation are analyzed, summarized and classified for the first time, is a completely new perspective on the text and may need some explanation. *On Sophistical Refutations* is considered to be the ninth book of the *Topics* and belongs to the earliest period of Aristotle's writing. The question arises as to what extent Aristotle depends upon Plato's dialogues in depicting the sophists, i.e. to what degree his account has independent historical value. Conversely, if he is sufficiently independent, we may ask to what extent his representation reflects a steadfast tradition going back to the first sophists, rather than reflecting specific features of his contemporaries (such as the Megarians, as argued by Dorion (1995)). Regarding the first question, I refer to the thorough discussion of Aristotle's references to the sophists in the aforementioned work of his and other works by Classen (1981), according to whom Aristotle, while clearly influenced by Plato, judges by his own standards and has "very clear notions of the elements and aspects he considers sophistic".[14] Regarding the second question, I refer to the discussion of Dorion's book by R. Barney (1998). In her view, which I share, *On Sophistical Refutations* was directed at the practices developed by the old sophists in great measure, else we

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[14] Classen (1981) 12.

would have to completely discard Platonic evidence on the sophists, as Plato reflects analogous approaches throughout his dialogues. In my article, I do not analyze *On Sophistical Refutations* as a specific work *per se*; rather I draw on those of Aristotle's theoretical formulations and comments, mainly from this work but also from his other writings, which can be illustrated by examples in Plato's dialogues *and* by the examples from the Derveni Papyrus, confirming the continuity of the tradition generalized by Aristotle. (That does not preclude the possibility that, in *On Sophistical Refutations*, he also had in mind some immediate opponents who also employed this tradition in their own way). In sum, my approach is based on the assumption that the generalisations of Aristotle in the *Organon* and his other works draw just as much on the dialogues of Plato as on his direct acquaintance with sophistic rhetorical practice, as well as its implementation in the teaching and learning process in the Academy, thus providing a valuable theoretical point of departure for an analysis which, whenever possible, should be performed using comparison with earlier pieces of evidence.

Without any doubt, we have to bear in mind that Aristotle grasps the sophist's methods by means of his own terminology and according to his own philosophical system.[15] The differences between the terminology used by Aristotle and that found in earlier sources, as well as his completely different stance on some themes first discussed by the sophists, is constantly the focus of my attention. However, it is worth noting that Aristotle often employs older terms, sometimes interchangeably with his newly coined words, and reflects old argumentative schemes, occasionally accompanied by his comments. Previous scholarship has observed that certain tendencies noted by Plato are of relevance for a correct understanding of the Derveni author's point of departure and philosophical language.[16] Elsewhere I demonstrated that the strategy of examining the Derveni author through the lens of Aristotle can be just as illuminating for establishing a correct perspective on his use of terminology and arguments.[17] I hope to continue developing this approach in this article, especially in part 4.3, where I will discuss the interaction between linguistic and physical phenomena.

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[15] Classen (1981) 13.

[16] Burkert (1997); Frede (2007); Betegh (2007) 150.

[17] Matusova (2016) 123–27.

2. General Context: Correctness of Speech (ὀρθοέπεια, ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων)

The correctness of words or speech (ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων, ὀρθοέπεια) was one of the leading themes introduced by the sophists. Protagoras devoted considerable attention to the subject and Prodicus is said to be the main authority on it;[18] Socrates and Antisthenes are credited with the same interest.[19] Although, as Bonazzi notes, it is difficult to articulate with certainty the actual difference between ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων and ὀρθοέπεια, a general distinction seems to be possible.[20] ὀρθοέπεια conveys a general idea of "speaking correctly" both orally and in writing, whereas ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων may refer to a more specific focus on the connection between each individual word and its denotatum. The sophists devoted attention to speech in general and the word as its particular unit ("the smaller part of speech", λόγου σμικρότερον μόριον, as Plato puts it in *Crat.* 385c). It might be said that the correctness of names as individual units attracted the sophists' interest *per se*, leading them to engage in theoretical discussion, but that the ultimate goal of their studies was certainly correct speech.

For instance, in the *Cratylus*, Hermogenes and Cratylus dissent in their ideas of the correctness of names (ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων). Hermogenes sees correctness in the convention and agreement of people (to call things such and such), whereas Cratylus sees it as a correspondence between the name and the nature of the thing to which it refers. Yet neither of them doubts the existence of the correctness of names and indeed that is their common starting point.[21] Moreover, Hermogenes acknowledges that the correctness of words must exist in terms of the correctness of speech.[22] When formulating the difference in their positions and the subject of inquiry in the dialogue, Socrates says:

> Then if a man speaks as he fancies he ought to speak, *will he speak correctly* (ὀρθῶς λέξει), or will he succeed in speaking if he speaks in the way and with the instrument in which and with which it is natural to speak and for things to be spoken, whereas otherwise *he will fail* (ἐξαμαρτήσεται) and accomplish nothing?[23]

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[18] Plato, *Crat.* 384b; 391b–c; *Phaedr.* 267c; *Euthyd.* 277e.

[19] Epictetus, *Diss. Arr.* 1,17,12 = Antisthenes B38 DK.

[20] Bonazzi (2010) 61.

[21] Plato, *Crat.* 383a, 384d.

[22] Plato, *Crat.* 385b–c.

[23] Plato, *Crat.* 387b–c. Here and below the translation of the *Cratylus* by Fowler (Page (1926), 19) (here and below with my emendations).

Note that Plato uses the verbal expression "to speak correctly", ὀρθῶς λέγειν, and the verb "to fail in so doing/commit a mistake", ἐξαμαρτάνειν, which are very close to each other in the context of the "correctness of speech".[24]

This pair of expressions appears in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, where he makes jests about sophistic education. The old farmer Strepsiades wants to learn how to get rid of his debts and goes to the sophists for that purpose. To his disappointment, he is forced to learn about words first, notably which of them are "correctly" masculine:

"But you must learn other things before these; namely, what quadrupeds are *correctly* (ὀρθῶς) masculine." (Nu. 659)[25]

and

"You must learn one thing more *about names* (περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων), what are masculine and what of them are feminine." (Nu. 681).

In particular, Socrates, who represents the sophists in this play, insists that Strepsiades must differentiate between the two forms of the word "chicken" (ἀλεκτρυών) by calling the female chicken ἀλεκτρύαινα (a word invented by Aristophanes) and the male ἀλέκτωρ.[26] He also wants the old man to change the form of the word ἡ κάρδοπος from the second declension to the first, in order to "properly" reflect its gender.[27] When "correctness" is attained and Strepsiades says τὴν καρδόπην, Socrates encourages him by saying that he *speaks correctly* (ὀρθῶς γὰρ λέγεις).[28] Despite that success, the old man proves to be unsuitable for sophistic schooling; once he has been expelled, his son Phiddipides replaces him as a student and makes progress in all areas of sophistic wisdom. In the end, Phiddipides says of himself: "For I, when I applied my mind to horsemanship alone, used not to be able to utter three words before *I made a mistake* (πρὶν ἐξαμαρτεῖν)."[29] Clearly, Phiddipides is referring to his newly acquired ability *to speak correctly*, λέγειν ὀρθῶς, which is attained through the study of the correctness of individual units of speech, and the lack of which is expressed by the verb ἐξαμαρτάνειν, *"to make mistakes"* when speaking.

[24] *Cf.* Democritus B 2 DK: ἀναμρτήτως λέγειν.
[25] The translation of the *Clouds* here and below by Hickie (1853).
[26] Aristophanes, *Nu.* 660–670.
[27] Aristophanes, *Nu.* 671–679.
[28] Aristophanes, *Nu.* 679.
[29] Aristophanes, *Nu.* 1402.

With that in mind, I wish to draw attention to the wording of the author in col. XII 3–10 and col. XVIII 3–5

col. XII 3–11	col. XVIII 3–5
3. "Olympus" and "time" are the same thing. Those who think that "Olympus" and "heaven" are the same thing are *wrong* (ἐξαμαρτάν[ουσ]ι̣[ν), 5. for they do not understand that heaven cannot be long rather than wide (οὐχ οἷόν τε̣ μακ[ρό]τε̣ρον ἢ εὐρύτε[ρο]ν εἶναι,), whereas if *someone were to call time "long"* (μακρόν) *he would not be wrong (commit a mistake)* (χρόνον δὲ μακρὸν εἴ τις [ὀνομ]ά̣ζο[ι] ο̣ὐ̣κ ἂ̣ν̣ [ἐξα]μαρτάνοι). Whenever he wanted ‹to say› "heaven" he added the epithet "wide" (εὐρύν'), but whenever [scil. he wanted to say] ‹"Olympus"›, on the contrary, he 10. never [scil. added] "wide", but "long". And in saying that it is "snow-clad" ‹he was comparing time› in its property ([δ]υνάμει) with a snowy ‹mount›ain.[30]	But all other men, according to common usage, say, "Moira has spun for them" and "these things will be whatever Moira has spun" – *speaking correctly* (λέγοντες μὲν ὀρθῶς), but not knowing either what "Moira" is or what "spinning" is.

In col. XVIII the author comments on the name of Moira used in the poem, citing a popular expression "Moira has spun" and noting that people when so saying "speak correctly", although they do not understand what those words refer to: **λέγοντες μὲν ὀρθῶς** οὐκ εἰδότες δὲ οὔτε τὴν Μοῖραν ὅ τι ἐστὶν οὔτε τὸ ἐπικλῶσαι. In col. XII 6–7 the author argues that Olympus is time, because Orpheus used it in the poem with the adjective "long", μακρός, which should designate time, rather than heaven. He adds: "if someone were to call time "long" (μακρόν) *he would not be wrong/commit a mistake* (χρόνον δὲ μακρὸν εἴ τις [ὀνομ]ά̣ζο[ι] ο̣ὐ̣κ̣ ἂ̣ν̣ [ἐξα]μαρτάνοι)". The author means that it would be wrong for this epithet to be applied to heaven. In both cases the words ο̣ὐ̣κ̣ ἂ̣ν̣ [ἐξα]μαρτάνοι and λέγοντες μὲν ὀρθῶς are used to describe the correctness of an expression and appear to be standard terms for correctness of speech against the background of the discussion in the *Cratylus* and the pointed irony of Aristophanes. Below we will see that the correctness meant in col. XII 6–7 implies study of the semantics of individual words according to the standards of language theory as developed by the first sophists.

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[30] Here and below the translation of the Derveni Papyrus by Laks and Most (2016), sometimes with my changes. Here, 399–400.

3. The Proper Meaning of Words (ὀνόματα ὀρθῶς διαιρεῖν, διαίρεσις τῶν ὀνομάτων)

In col. XII (see the table above) the author argues that Olympus is time, because it is used in the poem with the adjective μακρός, "long". According to him, μακρός properly denotes time – which would be "a correct expression/speech" – rather than heaven, hence Olympus is time. On the contrary, when Orpheus wanted to speak about heaven, he added the epithet εὐρύς, "wide". Although relevant collocations from the Orphic poem have not been cited in the extant fragments of the text, general epic usage confirms the keen observation of the author: in Homer, Olympus always goes with μακρός (meaning "high"), whereas εὐρύς is a constant epithet of "heaven" (οὐρανός). The epic language of the Orphic poem must have been in line with this usage, which was remarked upon by the author. However, it is not this aspect of his learned sensitivity which I wish to highlight now. Notably, he argues against the evident fact that Olympus refers to the realm of heaven in epic language, drawing on the argument based on correct usage of the adjective μακρός.

In classical prose and spoken Greek, μακρός refers to length/distance (with strong temporal connotations, LSJ s.v. II), whereas εὐρύς refers to width/space. Similarly, Socrates in the *Protagoras* when interpreting the poem of Simonides drew on the distinction between the meanings of the verbs εἶναι, "to be", and γίγνομαι, "to become".[31] Socrates says that in so doing he is inspired by the sophist Prodicus, who differentiates between the meanings of words, such as βούλεσθαι and ἐπιθυμεῖν and "many other great things",[32] including the semantic distinctions between ἐρίζειν and ἀμφισβετεῖν, εὐδοκιμεῖν and ἐπαινεῖσθαι,[33] and between various synonyms in the semantic domains of "pleasure"[34] and "fear".[35] For instance, as we learn from the same dialogue, Prodicus constantly lectured Socrates that he was misusing the adjective δεινός.[36] That complex word primarily means "dreadful, terrible", but can also be used in the sense of "strong", colloquially developing into "great, cool". Socrates sometimes used it rather colloquially, but Prodicus argued that such usage was incorrect, because prevailingly and hence properly the word has a negative sense. Specifically, Prodicus says that no one would ever use δεινός with words like "fortune", "peace" and "health", whereas it is a constant epithet of "hardship", "war" and "illness". We find a similar approach in col. XII: "if someone were to call time

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[31] Plato, *Prot.* 340b–d.
[32] Eadem.
[33] Plato, *Prot.* 337b–c.
[34] Plato, *Prot.* 358 a–d; Aristotle, *Top.* 112b21–26.
[35] Plato, *Prot.* 358 d–e.
[36] Plato, *Prot.* 341a.

"long" (μακρόν) he would not be wrong/commit a mistake", meaning that he would be wrong if he used μακρόν with "heaven". In fact, δεινός can be used in poetry with both meanings. Similarly, εἶναι and γίγνομαι are not necessarily strictly different in poetic language. However, Prodicus argues on the basis of the correct spoken usage, which is understood as defining the standards of the correctness of speech, while Socrates reapplies those standards to the poetic text. That is also what our author does: although μακρός is not necessarily used of time in poetry and indeed is often used of mountains, walls and gates in the sense of "high/tall", poetry is treated through the lens of the semantic "correctness" of the spoken language. The same strategy is applied in col. XXIV; commenting on the verse "She (sc. the moon) who shines *for many* (πολλοῖς) mortals upon the boundless earth" (l.3), he denies that this concerns the moons' ability to make things visible: had Orpheus meant so, he would have said "for all" (πᾶσιν), rather than "for many" (ll. 5–10).

According to the formulation of Andrew Ford, "sophists like Protagoras and Prodicus held poetry to technical standards of linguistic correctness, but the *technē* in question was the sophists' own, not that of poetry".[37] That approach underwent serious reconsideration only under the influence of the theoretical works of Aristotle, who formulated the difference between spoken language (which he calls τὰ κύρια, κυρίως) and the language of poetry.[38] However, to illustrate the wrong attitude to poetic language, Aristotle refers to a certain Ariphrades, who – apparently along the lines of the approach discussed above – mocked the tragic poets for using language not in conformity with spoken usage.[39]

However, Aristotle's concern in the *Poetics* is the distinction between spoken and poetic language, rather than the proper meanings of words *per se*. That focus on the specification of the proper meanings of words in one semantic domain is apparently a feature of an earlier period in the development of the theory of language. Plato calls it "differentiation of words" (διαίρεσις τῶν ὀνομάτων) or to "correctly differentiate between words" (ὀνόματα ὀρθῶς διαιρεῖν). Although Prodicus is always (with fondness) referred to in Plato's dialogues as the chief and most brilliant representative of this method,[40] other sophists took similar approaches. Besides explicit references to Damon and other sophists in the *Laches*,[41] Lysias in his speech against Theomnestus ironically ascribes to his adversary an argument based on a distinction between the meanings of the verbs ῥῖψαι "to throw" and

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[37] Ford (2002) 229.
[38] Aristotle, *Poet.* 1458a18–1459a16.
[39] Aristotle, *Poet.* 1458b39–1459a3.
[40] Plato, *Prot.* 341c; 358a; *Lach.* 197d; *Charm.* 163d–e.
[41] Plato, *Lach.* 197d.

ἀποβεβληκέναι "to throw off", "because it is not the same".[42] Our author, when distinguishing between μακρός and εὐρύς, argues along similar lines.

4. Homonymy/Ambiguity (ὁμωνυμία) and Synonymy

4.1 *Words Used with Different Meanings*

The reader may have noticed that in my discussion of the correctness of speech in col. XII, I referred only to line 7, where the verb ἐξαμαρτάνειν with the negation ("not to commit a mistake") was used in reference to language as an equivalent of ὀρθῶς λέγειν ("to speak correctly"). However, it appears in this column twice, the first time being in ll. 4–5 without a linguistic sense: "Those who *think* that "Olympus" and "heaven" are the same thing are *wrong* (ἐξαμαρτάν[ουσ]ι̣[ν])". Here it refers to thought rather than speech and it has been observed by some that the sense of this verb in col. XII 5 is ethical.[43] Clearly, one verb is used twice in a short passage to express two different meanings.

A similar situation presents itself in col. XX, where another verb, μανθάνειν, is used in a short passage with two different meanings:

> ⸤those⸥ men who, having performed holy rites in the cities, have seen them – I am less astonished that they do not understand (μὴ γινώσκειν): for it is not possible 3. to hear and at the same time to *understand* what is being said (οὐ γὰρ οἶόν τε ἀκοῦσαι ὁμοῦ καὶ μαθεῖν τὰ λεγόμενα). But all those who get initiated by an expert in holy rites – they deserve that people feel astonishment and pity for them: astonishment because, thinking, before they perform the rites, that they will know, they go away after having performed them, before they know and without asking further questions, 8. as though they knew something of what they have seen or heard or *learned* (ὡς εἰδότες τι̣ ἔ̣ων εἶδον ἢ ἤκουσαν ἢ ἔμαθον·).

Μανθάνειν means "to understand" in l. 3 and "to learn/receive new information" in l.8. This dual use has not escaped the attention of scholars. Kouremenos and Kotwick draw a parallel with Heraclitus B 17 DK:[44]

> The majority of men do not notice (or apprehend) the things they meet with, *nor do they know them when they have learned about them* (οὐδὲ μαθόντες γινώσκουσιν) but they seem to themselves *to do so.*[45]

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[42] Lysias, *Theomn.* I, 9–10.

[43] Kotwick (2017) 198.

[44] Kouremenos (KPT 2006) 238–241; Kotwick (2017) 283.

[45] Transl. by Marcovich (2001) 14.

There is a clear connection between col. XX and Heraclitus B 17 DK in that both authors blame people for not understanding (μὴ γινώσκειν/ οὐ γινώσκουσιν) what they have learned (ἔμαθον/ μαθόντες). But there is a difference too. Heraclitus skilfully plays on the double meaning of the verb μανθάνειν to create a typically Heraclitean paradox: οὐδὲ μαθόντες γινώσκουσιν, "they do not know although they have understood". The paradox arises because Heraclitus means μανθάνειν in both senses at once, one of which, "to learn", gives a normal, non-equivocal meaning to the phrase: "they do not know although they have learned". Thus, the double meaning of μανθάνειν in Heraclitus is far from being explicit, whereas the ambiguity of this verb is "extracted" and highlighted in two separate sentences in col. XX.

It is worth recalling here that the distinction between the meanings of this verb was conceptualised in early sophistic theory, which focused not only on the differentiation of meanings in one semantic domain (Section 3), but also on that of the various meanings of one word, i.e. on the polysemy of words, which in Aristotle's terms is called "homonymy" (ὁμωνυμία). We learn from Plato's *Euthydemus* that the two sophists Euthydemus and Dionysiodorus embarrassed the young Cleinias by questions implying the ability to differentiate between the two above-mentioned meanings of the verb μανθάνω. The young boy was not prepared for their attack, but Socrates encouraged Cleinias by noting that such questioning means he is passing through the initiation into "the sophistic mysteries":

> First of all, as Prodicus says, you have to learn about the correct use of words (περὶ ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος) – the very point that our two visitors are making plain to you, namely, that you were unaware that learning (τὸ μανθάνειν) is the name which people apply on the one hand to the case of a man who, having originally no knowledge about some matter, in course of time receives such knowledge; and on the other hand the same word is applied when, having the knowledge already, he uses that knowledge for the investigation of the same matter whether occurring in action or in speech. It is true that they tend rather to call it "understanding" (ξυνιέναι) than "learning" (μανθάνειν), but occasionally they call it learning (μανθάνειν) too; and this point, as our friends are demonstrating, has escaped your notice – how the same word is used for people who are in the opposite conditions of knowing and not knowing.[46]

In terms of the "correctness of names", referred to again in connection with its father-founder Prodicus, a distinction should be made between various meanings of one word,[47] here between μανθάνω, which means "to learn", on the one hand, and

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[46] Plato, *Euthyd.* 277e–278a (= Prodicus A 16 DK). Translation by Lamb in Page (1925).

[47] Dorion (2009) 531 also notes that the problematization of polysemy may go back to Prodicus.

"to understand" (ξυνιέναι), on the other. This paradigmatic example of the "homon-ymy" of the verb μανθάνειν entered Aristotle's handbook *On Sophistical Refutations* as the first of a number of examples given:

> Arguments such as the following depend upon ambiguity (ὁμωνυμίαν): μανθάνουσιν οἱ ἐπιστάμενοι. […] For to "learn" is ambiguous (τὸ γὰρ μανθάνειν ὁμώνυμον); it signifies both "to understand" by the use of knowledge" (τό τε ξυνιέναι χρώμενον τῇ ἐπιστήμῃ) and also to "acquire knowledge" (λαμβάνειν ἐπιστήμην).[48]

The pointed distinction between the meanings of μανθάνειν in col. XX looks like a gloss on the polysemy alluded to by Heraclitus. However, against the background of the examples discussed, this gloss, as well as the marked juxtaposition of the two meanings of ἐξαμαρτάνειν in col. XII, may function as a deliberate demonstration by the author of his knowledge of sophistic theory and of his ability to implement it in speech.

In what follows, I will show that the author implements his understanding of homonymy in his argumentation, similarly to how Plato does so in his dialogues and to how Aristotle recapitulates this practice in his *On Sophistical Refutations*.

4.2 *Homonymy and Synonymy and their Importance in Arguments*

Aristotle was the first to use the term homonymy (often rendered in English trans-lations as "amphiboly") in its linguistic sense, but – as the examples above show – the reflection on the phenomenon of polysemy originated in sophistic theory, where it took shape in connection with the potentialities of argumentation. Aris-totle defines a homonym as a word referring to subjects that have the same name, but different definitions.[49] His understanding of homonymy embraces what mod-ern linguistics tends to treat separately as polysemy and homonymy. According to Aristotle, homonyms are words that have several – related or unrelated – meanings in spoken usage (κυρίως), e.g. ἀετός, κύων, μανθάνειν, κλείς, ἀνάσχετος/ἀνασχετός.[50] However, according to Aristotle, abstract notions like "circle" (κύκλος), "beautiful" (καλόν), "good" (ἀγαθόν), "justice" (δικαιοσύνη) and "injustice" (ἀδικία), "similarity"

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[48] Aristotle, *Soph. elench.* 165b30–34. Here and below the translation of *On Sophistical Refutations* by Forster in Page (1955), here 19.

[49] Aristotle, *Cat.* 1a1–6.

[50] Aristotle, *Soph. elench.* 166a16; 165b33; *Eth. Nic.* 1129a30; *Rhet.* 1412b13.

(ὅμοιον), "one" (ἕν), "being" (ὄν), "sameness" (ταὐτόν) are also homonyms.[51] The notion of homonymy also refers to phrases which can be understood in several ways.[52] The concept of homonymy is associated (sometimes interchangeably) with the notion of ambiguity (ἀμφιβολία), with both being defined as a word or an expression which in its spoken usage "signifies several things" (ὅταν ἢ ὁ λόγος ἢ τοὔνομα κυρίως σημαίνῃ πλείω),[53] or "contains many senses" (τὸ πολλαχῶς/πλεοναχῶς λεγόμενον).[54] Synonymy, on the contrary, means that several things have *a common name* and definitions of their essence are identical.[55] Sometimes Aristotle uses the notion of synonymy in the modern sense, i.e. implying that different words have the same meaning,[56] but more often he uses an old sophistic expression to that end, namely "the same" (τὸ αὐτό), which apparently was a term for synonymy in earlier times,[57] or the expression "means the same" (σημαίνει τὸ αὐτό). According to Aristotle, homonymy is one of the most important tools in the argumentation of the sophists, serving as the basis for their "mischief, deception" (κακουργεῖ, ἀπάτη).[58] Specifically, he considers that the fallacy in conclusions (or an intended conclusion aimed at by the sophist) occurs due to the inability of the interlocutor "to differentiate between several meanings of one word" (τῷ μὴ δύνασθαι διαιρεῖν τὸ πολλαχῶς λεγόμενον) when they are intentionally substituted in speech.[59] The sophist induces his interlocutor to take homonyms for synonyms (in the Aristotelian sense). The interlocutor thinks that the word is being used with the same meaning as when it was first introduced and does not notice a change in the semantics: "because the word is the same, it appears to have the same meaning",[60] and "because it is difficult to differentiate when words are used in the same sense and when they are used in a different sense (for the one who can do this is nearly next door to understanding the truth)".[61] It is particularly difficult when polysemy or homonymy is hidden

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[51] Aristotle, *Met.* 1035b1; 1060b32–34; *Top.* 106a23; *Anal. Post.* 77a9; 99a12–13; *Top.* 133b15; *Phys.* 184 b21; 185b6; 248b19; *Eth.Nic.* 1129a26–27; *Soph. elench.* 169a22–25.

[52] Aristotle, *Soph. elench.* 165b29–166a21; *Rhet.* 1412b14–21.

[53] Aristotle, *Soph. elench.* 166a15–16.

[54] Aristotle, *Top.* 106b14; *Rhet.* 1401a26.

[55] Aristotle, *Cat.* 1a6–8; 3b 7–9; *Top* 148a32.

[56] Aristotle, *Soph. elench.* 167a24; *Top.*123a27–29; *Rhet.* 1405b39–a3.

[57] As confirmed by numerous examples in Plato (e.g. *Crat.* 409a–b; 411d; 419a), Lysias (e.g. *Theomn.*I, 7) and again in the jests of Aristophanes (e.g. *Nu.* 674). See Aristotle, *Top.* 103a6–10; *Soph. elench.* 166a25,36; 167a2,4,29; b30; 168b36; 177b10; *Rhet.* 1357b9.

[58] Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1404b 37–39; *Soph. elench.* 169a21–36.

[59] Aristotle, *Soph. elench.* 169a23.

[60] Aristotle, *Soph. elench.* 173b16; cf. 169a33–35.

[61] Aristotle, *Soph. elench.* 169a30–33.

(λανθάνει),[62] and especially when the shift of the meaning is caused by a small change in the word's use and by the "similarity of the expression": for example, addition of a reference word may change the meaning of a lemma; the word "to be", for instance, does not have the same meaning when used alone and in combination with a pronoun "to be something".[63]

The tactics of conducting a dialogue drawing on the interlocutor's inability to differentiate between the meanings of one word is paradigmatically and grotesquely presented in the scene involving Euthydemus and Dionysiodorus from Plato's *Euthydemus* referred to above.[64] However, Socrates himself is fond of using this method in many places in Plato's dialogues. By way of illustration, let me highlight how one of Socrates' introductory arguments in the *Cratylus* involves an intentional play on the meanings of the word διδάσκω.

As we know, Hermogenes and Cratylus disagree on how a name is attached to its nominatum – whether it is by convention or by nature, grasped and expressed in the word by a particular knowledgeable person, a νομοθέτης. According to Cratylus, names are attached to their referents by nature; when properly understood, they have a *didactic* function and are the only tool for understanding the nature of things.[65] By contrast, according to Hermogenes, names are just instruments of naming, products of convention, that is, of agreement among people. Consequently, the "didactic" function of names – in the sense that they teach us "the essences of their nominata"[66] –goes against his position. In the first part of the dialogue, Socrates speaks for Cratylus against Hermogenes:

> SOC. The name being an instrument, what do we do with it when we name?
> HER. I cannot tell.
> SOC. ῏Αρ' οὐ διδάσκομέν τι ἀλλήλους and separate one thing from another as they are?
> HER. **Certainly.**
> SOC. A name is, then, an instrument of *teaching* (διδασκαλικὸν τί ἐστι ὄργανον) and of separating essence, as a shuttle is an instrument of separating the web?
> HER. Yes.[67]

Here, Hermogenes assents to Socrates' statement that a name is an instrument of *teaching* about reality, not because he thinks that a name "teaches" us by showing

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[62] Aristotle, *Top.* 110a26; 110b33; 139b28; 148a37; 157b7.

[63] Aristotle, *Soph. elench.* 166b37–167a6; cf. 169b9–12.

[64] Plato, *Euthyd.* 275d–278a.

[65] The position of Cratylus is encapsulated in Plato, *Crat.* 428e–429a.

[66] Schofield (1982) 62.

[67] Plato, *Crat.* 388b.

what reality is, but because he is ensnared in a semantic trick. Socrates starts winning Hermogenes' assent by asking whether we διδάσκομεν each other something when speaking. The verb διδάσκω, a counterpart to the verb μανθάνω, is also ambiguous and has a double meaning in Greek. It means "to teach" in one sense (LSJ s.v. I), but "to explain, to pass information, to tell someone something" in another sense (LSJ s.v. II). The Cambridge Greek Lexicon (s.v. 7) marks this latter meaning as the "weaker sense". In this "weaker" sense, διδάσκω is equivalent to λέγω and φράζω, which is how it is used in the vast number of contexts.[68] Socrates exploits this semantic ambiguity to obtain Hermogenes' agreement that any word is *informative*: Ἆρ' οὐ διδάσκομέν τι ἀλλήλους – "Do we not tell each other something?" Here Hermogenes readily agrees, allowing Socrates to proceed by pushing the other, "didactic", meaning of the same root, because the adjective διδασκαλικός is mostly used in the context of teaching, and its combination with the notion of "instrument", introduced earlier, reinforces this sense. Thus, he steers Hermogenes to speak in terms which are more congruent with the ideas of Cratylus. Eventually, he introduces an unequivocal formulation – which satisfies Cratylus – that names are used "for the sake of teaching" (διδασκαλίας ἕνεκα).[69]

The Derveni author exploits the potential of the verb διδάσκω in a very similar way. In col. X he interprets the epithet of Night πανομφεύουσα, "all-pronouncing", as πάντα διδάσκουσα, "teaching all things".

col. X 1–10

1. Καὶ λέγειν [οὐδὲ γ]ὰρ λέ[γ]ειν οἶόν τε μὴ φωνοῦντ[α·]

2. ἐνόμιζε δὲ τὸ αὐτὸν εἶναι τὸ λέγειν τε καὶ φωνεῖν.

3. λέγειν δὲ καὶ διδάσκειν τὸ αὐτὸ δύναται· οὐ γὰρ

4. οἶόν τε δι[δ]άσκειν ἄνευ τοῦ λέγειν ὅσα διὰ λόγων

5. διδάσκετα[ι·] νομίζεται δὲ τὸ διδάσκειν ἐν τῶι

6. λέγειν εἶ[ναι.] οὐ τοίνυν τὸ μὲν διδάσκειν ἐκ τοῦ

7. λέγειν ἐχ[ωρί]σθη τὸ δὲ λέγειν ἐκ τοῦ φωνεῖν,

8. τὸ δ' αὐτὸ [δύνα]ται φωνεῖν καὶ λέγειν καὶ διδάσ[κειν.]

9. οὕτως [οὐδὲν κωλ]ύει "πανομφεύουσαν" καὶ πάν[τα]

...and to speak. For to speak without uttering is not possible either; and he thought that "to speak" and "to utter" were the same thing; but to speak and διδάσκειν have the same meaning, for it is not possible δι[δ]άσκειν without speaking whatever διδάσκετα[ι·] by means of words, and διδάσκειν is thought to consist in speaking. Therefore διδάσκειν is not separated from speaking, nor speaking from uttering, but "to utter", "to speak" and διδάσ[κειν.] have the same meaning.

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[68] We find a clear example of this use in Gorgias' *Palamedes*, where Palamedes says that he should rescue himself by "telling the truth, rather than deceiving" (διδάξαντα τἀληθές, οὐκ ἀπατήσαντά με δεῖ διαφυγεῖν τὴν αἰτίαν ταύτην, DK B 11 a 217). Cf. e.g. Euripides, *Andr.* 739; Plato, *Apol.* 19d, 21b; *Crito* 49e, *Hipp. Min.* 364c; *Euthyphr.* 6e, 12e.

[69] Plato, *Crat.* 428e4.

10. διδά[σκουσαν τὸ αὐ]τὸ εἶναι.

Thus, <nothing pre>vents "all-pro-nouncing" and "teach<ing all things">" from being the same thing.

The word πανομφεύουσαν, apparently used in the poem,[70] is formed from the very archaic and poetic word ὀμφή, "voice", and πᾶν, "all". Apparently, as the first step, the author explains this archaic verb through the common verb φωνεῖν, "to utter" (a strategy exemplified also by Aristotle: the archaic τέκμαρ is the same (ταὐτόν) as πέρας;[71] and (the rare) λώπιον is the same as ἱμάτιον).[72] Then, using common termi-nology for synonymy, he argues for the identity of φωνεῖν, "to utter", and λέγειν, "to speak". We may be rightly puzzled here as to how the author – who in col. XII bases his argument on the semantic difference between μακρός and εὐρύς in spoken lan-guage, ignoring their use in poetry – can argue for the sameness of φωνεῖν and λέγειν, which are distinctively different in spoken language (φωνεῖν can refer to any sound, whereas λέγειν can only be used for human speech), although, like μακρός and εὐρύς, they can be used synonymously in poetry. This shows that our author, quite in the manner of the sophists, feels free in each case to choose a strategy that will lead to his intended conclusion. Nevertheless, his wording in this phrase shows his awareness that he was applying a different strategy – and probably one that was incorrect or unpopular from a contemporaneous point of view – from that in col. XII: note, that he waives responsibility for the claim on the synonymy of these verbs by ascribing this opinion to Orpheus, a poet: ἐνόμιζε (*he thought*) δὲ τὸ αὐτὸν εἶναι τὸ λέγειν τε καὶ φωνεῖν (l. 2). He then claims without any reservations that the meaning of λέγειν, "to speak", is identical to the meaning of διδάσκειν (λέγειν δὲ καὶ διδάσκειν τὸ αὐτὸ δύναται, l. 3). That point deserves reconsideration. Modern trans-lators normally take it in the sense that "to say" and "to *teach*" have the same mean-ing" (exemplified by L&M),[73] leaving out of consideration the fact that διδάσκειν is polysemous, with one of its meanings indeed coinciding with the meaning of λέγειν, as discussed above. If we take this into account, the statement of the author appears to be linguistically correct and formulated in terms appropriate for his

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[70] For the reconstructions of the verse and of the initial part of the argument see Kotwick (2017) 180–81.

[71] Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1357b9.

[72] Aristotle, *Top.* 103a10; *Met.* 1006b26; *Phys.* 185b20.

[73] See also Kotwick (2017) 183.

time.[74] In his next explanatory sentence, the author develops the idea of conveying information, contained in διδάσκειν: οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε δι[δ]άσκειν ἄνευ τοῦ λέγειν ὅσα διὰ λόγων διδάσκετα[ι·], which can be translated as "for it is not possible to in-form/to tell someone something without speaking as far as it concerns information passed by words" (l.4–5), and νομίζεται δὲ τὸ διδάσκειν ἐν τῶι λέγειν εἶ[αι.], "inform-ing/telling is thought to consist/to be encapsulated in speaking" (l.5), thus (τοίνυν) διδάσκειν, "informing/telling", is inseparable (ἐχ[ωρί]σθη) from λέγειν, "speaking", as "speaking" is inseparable from φωνεῖν, "uttering" (l.5–7). It is possible to see διδάσκειν as meaning "to teach" in those sentences (ll. 4–7), but it is not easy to argue with certainty when exactly this meaning comes into play – at the very be-ginning (l.4), or at a certain point (e.g. l.5,7), nor whether it replaces the meaning "to tell" or should be considered together and along with it. That difficulty arises, as Aristotle says, from the "hidden homonymy" which is in play here; one has to be a superior user of language to be able "to differentiate between the meanings" in the development of an argument, "because the word is the same, it appears to have the same meaning",[75] and "because it is difficult to differentiate when words are used in the same sense, and when they are used in a different sense".[76] The author argues for the synonymy of all three verbs, drawing on the homonymy of διδάσκειν and smoothing his argument by passing surreptitiously from one meaning to the other. That enables him eventually to forcibly equate the meanings of (παν)ομφεύειν and διδάσκειν by making the sense of "teaching" come to the fore in his final statement: when explicating πᾶν in πανομφεύουσαν he replaces it with πάντα, which becomes the object of διδάσκουσα, with that addition emphasising the idea of teaching (a device also described by Aristotle, see note 63). In the whole of this passage, the author leads to his intended conclusion by proceeding with the homonymous διδάσκειν from the idea of informing ("the weaker sense") to the idea of teaching, thus making explicit the strategy latently used by Socrates in his con-versation with Hermogenes.

4.3 Homonymy of χράω and ἀρκέω in col. XI and Polysemy of Sameness

Gabor Betegh noted that the author may have used the device of homonymy in col. XI 1–10:

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[74] See note 57, and especially the formulations in Aristophanes, Nu 674 (ταὐτὸν δύναταί σοι κάρδοπος Κλεωνύμῳ) and Lysias, *Theomn*.I, 7, 9 (πολὺ γὰρ γὰρ <ἂν> ἔργον ἦν τῷ νομοθέτῃ ἅπαντα τὰ ὀνόματα γράφειν ὅσα τὴν αὐτὴν δύναμιν ἔχει).

[75] Aristotle, *Soph. elench*. 173b16; cf. 169a33–35.

[76] Aristotle, *Soph. elench*. 169a30–33.

1. [τ]ῆς Νυκτός. "ἐξ ἀ[δύτοι]ο" δ' αὐτὴν [λέγει] "χρῆσαι"

2. γνώμην ποιού[με]νος ἄδυτον ε͜ῖναι τὸ βάθος

3. τῆς νυκτός· οὐ γ[ὰρ] δύνει ὥσπερ τὸ φῶς, ἀλλά νιν

4. ἐν τῶι αὐτῶι μέ[νο]γ αὐγὴ κατα[λ]αμβάνει.

5. χρῆσαι δὲ καὶ ἀρκέσαι ταὐτὸ [δύ]ναται.

6. σκέψασθαι δὲ χρὴ ἐφ' ὧι κεῖτα[ι τὸ] ἀρκέσαι

7. καὶ τὸ χρῆσαι.

8. ʿχρᾶν τόνδε τὸν θεὸν νομίζογτ[ες ἔρ]χονται

9. πευσόμενοι ἄσσα πο͜ῶσι'. τὰ δ' [ἐπὶ τούτ]ωι λέγει·

10. "[ἡ δὲ] ἔχρησεν ἅπαντα τά οἱ θέ[μις ἦν ἀνύσασ] θαι".

...of Night. <He says> that she proclaims the oracle out of the <innermost shrine>, his view being that the innermost shrine is the depth of night; for it does not set as the light does, but the daylight seizes it while it remains in the same place. And "to proclaim an oracle" and "to prevent harm" have the same meaning; and we must consider what "to prevent harm" and "to proclaim an oracle" refer to.

It is in the belief that this god proclaims oracles that they come to find out what they should do. This is what he says<after this [scil. verse]>

<Night> proclaimed an oracle about all that was ri<ght for him to perform.>

...he made clear that...next to the things that exist...as

The author comments on the verse where Night gives an oracle (χράω, ἔχρησεν) to Zeus. However, the verb χράω is polysemous. Its meanings are so divergent that they can be considered homonyms even in modern terms. Betegh suggested that the author jumped from its meaning "to give an oracle" (LSJ s.v. I) used in the poem to its other meaning "to furnish (what is needed)", "to lend" (LSJ s.v. III B) and equated that latter meaning with one of the meanings of the equally polysemous verb ἀρκέω, "to assist, to help" (LSJ s.v. I 3): "it cannot be excluded that, by exploiting the polysemy of the word, he was about to shift the literal meaning of the word χρῆσαι, 'proclaiming oracles', by making the connection with ἀρκέσαι."[77] Although his suggestion about the use of the polysemy of χρῆσαι has not received due attention in scholarship,[78] I think that it is correct: this strategy of reinterpreting the originally meant sense of a word used in the poem is confirmed by the author's method elsewhere (see our discussion of μακρός in col. XII above, or his reinterpretation of ἑᾶς "his" into "good" in col. XXVI) and by his treatment of ἐξ ἀδύτοιο in the same column (II. 1–4).[79] ἄδυτον in poetry standardly means "space inaccessible/

[77] Betegh (2004) 212.

[78] Kouremenos (KPT 2006) 187 and Kotwick have not paid attention to the suggestion that the author consciously exploited polysemy. Kotwick (2017) 191 thinks that the idea is that ἀρκέω in the meaning "to assist", "helfen" is an interpretation of "to give oracle", "Orakel geben".

[79] Cf. also Kotwick (2019b) 178.

where it is not possible to enter", but the author draws on a different meaning of δύω/δύνω – "to set/go down below the horizon" by arguing that Night remains in the same place, rather than going down (unlike the sun). However, Betegh observes that the semantic field of the word ἀρκέσαι "is relatively wide, and the context in the papyrus does not offer much help in deciding which meaning we should choose. The different relevant senses fall into two larger groups: 'ward off', 'defend' and 'assist' on the one hand, and 'be strong enough', 'suffice' and 'endure', on the other".[80] Indeed, the state of the text is very poor in this column and does not allow us to use the context to argue for one or another interpretation. However, Betegh admits that the author might have meant either the first or the second group of the meanings of ἀρκέσαι. The second group "could lead the way towards an interpretation where the dispenser and the recipient of the oracle are not separate entities."[81] Betegh does not develop his suggestion further, but arguably he means that ἀρκέσαι in the sense of sufficiency denotes the condition of Zeus, whereas χρῆσαι describes the act of Night, which could support the author's idea that all deities mentioned in the poem, including Night, refer to one entity – Zeus (Nous, Air).

In what follows I wish to redefine the last suggestion by Betegh (that ἀρκέσαι might refer to sufficiency) by offering some general considerations on the author's use of the notion of identity (or sameness) and by connecting it to Aristotle's evidence on polysemy of general notions.

The interpretative strategy of explaining all names and words in the poem as referring to one Zeus-Nous-Air permeates the commentary, but it stands out in particular in col. XXI, which argues that all the divine names and verbs used in the poem refer to one and the same god (Ἀφροδίτη Οὐρανία καὶ Ζεὺς καὶ ἀφροδισιάζειν καὶ θόρνυσθαι καὶ Πειθὼ καὶ Ἁρμονία τῶι αὐτῶι θεῶι ὄνομα κεῖται, ll. 5–7) and in col. XXII, which states that all feminine deities are the same (Γῆ δὲ καὶ Μήτηρ καὶ Ῥέα καὶ Ἥρη ἡ αὐτή, l. 7). However, in the same col. XXI the author asserts that Peitho refers to Zeus, "because the things that exist yielded to one another; yet "yield" and "persuade" are the same" (Πειθὼ δ' ὅτι εἶξεν τὰ ἐ[ό]ντα ἀλλήλο[ι]σιν· ε[ἴ]κειν δὲ καὶ πείθειν τὸ αὐτόν·) (XXI, II. 10–11). "To yield" and "to persuade" denote opposite aspects of the single action: persuasion implies yielding – if one persuades, the other yields.

Thus, in col. XXI the author argues on the basis of two different types of sameness, the first one implying that all names *denote* one and the same god (reformulated in col. XXII as all deities *are* the same), and the second one that the opposites are the same.

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[80] Betegh (2004) 212.
[81] Eadem.

In col. XI, according to the interpretation suggested by Betegh, χρῆσαι and ἀρκέσαι are used in one sense, i.e. *synonymously* ("to furnish what is needed" = "to assist, to help"). Although the exact semantic coincidence of those meanings can be questioned, we have seen that the author was not very scrupulous when arguing for the semantic identity of λέγειν and φωνεῖν (col. X 2) either. However, another interpretation is possible: if we take ἀρκέσαι in the meaning of "to become sufficient", they are *antonyms describing two opposite actions of one and the same process* (if one furnishes what is needed, the other becomes sufficient),[82] exactly as is the case with πείθειν and εἴκειν in col. XXI. Thus, read in two different ways, the phrase has two senses, both of which are paralleled by the author's use of the notion of sameness elsewhere (the sameness of synonymy in col. X and the sameness of the antonymy of the verbs denoting the opposite actions of one process in col. XXI). Remember that we know that the author can argue on the basis of two different types of sameness in terms of one argument (col. XXI). Given that Aristotle includes the possibility of a phrase to be read in two (or more) different ways among the classical examples of homonymy (see notes 52, 53, 54), and emphasises that the notion of sameness (ταὐτόν) is polysemous (πολλαχῶς λεγόμενον) and homonymous,[83] it does not seem unlikely that the author combined two different senses in one phrase and intended its double reading.

The sameness of one and many and the sameness of opposites goes back to Heraclitus' models πάντα - ἕν (B 50 DK: ἓν πάντα εἶναι, or B 10 DK: καὶ ἐκ πάντων ἓν καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντα), and the identity of opposites (B 75 DK: διδάσκαλος δὲ πλείστων Ἡσίοδος· τοῦτον ἐπίστανται πλεῖστα εἰδέναι, ὅστις ἡμέρην καὶ εὐφρόνην οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν· ἔστι γὰρ ἕν; B 88 DK: ταὐτό τ' ἔνι ζῶν καὶ τεθνηκὸς καὶ [τὸ] ἐγρηγορὸς καὶ καθεῦδον καὶ νέον καὶ γηραιόν· τάδε γὰρ μεταπεσόντα ἐκεῖνά ἐστι κἀκεῖνα πάλιν μεταπεσόντα ταῦτα, and B 60 DK: ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὡυτή). Notably, the exegetical procedure behind the sameness of the opposite meanings of χράω and ἀρκέω copies that of Heraclitus B 48 DK: τῶι οὖν τόξωι ὄνομα βίος, ἔργον δὲ θάνατος. A bow (τόξον) is called βίος. However, this word, βίος, is homonymous – one meaning is "bow" as a synonym of τόξον, whereas the other meaning is "life". Considering βίος-bow the interpreter shifts to its other meaning "life" and thence to its opposite, "death"/θάνατος (thus, life and death are the same, cf. B 88 DK). So the author shifts from "to give oracle" to "to furnish what is needed" and to the opposite of the latter,

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[82] As exemplified by Plato, *Resp*. 369d: "Now the first and chief of our *needs* (τῶν χρειῶν) is the provision of food for existence and life." "Assuredly." "The second is housing and the third is raiment and that sort of thing." "That is so." "Tell me, then," said I, "**how our city will *suffice* (ἀρκέσει)** for the provision of all these things. Will there not be a farmer for one, and a builder, and then again a weaver?"

[83] Aristotle, *Soph. elench.*169a22–25; Cf. *Top*. 133b15; 152b30.

namely "to become sufficient". In terms of a possible Heraclitean influence, it is also striking that col. XI discusses the relationship between Night, which "remains in the same (place)", and Light, which "seizes, takes" it, two opposites which are one, according to Heraclitus (B 75 DK).

Thus, the author uses three types of sameness in cols. X, XI, XXI, and XXII: the (linguistic) sameness of the synonymy of notions (the same meaning of the verbs of speaking in col. X and χράω and ἀρκέω in col. XI meaning the same, i.e. "to help, to assist"); the sameness of the two opposite actions of one process (πείθω and εἴκω in col. XXI and χράω and ἀρκέω in col. XI having opposite meanings "to give what is needed" - "to become sufficient"), and – pervasively in the commentary and particularly in cols. XXI, XXII – the sameness of one and many. These three types of sameness are notably discussed in the *Physics* when Aristotle considers and resolves the philosophical and logical problems of the identity of one and many (*Phys*. 185b5–186a3), and the problem of the identity of opposites in connection with his discussion of changes caused by motion (*Phys*. 202a3–202b22). Specifically, Aristotle discusses the famous problem of one and many, which occupied "even the later of the old philosophers" (apparently the Eleatics), as well as the sophists (such as Lycophron).[84] Some of them were afraid to admit that one can be many, but had to do so, although they were puzzled thereby. Aristotle observes that the difficulty can be solved by considering the sameness of one and many in terms of potentiality, rather than actuality and by not taking them as actual opposites.[85] In that discussion Aristotle admits that "one" "can be said in many ways" (ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ἓν πολλαχῶς λέγεται), one of which implies that several notions have the same definition or the "account of their essences is one" (which is his standard definition of synonymy – see note 55).[86] Aristotle illustrates that point with the examples of μέθυ ("liquor") and οἶνος ("wine"), or λώπιον ("cape") and ἱμάτιον ("cloak").[87]

The second discussion concerns "the known problem"[88] of the relationship of the mover and the moved. According to Aristotle, the problem is that both have

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[84] Aristotle, *Phys*. 185b 26–28: ἐθορυβοῦντο δὲ καὶ οἱ ὕστεροι τῶν ἀρχαίων ὅπως μὴ ἅμα γένηται αὐτοῖς τὸ αὐτὸ ἓν καὶ πολλά.

[85] Aristotle, *Phys*.185b34–186a3: ἐνταῦθα δὲ ἤδη ἠπόρουν, καὶ ὡμολόγουν τὸ ἓν πολλὰ εἶναι—ὥσπερ οὐκ ἐνδεχόμενον ταὐτὸν ἕν τε καὶ πολλὰ εἶναι, μὴ τἀντικείμενα δέ· ἔστι γὰρ τὸ ἓν καὶ δυνάμει καὶ ἐντελεχείᾳ.

[86] Aristotle, *Phys*. 185b5–9.

[87] Aristotle, *Phys*. 185b9, 19–20.

[88] Aristotle, *Phys*. 202a13: Καὶ τὸ ἀπορούμενον δὲ φανερόν - "This seems to refer not to any previous passage, but simply to a problem familiar to Aristotle's readers." (Ross (1936) 540).

one energy. So, "how can two specifically different things have the same actualisa-tion?", or in what sense is it the same? One of the approaches – discussed and re-jected – is to admit the identity of two opposite actions of a reciprocal process:

> Also, if teaching (ἡ δίδαξις) and learning (ἡ μάθησις), and affecting (ἡ ποίησις) and being affected (ἡ πάθησις), are the same (τὸ αὐτό), then to teach will be the same as to learn (τὸ διδάσκειν τῷ μανθάνειν τὸ αὐτὸ), and to affect will be the same as to be affected (τὸ ποιεῖν τῷ πάσχειν), so that it will be necessary for the one who is teaching to be in every case learning, and the one that is affecting to be in every case affected. (202b2–5).[89]

That is, however, wrong, because the identity of those opposite actions is not the identity of their definition (as in the case of λώπιον καὶ ἱμάτιον) or, in other words, the identity of their essences, but rather the identity of the substratum, along the lines of the road to and from (a place):

> nor is it necessary for the one who is teaching to be learning (οὔτ' ἀνάγκη τὸν διδάσκοντα μανθάνειν), even if affecting and being affected are the same (οὐδ' εἰ τὸ ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν τὸ αὐτό ἐστιν) – provided they are not the same in such a way that one account states the essence of each (as with cape and cloak) (μὴ μέντοι ὥστε τὸν λόγον εἶναι ἕνα τὸν <τὸ> τί ἦν εἶναι λέγοντα, οἷον ὡς λώπιον καὶ ἱμάτιον), but are so rather in the way that the road from Thebes to Athens is the same as the road from Athens to Thebes, as was said ear-lier. (202b14–16).

The "know problem" of the identity of the opposites is formulated here by Aristotle using the examples of the sameness of the opposite reciprocal processes (ποιεῖν - πάσχειν; διδάσκειν - μανθάνειν) and thus *exactly matches* the examples in the papy-rus (πείθω - εἴκω, and χράω - ἀρκέω read as antonyms). The same example of the identity of synonymy (λώπιον καὶ ἱμάτιον), which matches the examples in the pa-pyrus like χράω - ἀρκέω, read as synonyms, and the verbs of speaking in col. X, ac-companies both discussions – that of one and many (*Phys.* 185b19–20) and that of the sameness of opposites (*Phys.* 202b13). Thus, these passages in the *Physics* dis-play a discussion of the three types of sameness – one and many; identity of syno-nyms; identity of the opposite reciprocal processes – which we have identified in the Derveni Papyrus. Importantly, both discussions in the *Physics* contain refer-ences and allusions to Heraclitus (explicitly in *Phys.* 185b20–23 and through the allusion to Heracl. DK in Phys. 202 b14), highlighting the Heraclitean background to those discussions and a conscious turn towards Heraclitean material even where

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[89] Here and below the translation of the *Physics* by Reeve (2018).

Aristotle's argument is critical and significantly developed compared to his predecessors. That supports my suggestion that the relevant material in the papyrus has a Heraclitean background.

5. Conclusion

5.1 *Recapitulation of the Discussion*

I began my analysis by discussing the theme of correct speech or speaking correctly (ὀρθοέπεια), and suggested that in all likelihood the author used technical terms "to speak correctly" (ὀρθῶς λέγειν) and "to commit mistakes" (ἐξαμαρτάνειν) as we find them in Aristophanes and Plato. Then, I demonstrated that the author engages with the problematics of "speaking correctly" as celebrated by the fifth century sophists, especially what Plato calls "to differentiate between the names properly" (ὀνόματα ὀρθῶς διαιρεῖν), that is to establish a precise meaning for each word as used in everyday language (what Aristotle will later refer to as κύρια ὀνόματα, κυρίως). Furthermore, I showed that he applies that knowledge to his analysis of the poetic text according to the standard tactics of the sophists (Ford (2002), 229). That refers in particular to his differentiation between the meanings of μακρός and εὐρύς in col. XIII, as well as πολλοί and πάντες in col. XXIV. However, he feels at liberty to ignore those rules when they prevent him from reaching his intended conclusion (col. X). I went on to discuss the subject of homonymy and synonymy – another area of sophistic interest which was eagerly elaborated on by the sophists in connection with the development of their argumentative tactics. The sophistic approach to those matters deeply impacted the fifth century literature and left numerous traces in the dialogues of Plato, but it is only the theoretical works of Aristotle where that experience is analysed, summarised and classified. Drawing on Plato's evidence and Aristotle's systematisations, I analysed the text of the Derveni papyrus. Its author uses arguments from synonymy, in particular in cols. X and XI, while juggling with homonymous notions throughout his entire text in style and argumentation. The examples of his use of homonymy include the verbs μανθάνω and διδάσκω which paradigmatically represent the sophistic use of homonymy, in theory and in practice (Arist. *Soph. elench.* 165b30–34; Plato, *Euthyd.* 277e–278a; Plato, *Crat.* 388b). Furthermore, in the development of Betegh's argument, I suggested that homonymy, rather than synonymy alone, plays a part in col. XI in that one phrase (l.5) – χρῆσαι δὲ καὶ ἀρκέσαι ταὐτὸ [δύ]ναται – can be read in two different ways (which is described by Aristotle among the examples of homonymy), so that the notion of sameness (τὸ αὐτό/ταὐτό) also appears to be homonymous (polysemous) (as also emphasised by Aristotle). The homonymy of the notion of sameness in col. XI implies the sameness of the identical definition (which

is synonymy in linguistic terms) and the sameness of the opposite aspects of one process (which is antonymy in (modern) linguistic terms).

Generally, the notion of sameness is used in the commentary in three different ways, which also manifest themselves beyond col. XI 5: the sameness of synonyms (e.g. the verbs of speaking in col. X), the sameness of one and many (e.g. all names of gods and verbs denoting their actions in col. XXI, the feminine deities in col. XXII), and the sameness of the two opposite aspects of one process (πείθω - εἴκω in col. XXI). Those three types of sameness are discussed critically by Aristotle in the *Physics* from the perspective of his own system of notions. He resolves the logical problems lying behind two of those types – the sameness of one and many and the sameness of the opposite aspects of one process. That latter type is discussed by Aristotle precisely in the form it appears in the Derveni papyrus, although the sameness of opposites does not necessarily imply that specific type of correspondence of the reciprocal actions and can be represented by many other varieties. In each of those discussions he uses for comparison the third type – the sameness of synonyms. Apparently, in his critical discussion Aristotle addresses the set of variants of the notion of sameness which the Derveni author reflected on at an earlier stage.

Notably, our analysis started with purely "linguistic" notions of correct speaking and the proper meanings of words, synonymy and homonymy, but the discussion of synonymy and homonymy later led us to the idea of sameness not only in semantic, but also in physical terms. By way of illustration, that interaction between the linguistic and physical perspectives is encapsulated in col XI 5, read in the way I proposed: the sameness of χρῆσαι and ἀρκέσαι, interpreted as synonyms, pertains to the realm of linguistics, but if we interpret those verbs as antonyms their sameness refers to the realm of physics. Looking at that through the lens of Aristotle's approach, we should not be surprised. In the discussed passages of the *Physics*, Aristotle easily moves between the semantic and physical perspectives in a very similar way and uses linguistic examples to illustrate physical problems. Indeed, the classification of the linguistic notions in the *Organon* is important for Aristotle as an interesting area *per se*, but first and foremost, as a tool for understanding reality. Even quantitatively, beyond the *Organon*, he addresses homonymy most often in the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*, where every subject starts with discussion of the semantics of words. That combined approach is rooted in the tradition of Greek philosophy, inaugurated by the great figures of old like Heraclitus and Parmenides, but there are reasons to suppose that it had its continuation in the age of the first sophists, who were tremendously influenced by those thinkers[90] but who also

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[90] Kahn (1997) 56, 60; Janko (2001) 4.

made their specific contribution to the methodology of argumentation, specifically in their conceptualisation of language. The Derveni commentary may be considered to provide valuable evidence for that tradition of merging language concepts and physics in a way which bears clear traces of sophistic methodology.

5.2 Perspective on the Text

From the above it follows that the author of the commentary possessed a refined sophistic education and I have shown how his ideas on language relate to the cultural context of his time. He alludes to contemporary theories of language in his style and employs them in the interpretation of poetry. He is well-versed in sophistic argumentation and his approach to physics through language is impacted by Heraclitus, as becomes apparent to us though the traditions reflected by Aristotle. One might surmise that such learned complexity presupposed a similar level of education among his audience, assuming of course that he intended his exegesis to be duly appreciated and understood.[91] That raises the question of the pragmatics of this text, which *at the time it was written* was aimed at an intellectually prepared audience, rather than a random group of people or initiates. While, in my view, a detailed answer to this question would require extensive discussion of the issue of an *agōn*,[92] which merits a separate study, I wish to draw attention to the following points to deliver a more balanced perspective on this text.

Previous scholarship has noted that the poem, commented upon by the author, bears distinctive traces of Mesopotamian influence,[93] as too do some elements of its interpretation employed by him. Thus, interpreting multiple deities as aspects or names of one deity, and in turn as a manifestation of nature, is a strategy that is well-documented in the Mesopotamian poetic texts and their commentaries;[94] the

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[91] Aristophanes' difficulties with the reception of *The Clouds*, "the cleverest of my comedies", full of linguistic and philosophical jokes, come to mind, about which he complains in his parabasis (Nu. 518–562), entreating the audience to rise to the level of its complexity. See Hubbard (1991) 90–98 ("Every spectator is flattered by being invited to consider himself part of an elite", p.94).

[92] As suggested by several scholars, cf. Edmonds III (2018); similarly, Barney (2001) 57–60 reads the etymologizing of Socrates in the *Cratylus* as a competitive display: "the etymologies are to be understood as a triumphant display of competitive skill, in which Socrates beats the practitioners of strong etymology at their own game." (57).

[93] See note 4.

[94] See West (1997) 87; Burkert (2004) 153, note 104; Myerston (2013) 104. In the seventh tablet of Enūma eliš Marduk acquires the functions of Anu and Enlil and is given fifty names reflecting his various functions. On the identification of gods with Marduk in Enūma eliš, see Frahm (2011) 351: "In VII 97 of Enūma eliš, Marduk is called *ban Hi abbe*[*su*],

Hurrian-Hittite motif of swallowing genitals in the beginning of creation (cols. XIII–XVI) plays a significant part in his exegesis, rather than being radically altered by replacing the meaning of αἰδοῖον with its homonymous notion of "revered" (as he does, for example, with ἄδυτον in col. XI or ἐᾶς in col. XXVI; see above);[95] the famous Semitic motif of being named as corresponding to coming into being, which is also prominent in Enūma eliš, appears in the extant fragments twice (cols. XVII and XVIII).[96] How do these distinctively non-Greek, apparently borrowed, elements coexist with the refined and modern strategies of the author? A plausible answer would be that our author, educated in modern standards, worked with some archaic material traditionally accompanying the Orphic poem, elements of which he deemed necessary to incorporate into his exegesis. That brings us back to the observations of West, who drew attention to the long-standing pre-existence of commentaries on theological poems, ritual and religious texts in the Assyrian and Babylonian traditions. West suggested that the Mesopotamian priestly commentaries on rituals may have provided a model for Orphic-Bacchic societies in linking text and ritual and, drawing on the collection of mystical and mythological texts edited by Livingstone,[97] highlighted several parallels he deemed important.[98] He considered these analogies in a religious perspective, stressing the formula of secrecy accompanying some of the Mesopotamian texts, and considering the author as a learned priest and his audience as initiates, although noting the "eccentric" character of his explanations.[99] However, as I have demonstrated, his explanations are not eccentric, but highly professional and tricky from the modern sophistic point of view, whereas the issue of secrecy is the aspect that has been challenged most often, in my opinion rightly, regarding the Orphic poem itself and the target audience of the commentary[100] (to which our discussion also contributes). Yet, with these limitations, West's observations on the potential links between the Derveni commentary and Mesopotamian prototypes[101] gain new significance in light of further developments in Assyriological studies and my analysis

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"creator of [his] divine (fore)fathers", a statement that implies his identity with one of the gods who preceded him."

[95] Burkert (2004²) 99–100; Betegh (2004) 119–21.

[96] West (1997) 88.

[97] Livingstone (1986).

[98] West (1997) 86–90.

[99] West (1997), 83–4, referring to Plato's Meno 81 a as a parallel.

[100] See note 9.

[101] West's observations did not find much resonance in the studies of the papyrus. The only study known to me is Myerston (2013), who developed his ideas by drawing attention

presented above. Since West's article was written, more Assyrian and Babylonian commentaries have been published or come to the notice of scholars, prompting new studies devoted to their hermeneutical methodology.[102] Mesopotamian hermeneutic texts, going back to the second millennium BC, proliferated (through copying of old texts and creation of new ones) in particular in the Assyrian culture in the seventh century BC and in the Babylonian culture in the sixth-second centuries BC[103], i.e. the time immediately preceding, or relevant to, the spread of Orphism in Greece. Commentaries were written on all types of texts – omen, ritual, literary texts etc. – yet they all share a common methodology. As Frahm notes, commentaries on literary and theogonic texts were rarely marked as secret knowledge; on the contrary, some were intended for broad study.[104] The features of their methodology that merit attention in relation to our material are 1) their "atomistic" nature, meaning extracting the lemmata from their base text and discussing them in isolation from it;[105] 2) their authors' focus on linguistic phenomena, and 3) the use of linguistic phenomena to arrive at an interpretation where the *intentio lectoris* goes beyond the *intentio operis* and can be considered "allegorical".[106] Other features parallel to those in the Derveni commentary such as line-by-line commentary and the use of quotations from other literary compositions also deserve attention.[107] However, it is the linguistic component that stands out in particular in light of my analysis. The Assyrian and Babylonian commentaries not only use artificial

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to the similarities between the Derveni commentary and Enūma eliš, and the related commentaries, rather than ritual explanation texts, in etymologizing divine names as referring to the same entity.

[102] See a survey in Frahm (2011) 4–6.

[103] Frahm (2011) 26.

[104] Frahm (2011) 343–44.

[105] On the atomistic nature of the Mesopotamian commentaries as their basic feature see Frahm (2011) 28. Kotwick (2019b) 184, in her attempt to describe the allegorical method of the Derveni author, arrives at the same phraseology: "He employs a two-step allegoresis: first, he atomizes a word of the Orphic text, and second, he interprets the atomized word according to one or more interpretative moves that are all based on various types of likeness." She does not consider the author's approach from a linguistic perspective as I do, nor does she have in mind the Mesopotamian texts, but it is noteworthy that she identifies the first step of the Derveni author's method using precisely the terms employed by Frahm for the description of the Mesopotamian hermeneutical techniques.

[106] Frahm (2011) 39–40, 59. Noted by West (1997) 86.

[107] Frahm (2011) 26–27, 102–107. Cf. the Derveni author's frequent references to the "next verse" (see Betegh (2004) 94) and the quote from "Hymns" in col. XXII 12–13.

etymologies,[108] but also extensively exploit the potential of synonymy and homonymy. In the realm of synonymy, they explain rare or obsolete words through more common synonyms[109] (just as the Derveni author explains the obsolete πανομφεύειν through φωνεῖν in col. X) and add complex chains of synonyms to explain a given lemma[110] (as may be seen when the Derveni author attaches the chain of λέγειν and διδάσκειν, understood as synonyms, to φωνεῖν in col. X); in exploiting homonyms – "words that sound exactly like or similar to a given lemma even though they may mean something completely different" – they analyze one root "with an eye on the many other meanings these signs may have",[111] drawing on the idea that "any or many possible readings of a cuneiform sign can be used to derive meaning from a text".[112] That is precisely what the Derveni author does when commenting on ἄδυτον "where it is not possible to enter" in the sense of "which does not go beyond the horizon", χρῆσαι "to utter an oracle" in the sense of "to lend/give what is needed", ἐὰς as "good", and, most likely, when playing with several meanings of αἰδοῖον.[113] Sometimes a given lemma is interpreted in terms of synonyms and in terms of homonyms simultaneously,[114] corresponding to the dual vision of the chain φωνεῖν, λέγειν, διδάσκειν in col. X in terms of synonyms, but also involving the homonymous meaning of διδάσκειν. In doing so, like the Mesopotamian authors, the Derveni author transcends the literal meaning of the text and arrives at an interpretation traditionally referred to as allegorical. It is impossible to overlook the pronounced methodological parallels. Hence, from this perspective too, it is plausible that some written or oral explanations bearing traces of Mesopotamian hermeneutics accompanied the Orphic poem as part of the original Orphic tradition available to the Derveni author and that linguistic approaches of the kind just described were an integral part of them. Nevertheless, the specific character of the

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[108] Frahm (2011) 70–76. In the Derveni commentary, this is comparable to the derivation of Κρόνος from κρούειν in col. XIV, XV.

[109] Frahm (2011) 60–62. For example, in the poem Ludlul, also called "The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer" (K3291) the verse "[My lips, which] used to *discourse*, became those of a deaf-mute" (quotation from Ludlul 1 71) is explained as "To *discourse*" [(means)] "to *speak*," (Frahm (2011) 119).

[110] Frahm (2011) 64–66.

[111] Frahm (2011) 70.

[112] Frahm (2011) 73–74, see also 60–62; 64–66, 342.

[113] See Kotwick (2017) 207–14.

[114] Cf. Livingstone (1987) 43: For example, in K 2164 ll 25–27 in the lemma u4.ná.àm, a chain of synonyms which express the common meaning of the root "to lie down, sleep" is first given to the component na, and then, Livingstone suggests, homonymous meanings of this cuneiform sign "to build, make", "to be beautiful" are adduced.

author's elaboration on the linguistic material – and that has been the focus of my analysis presented above – remains unclear unless studied through the lens of his contemporaneous cultural setting. The early sophistic theory of language with all its stylistic and text-critical aspects, with its typical examples of homonymy, synonymy and ambiguity, including the homonymy of general philosophic notions (completely absent from the Mesopotamian texts) shapes this material. Arguably, the complex nature of the Derveni commentary lies in the interaction between two strata – the genuine archaic material, indicative of original orphism (or a specific form of it), and the outlook of a Greek sophist. The author elaborates on the traditional methods of interpretation according to the agenda of his contemporaneous culture providing a sophisticated exercise within a given methodological framework. Just as the equation of gods with one god, who is identified further with the forces of nature, coming from the depths of the archaic traditions impacted by Mesopotamian hermeneutics, was elevated by the author to a new level of a highly sophisticated and updated philosophical system, a similar transformation may have occurred with the linguistic component of those explanations. The reconstruction of the original Orphic material, involving linguistic explanations, on which he drew, is beyond our reach, but in whatever form those archaic Orphic traditions were at the author's disposal, he appears to have elaborated on them according to the standards of style, exegesis and argumentation set by the contemporary sophistic theory of language.

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