TIRESIAS IN EURIPIDES' *BACCHAE* AND THE AUTHOR OF THE DERVENI PAPYRUS

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Introduction

Since the contents of the Derveni Papyrus (hereafter DP), discovered in 1962, were partially known, different theories have been proposed as to its author's identity[2] : Stesimbrotus of Thasos according to Burkert ; Euthyphro according to Kahn ; Diagoras of Melos according to Janko[3]. These hypotheses have not gained many followers[4]. However, they should in no way be considered frustrated or useless attempts. Quite the contrary, they have the great merit of delineating the philosophical and religious context in which the anonymous author elaborated his theories, and with which other figures and schools of thought hold affinities. Following this line, this paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of the personality and intentions of the author of the DP by looking into several significant parallels between the latter and the character of Tiresias in Euripides' *Bacchae*, who appears to reflect the attitudes and innovative methods of certain professionals of the sacred in late fifth-century Athens. While Tiresias' views on religion have often been compared with contemporary sophistic theories, they have never been used by specialists in the DP to shed light on the interpretative methods of the commentator.

The rationalistic discourse of Tiresias in Euripides' *Bacchae* (286–301)

Most of the text preserved on the DP, from column VIII to the end (XXVI), consists of the philosophical commentary of a poem with a theogonic theme attributed to Orpheus. The anonymous commentator believes that in the poem, besides the literal meaning, there is a profound meaning. When Orpheus talks about the different gods that succeed each other in power (Uranus, Cronus and Zeus), he is really recounting allegorically, through enigmas (VII, 5–7), the physical formation of the universe, in which diverse natural elements and forces were involved.

One of the commentator's procedures for finding the hidden sense of Orpheus' words is etymological analysis[5]. A divine name or key term can be understood if someone qualified discovers what word(s) it derives from ; in this way, it is possible to explain its true meaning or ἐτυμολογία. Thus, the commentator interprets Κρόνος as a derivative of κρού-

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[2] For several years, researchers have worked with the unauthorized edition which appeared in *ZPE* 47 (1982) : see Anonymous (1982). In 1997, Tsantsanoglou published the text of the first six columns with no critical apparatus. The editions and studies of Janko (2002), Jourdan (2003) and Betegh (2004), and the papers included in Laks / Most (1997) were a great advance. The first official edition is that of Kouremenos / Parássoglou / Tsantsanoglou (2006). Bernabé's edition of 2007, 183–269 is more complete thanks to its full *apparatus criticus* and *loci paralleli*. For a comprehensive bibliography, see Bernabé (2007) 174–181.

[3] See Burkert (1986) ; Kahn (1997) ; Janko (1997), (2001), (2002) and (2002–2003), the most elaborate theory. A summary and assessment of these proposals can be found in Funghi (1997) 36 ; Janko (1997) 70–87 ; Betegh (2004) 64.

[4] Janko (1997) points out the weak points of Burkert's proposal and of other possibilities. In turn, Betegh (2004) 373–380 criticizes Janko's theory.

[5] On the etymological method in the DP, see Casadesús (2001). On its relationship with Plato's *Cratylus*, see Baxter (1992) 97–107, Casadesús (2000) and Anceschi (2007), with bibliography. Many parallels between the etymology in the papyrus and in Stoicism are pointed out by Casadesús (2010) 210–216. Etymological explanations were greatly cultivated by the Orphics : see Casadesús (1997) and Bernabé (2008).

ειν and of νοῦc (XIV, 7), Δημήτηρ as Γῆ Μήτηρ (XXII, 9–10), and Δηιώ as proceeding from ἐδηιώθη (XXII, 12–13)[6].

In Euripides' *Bacchae*, there is a passage which, in this respect, is reminiscent of the DP[7]. In order to remove certain grotesque elements from the myth of Dionysus, which would be difficult to accept from a rationalistic viewpoint, the seer Tiresias offers a series of etymological interpretations of several key terms. Let us consider the earlier context. In the first episode of the tragedy, Tiresias comes to the palace of Cadmus in Thebes to pick up the latter, leave with him and celebrate the god Dionysus. They are both wearing the typical dress of the Bacchae : the thyrsus, the deerskin and the ivy crown (176–177). King Pentheus soon appears on the scene, declaring his hostility towards Dionysus because of the social risk he represents, since he has caused many women to abandon their homes (215–225). He also announces that he will arrest all the other maenads and behead Dionysus, who is no more than a trickster (226–241). He refers to the myth of his birth from Zeus' thigh and he considers it a lie : he was actually burnt to death by the god's thunderbolt along with his mother and punished for having invented her marriage to the supreme god (242–247). Then, seeing the two old men dressed as Bacchae, he refers to their ridiculous appearance and their folly, and ends up declaring the Bacchic rites to be perverse and unhealthy (248–262).

Tiresias replies to Pentheus with a skilfully constructed speech which is both a rebuttal and a defence. In it, he discusses the importance of the god whom Pentheus is mocking[8]. Demeter is the earth, which feeds men with fruit, and Dionysus is the inventor of wine, which gave men their liquid sustenance. Far from stirring and arousing sexual desire as Pentheus suggests (221–225), wine relieves pain and makes us forget our problems (280–283). Dionysus is also the wine itself, which is offered to the gods in libation and is thus an instrument of good (284–285). He continues with a curious story about the birth of the god from Zeus' thigh (286–301)[9] :

καὶ καταγελᾷc νιν, ὡc ἐνερράφη Διὸc
μηρῷ ; διδάξω c' ὡc καλῶc ἔχει τόδε.
ἐπεί νιν ἥρπαc' ἐκ πυρὸc κεραυνίου
Ζεύc, ἐc δ' Ὄλυμπον βρέφοc ἀνήγαγεν θεόν,
290 Ἥρα νιν ἤθελ' ἐκβαλεῖν ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ
Ζεὺc δ' ἀντεμηχανήcαθ' οἷα δὴ θεόc.
ῥήξαc μέροc τι τοῦ χθόν' ἐγκυκλουμένου
αἰθέροc, ἔδωκε τόνδ' ὅμηρον ἐκτιθεὶc
Διόνυcον Ἥρας νεικέων· χρόνῳ δέ νιν
295 βροτοὶ ῥαφῆναί φαcιν ἐν μηρῷ Διόc,
ὄνομα μεταcτήcαντεc, ὅτι θεᾷ θεὸc
Ἥρᾳ ποθ' ὡμήρευcε, cυνθέντεc λόγον.

[6] In his opinion, the name Rhea probably derived from the verb ῥέω or a compound. For the gap in XXII, 15, Kouremenos, Parássoglou and Tsantsanoglou conjecture [ἐκρεύcαντα]. The commentator then also goes into the etymology of Hera, possibly derived from ἀήρ. Moreover, he believes that Ἀφροδίτη comes from ἀφροδιciάζειν and Ἁρμονία from cυναρμόττω (XXI, 7–12).

[7] Seaford (1996) 175–176, Egli (2003) 141, 144 and Di Benedetto (2004) 26, 100–101 point out the similarities between the two texts.

[8] 273 : ὃν cὺ διαγελᾷc ; 286 : καὶ καταγελᾷc νιν. Euripides is likely to be echoing contemporary criticism and mockery of this myth. Dodds (1960) 107 *ad* 286–297 gives two examples : Polyzalus, an author of ancient comedy, wrote some Διονύcου Γοναί (fr. 6–7 K.-A.) ; Lucian, *Dial. D.* 9, imagines that Hermes does not allow Poseidon to see Zeus because he has just given birth to Dionysus and is indisposed.

[9] Roth (1984) on Tiresias as a seer and intellectual in the *Bacchae* is important. Regarding this passage, see the commentaries of Dodds (1960) 105–112 and Seaford (1996) 174–179 ; also Segal (1982) 292–298, Egli (2003) 136–146, Di Benedetto (2004) 88–93 and Mirto (2010) 11–18.

μάντις δ' ὁ δαίμων ὅδε· τὸ γὰρ βακχεύcιμον
καὶ τὸ μανιῶδες μαντικὴν πολλὴν ἔχει·
ὅταν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἐς τὸ cῶμ' ἔλθῃ πολύς,
λέγειν τὸ μέλλον τοὺς μεμηνότας ποιεῖ.

293 ἔδωκε … ἐκτιθείς Borthwick (ἐκτιθείς iam Verdenius) : ἔθηκε … ἐκδιδούς fere LP (-διδούς P^2 : -διδ*** P), quibus seruatis lacunam post hunc uersum indicauit Murray : ἔcωcε corr. Wilamowitz
295 ῥαφῆναί Pierson : τρ- LP

Tiresias claims that the story of Dionysus sewn into Zeus' thigh is not absurd, but that it makes sense (288 : διδάξω c' ὡς καλῶς ἔχει τόδε). One only has to make a linguistic analysis to find the concealed truth behind the story of the myth. The reference to a thigh as the place of gestation seems strange, so Tiresias deduces it to be the deformation of a different term. He therefore conjectures that originally a ὅμηρος « hostage » took part in the event, a word which over time became deformed into ὁ μηρός. The hostage had to be a *simulacrum* of the god, given to Hera instead of the real Dionysus[10]. This rationalistic explanation, based on a precise knowledge of the language, transforms the myth into a believable episode[11]. At the same time, Euripides also plays with the term μέρος, which designates the part of the ether used to form the image of Dionysus, and which might also have contributed to the introduction of the word μηρός into the story.

This explanation of μηρός can be considered as a « paretymology ». It is not exactly an etymology, but the method is similar, because a word is analysed by using another one with nearly the same sound. There are two other cases in which Tiresias does clearly use etymology. In his interpretation, Demeter is a name for the earth. Implicit is the well-known equivalence Δημήτηρ – Γῆ Μήτηρ, which is also to be found in the DP (XXII, 9–10)[12] : 'Δημήτηρ' [δὲ | ὠνομάcθη ὥcπερ ἡ 'Γῆ Μήτηρ', ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ἓ[ν] ὄ̣νομα· | τὸ αὐτὸ γὰρ ἦν[13]. Moreover, Tiresias relates μανία to μαντική etymologically, when he says : τὸ μανιῶδες μαντικὴν πολλὴν ἔχει (299)[14]. Having recourse to divination, which was a respectable activity, he justifies the frenzy of Dionysus' followers, which was undoubtedly shocking and even unacceptable.

Sophistic elements in Tiresias' speech

In his defence of Dionysus and his myth against the attacks of Pentheus, we have seen that Tiresias uses the rationalistic resource of linguistic and etymological analysis, with which he eliminates the least credible aspects of the myth. Moreover, he points out the benefits that Dionysus and Demeter bring to mankind, since both of them provide dry and wet sustenance : cereal and wine, which relieves man of his hardship. These claims reflect the postulates of Prodicus, who maintained that many entities that were useful to man (such as

[10] A parallel is the image of Helen who went to Troy, made of οὐρανός or αἰθήρ (Eur. *Hel.* 31–35, 582–585). See Pind. *Pyth.* 2, 36–37 and Plat. *Symp.* 179bc for similar mythic stories.

[11] Tiresias' alternative explanation is obviously as unbelievable as the story of the thigh. Euripides is likely to have chosen this rather absurd explanation in order to mock erudite seers of his time, who allegedly behaved like Tiresias. On the humorous elements of the episode, see Roth (1984) 59, n. 3 and Di Benedetto (2004) 322–323. The same exaggerations in etymological practice are satirized by Plato in the *Cratylus*.

[12] On this equivalence, see Eur. *Phoen.* 684–685 : Δαμάτηρ θεά, | πάντων ἄνασσα, πάντων δὲ Γᾶ τροφός. This etymology finally became commonplace, *e.g.* Diod. Sic. 3, 63, 7 ; Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* 9, 189 ; Cic. *Nat. D.* 1, 40 and 2, 67 (see Pease *ad loc.* and Bernabé [2007] 245–247 for a full list of references).

[13] Henrichs (1968) had already observed the parallel between the passage of the *Bacchae* and the DP. The sentence of the Papyrus seems to be an echo of Aesch. *PV* 209–210 : Θέμις | καὶ Γαῖα, πολλῶν ὀνομάτων μορφὴ μία.

[14] The same etymology can also be found in Plat. *Phaedr.* 244c. It is correct, since both words derive from the same root : **men-* / **mon-* / **mn-*. See Chantraine (1968) 665 *s.v.* μάντις.

the sun, the moon, rivers, but also bread, wine, water and fire) were considered gods, and later also those who had invented products such as bread and wine[15]. Just as Prodicus believed Dionysus to represent both wine and its inventor, Tiresias says that the god is « poured out in libation » and is the discoverer of wine (284, 279). At the same time, when the seer assures that Demeter is the earth, he is not just making a play on words, but is trying to find her true nature in her name, which hides a deep truth. In this case, he believes that the last part of the name, -μήτηρ, indicates that she is a mother, and he relates δη- with γῆ, the earth. The consequence of this is that she is not a personal goddess, but the deification of the earth element, since she provides man with sustenance. This is also consistent with Prodicus' teachings.

In addition to these sophistic influences, Tiresias' speech also demonstrates a mastery of rhetoric and a familiarity with concepts and subjects pertaining to presocratic speculation, such as dryness and wetness, or the ether that surrounds the earth, from which the *simulacrum* of Dionysus is formed[16].

It is striking and even disconcerting that such an expert in sacred matters as Tiresias should make use of the theories of a thinker like Prodicus, who was critical of traditional religion, to defend the worship of Dionysus and the validity of his myths, above all when a few verses before he has shown himself to be in favour of maintaining the customs of the homeland (199–203) and has implicitly accused Pentheus of sophistry (269–271). We can find an explanation to this apparent paradox if we bear in mind the person to whom the speech is addressed. Pentheus has declared that he does not believe in the divinity of Dionysus, that his rites are harmful and that the myth of his birth is absurd. This stance brings him in line with the sophists, who doubted the existence of the gods as presented in traditional myths. Being aware of this, Tiresias takes on certain sophistic doctrines in order to convince Pentheus with ideas similar to his own, thereby performing his *captatio benevolentiae*. The kind of religion he presents is a rationalized, refined one, appropriate for an erudite person, not the common people[17]. By attributing ideas pertaining to rationalistic speculation to a seer, Euripides was probably just giving form to a type of character not uncommon in late fifth-century Athens, as discussed below.

Parallels with the Derveni Papyrus

In the DP, a number of parallels can be seen with Tiresias' speech in both general and specific matters. The viewpoints they both share can be summarized in the following points : 1) the myth cannot be rejected or considered absurd because of its grotesque or blasphemous aspects, since these result from an erroneous and superficial interpretation ; 2) in the myth lies a deeper truth, hidden to most, but accessible to religious experts like Tiresias and the author of the papyrus ; 3) one of the methods for unveiling the hidden meaning of the myth is the linguistic analysis of key terms, particularly the etymology of the names of the gods.

The author of the DP and Tiresias are both characterized by their defence of the myth and their desire to eliminate any grotesque aspect. In their opinion, it is worth studying the theogonic poem of Orpheus and accepting the myth about the birth of Dionysus, despite its

[15] Fr. 5 DK, esp. Phld. *De piet. c.* 9, 7 (p. 75 G.) and Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* 9, 18. On Prodicus' theories about the gods, see Henrichs (1975) and (1984). On Prodicus' influence in this passage, see Roth (1984) 59, with n. 1, and Di Benedetto (2004) 338–339.

[16] On mastery of rhetoric, see Dodds (1960) 103 *ad* 266–271 and Roth (1984) 60–61. Lloyd (1964) studies the concepts of dryness and wetness in the presocratic thought. On ether surrounding the earth, see Egli (2003) 140–141.

[17] As Egli (2008) 145 rightly points out, the theories of Prodicus led him to atheism, but in the case of Tiresias, they serve as a basis for a « modern », non-anthropomorphic view of divinity. In this respect, the observation of Dodds (1960) 104 *ad* 274–285 is very significant : « At a later date the Stoics similarly materialized and depersonalized the gods without ceasing to regard them as proper objects of worship. »

extravagant elements and its indecorous description of the gods. Cronus' violent dethronement of his father Uranus or Zeus' incest with his mother are only apparent, as with the story of the gestation of Dionysus in Zeus' thigh. According to the commentator, when Orpheus says that Cronus « did something great » (XIV, 5 = *OF* 10, 1), he is not referring to his seizure of power, but to the fact that the name of the god designates the Noῦc, which makes things clash against each other (XIV, 7 : κρούοντα τὸν Noῦν πρὸc ἄλληλ[α]). With regard to the verse in which Orpheus describes Zeus' desire to join with his mother (XXVI, cf. *OF* 18), the commentator goes to great pains to demonstrate that he means no such thing (XXVI)[18]. In fact, ἑᾶc would not be a possessive, but a form of the adjective ἐύc, of which the commentator offers several examples. Therefore, the verse means that Zeus wishes to join with the « good mother », that is, the earth[19]. Only the ignorant believe it to be « his own mother » (8–9 : οἱ δὲ τὸ {ρ}ῥῆμα οὐ γινώcκοντεc δοκοῦcιν εἶναι | 'μητρὸc ἑαυτοῦ').

Just as Tiresias eliminates the grotesque element of the gestation of Dionysus in Zeus' thigh, the author of Derveni does away with the scandalous parts regarding Cronus' violence against his father or Zeus' incest. Both use a linguistic explanation, which refutes the obvious interpretation pertaining to the common people, and reveals the original meaning[20]. The term ὁ μηρόc which appears in the story is in fact ὅμηροc, just as Κρόνοc hides the words Noῦc and κρούειν and the form ἑᾶc is not from the possessive ἑόc, but from the adjective ἐύc. A superficial reading prevents you from seeing it, but the truth emerges if a religious expert with the necessary training brings it to light. Similarly, in the view of the author of the papyrus and of Tiresias, the name of the goddess Demeter in fact hides the name of the earth : « Demeter was named as if she were the Mother Earth, two names in one » (XXII, 9–10). This common remark shows that it must have been a fairly widespread idea at the time in intellectual circles.

For both the author of Derveni and Tiresias, the truth behind the myth is only accessible to a few initiates, whereas most people are unaware of it. The mythical seer takes on the position of the initiate giving lessons to the layman, in this case Pentheus, and assures him that he will explain the true meaning of the myth he ridicules (287 : διδάξω c' ὡc καλῶc ἔχει τόδε). Likewise, the author of the papyrus claims that the profound meaning of Orpheus' words « is unclear to most, but for those who understand it correctly it is perfectly clear » (XXIII, 1–3 : το[ῖc] μὲν | πολλοῖc ἄδηλόν ἐcτιν, τοῖc δὲ ὀρθῶc γινώcκουcιν | εὔδηλον)[21]. His intention, like that of Tiresias, is to teach it.

It is important to underline the distinction that for the author of Derveni the deep meaning of the poem is there because Orpheus deliberately hid it from lay people, whereas for Tiresias the original meaning was lost due to defective transmission. But both share a similar method to reveal the truth of the myth : etymology or linguistic analysis, with special attention to the names of the gods or aspects related to the latter (such as Zeus' thigh).

[18] On col. XXVI, see Brisson (2009) and (2010a).

[19] 1–2 : 'μη[τρ]ὸc' μέν, ὅτι μήτηρ ὁ Noῦc ἔcτιν τῶν ἄλλωv, | 'ἑᾶc' δέ, ὅτι 'ἀγαθῆc'. « "Mother", because Intellect is the mother of all other things ; "*heas*", because she is good. »

[20] There are more examples of rationalistic explanations of myths in classical literature. Seaford (1996) 176 and Egli (2008) 144 mention two : according to Herodotus (1, 122), Cyrus was raised by the wife of a cowherd called Cyno. On the basis of the name, the parents disseminated the news that he had been fed by a bitch, changing the name from Κυνώ to κύων (παραλαβόντεc τὸ ὄνομα τοῦτο ; see Eur. *Bacch.* 296 : ὄνομα μεταcτήcαντεc) ; as in Tiresias' speech, the simple change of one term for another gave rise to a whole legend. Plato (*Phaedr.* 229cd) points out that sages sometimes explain myths if they are not satisfied with the form transmitted ; thus Socrates suggests that Orythia was not abducted by the god Boreas, but blown down by the wind of the same name.

[21] On the opposition between lay people and initiates in the papyrus, see Brisson (2010b).

Another parallel between the two texts is that, according to Tiresias, the Dionysus whom Zeus handed over to Hera was no more than ether, rather like the idea of the author of Derveni that in Orpheus' poem Zeus is another way of referring to the air[22].

Finally, we can point out an interesting similarity between the passage from Euripides and the papyrus. Pentheus ends his attacks by saying that, since wine is given out to the women in Dionysus' rituals, nothing good can be said of the latter (262 : οὐχ ὑγιὲς οὐδὲν ἔτι λέγω τῶν ὀργίων). The adjective he uses is ὑγιές, « healthy », referring to morality, but probably also to mental health. Anyway, before the commentator of Derveni quotes and interprets the poem, in col. VII he first makes an assessment of Orpheus' *modus operandi*. In his opinion, following the editors' restoration, the mythical poet « pronounces a healthy hymn and legitimate things » (VII, 2 : . . ὕ]μνον̣ [ὑγ]ι̣ῆ καὶ θεμ[ι]τ̣ὰ λέγο[ντα). His speech is neither absurd nor illegitimate, that is to say, blasphemous (for attributing violent and immoral conducts to the gods), because its meaning is not literal (4–5 : ἔστι δὲ ξ[ένη τις ἡ] πόησι̣ς | κ]α̣ὶ ἀνθρώ[ποις] αἰνι̣[γμ]ατώδης).

The character of Tiresias and of the author of the Derveni Papyrus

Tiresias is a seer and expert in sacred matters, and the author of Derveni would appear to be one too, since he takes the liberty of giving his opinion about the meaning of the initiation rites (col. VI) and criticizes the celebrants who do not instruct the initiates (XX). Euripides probably wished to represent in the seer a commonplace figure in the Athens of his time, the erudite priest or seer, a group of which the commentator of Derveni would also have formed part.

We have record of a figure with similar characteristics from the late fifth century, the seer Euthyphro, who gives his name to one of Plato's dialogues and also appears in the *Cratylus*[23]. Not in vain did Kahn defend the possibility of Euthyphro being the author of the DP[24]. As far as we know, Euthyphro was a professional of the sacred who at the same time made use of rationalistic procedures, specifically the etymological explanation of the names of the gods (Plat. *Crat.* 396d). There is another interesting parallel with Euripides' Tiresias : just as Pentheus mocks his rites and beliefs, in the Platonic dialogue that bears his name, Euthyphro complains that in the Assembly, when he spoke of divine matters and predicted the future, he was subject to mockery (Plat. *Euthyphr.* 3c : ἐμοῦ (…) κατα-γελῶσιν ὡς μαινομένου)[25]. Perhaps his use of etymology was a way of defending himself from these attacks and giving his activities a more scientific and modern appearance, as we have pointed out in the passage from the *Bacchae*[26].

Bearing in mind the similarity between the character of Tiresias and the commentator of Derveni, we can guess what the purpose of the latter was and to whom he was aiming his allegorical writing full of physical explanations[27]. Given that Tiresias addresses his rationalistic speech to the incredulous Pentheus, whom he attempts to refute and convince, we may think that the anonymous author was intending to save the Orphic poem (and the

[22] XVII, 4–7. Another parallel is offered by Metrodorus of Lampsacus, disciple of Anaxagoras, who, continuing with the allegorical explanation of the Homeric poems beginning with Theagenes of Rhegium, interpreted Agamemnon as ether (fr. 61 A 2, 3 and 4 DK = Hsch. α 299).

[23] Plat. *Crat.* 396d, 399a, 400a, 407d, 409d and 428c. Roth (1984) 64–65 has already pointed out the parallels between Tiresias and Euthyphro.

[24] See Kahn (1997).

[25] Pentheus describes Tiresias clothed in Bacchic dress as πολὺν γέλων (250). The seer points out that the tyrant mocks Dionysus : οὗτος δ' ὁ δαίμων ὁ νέος, ὃν σὺ διαγελᾷς (272), καὶ καταγελᾷς νιν (286).

[26] For a treatment of other similar figures, such as Antiphon the sophist and Philochorus, see Roth (1984) 65–68. Obbink (1994) defends that Philochorus (FGrHist 328 F 185), as mentioned by Philodemus, quoted the same work preserved in the Derveni Papyrus, XXII, 11–12.

[27] On the intentions of the author of the papyrus, see Kouremenos / Parássoglou / Tsantsanoglou (2006) 45–58, with a compendium of the main positions of other scholars.

mysteries in which it was read) from the accusations of folly and immorality proceeding, perhaps, from erudite contemporaries or those influenced by sophistry. It may also have been a treatise with a more restricted circulation, aimed at initiators, whom he wished to provide with arguments to refute possible rationalistic accusations against their rites and the poems used in them. At all events, the portrait that Euripides makes of Tiresias in the *Bacchae*, a probable reflection of the priests of the late fifth century with similar ideas, offers important clues for understanding better the personality of the mysterious author of the DP.

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