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EXTRA-ORDINARY PEOPLE: *MYSTAI* AND *MAGOI*, MAGICIANS AND ORPHICS IN THE DERVENI PAPYRUS

RADCLIFFE G. EDMONDS III

THE SPECTACULAR DISCOVERY of the Derveni papyrus over forty years ago has provided scholars with a number of puzzles, not the least of which is to figure out who or even what kind of a person the author of the papyrus was. While a variety of names have been mooted, based mostly on the similarities of the author's physical theories to those of other Presocratic thinkers,[1] the recent publication of the first seven columns of the papyrus has focused attention on the Derveni author as a religious figure, a ritual specialist concerned not just with a text of Orpheus but with the performance of sacrifices and the consultation of oracles.[2]

How then shall we understand the Derveni author? As a self-professed expert on the text of Orpheus, the Derveni author has been called an Orphic, but as an expert on rituals performed by the *magoi*, he might just as well be called a magician. In one of the columns of the fragmentary papyrus preceding his references to Orpheus, the Derveni author compares the ritual acts

I would like to thank Irene Polinskaya for setting up the APA panel on models of Greek religion out of which this paper originated. I would also like to thank the editors at *CP* for all their assistance and Jan Bremmer, Gabor Betegh, Chris Faraone, and Alberto Bernabé for their comments, suggestions, and critiques, although I need scarcely add that any infelicities, obscurities, or outright errors are wholly the products of my own ignorance, carelessness, or obstinacy.

1. Betegh (2004) provides the most detailed examination of the Derveni author's theories, although he sensibly does not propose a particular name known from our highly fragmentary list of Presocratic thinkers. Burkert (1968 and 1970) first raised the issue of the Derveni author's philosophical theories, and much scholarship has followed in his wake. Proposed authors for the papyrus include Stesimbrotus (Burkert 1986), Metrodorus of Lampsacus (Ricciardi Apicella 1980), Epigenes (Edwards 1991, first suggested by Kapsomenos [1964–65]), the Euthyphro known from the Platonic dialogues (Kahn 1973, 1986, 1997), Diogenes of Apollonia (Janko 1997) or Diagoras of Melos (Janko 1997 and 2001). As Kouremenos (2006, 59) notes, "attempting to identify the Derveni author in the light of the available evidence seems to be an exercise of rather low epistemic value."

2. The definitive publication of the entire papyrus, with photographs, has finally come out, more than forty years after the original discovery (Kouremenos et al. 2006), but the controversies over the Derveni author and his text have hardly been resolved. Tsantsanoglou published a tentative edition of the first seven columns in Laks and Most 1997, greatly increasing the knowledge of the first columns in which ritual matters are discussed. Betegh 2004 is the most recent of the interim texts (cf. Anonymous 1982, Janko 2002), which draws not only on the previous ones, but also on the readings of the papyrus in Bernabé 2004b, which were vetted by Tsantsanoglou. For the ritual specialist, cf. the important model in Burkert 1982. The parallel of the priests and priestesses in Plato's *Meno* 81b (= frag. 666 Bernabé), who make a business of providing accounts of the sacred works they perform, has often been adduced, e.g., Kahn 1997, Bernabé 2002a. For Orphica, wherever possible I give the numeration for both Kern 1922 (either fragment, OF, or testimonia, OT), as well as the fragment number from Bernabé 2004b.

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of the *mystai* to those of the *magoi*, "*Mystai* make the preliminary sacrifices to the Eumenides, in the same way as the *magoi*."[3] Scholars have produced widely varying answers, however, on what the Derveni author means here by the terms *mystai* and *magoi*, from Eleusinian initiates to Orphic devotees, from Persian priests to itinerant charlatans. Such disagreement stems not merely from the difficulty of the Derveni text, but from problems inherent in the modern scholarly categories of Orphism and magic. The Derveni papyrus thus provides an opportunity for a re-examination of both ancient and modern categories, magic and Orphism as well as *mystai* and *magoi*. Through his text, the Derveni author distinguishes himself from the *magoi* but portrays himself in terms that would make his contemporaries identify him as an Orphic, that is, the kind of person associated with Orpheus and his texts.[4] The Derveni author's ways of defining himself and his religious authority in contrast to his rivals show how the ancient categories were articulated and point up the flaws in the modern constructions of magic and Orphism, particularly those that take as central particular doctrines about the nature of the soul or of the gods. A better understanding of the nature and interrelation of the ancient and modern categories will help us better to comprehend the evidence, not just from the Derveni papyrus, but from the many sources for ancient Greek religion.

CONSTRUCTING RELIGION

"Religion," J. Z. Smith provocatively notes, "is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization."[5] The history of scholarship on the religious phenomena of the ancient world labeled "Orphism" and "magic" certainly seems to bear out this charge, since the fabrication of these two categories owes much to prejudices and concerns of the scholars of religion and anthropology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Smith's "acts of comparison and generalization," however, are performed not only by modern scholars, but also by ancient thinkers, whose motivations are often as prejudiced as those of modern scholars. Their prejudices, however, are different from those of modern scholars and, as such, constitute in and of themselves important data for the understanding of Greek religious ideas. If "religion" is a construct that varies from the perspective of the one constructing the category and the circumstances of the construction, we, as modern scholars, can reconstruct the religious ideas of the ancient Greeks by paying close attention to the generalizations and comparisons made by

3. μύσται Εὐμεγίσι προθύουσι κ[ατὰ τὰ] αὐτὰ μᾴγοις· (col. 6.8–9). I use the text and translation from Betegh 2004, unless otherwise noted. Here I have transliterated *mystai* and *magoi* instead of translating them as initiates and magi. The new text of Kouremenos et al. 2006 differs in minor ways from Betegh's in the passages I quote, but none of the differences seem significant for my arguments here.

4. The term *orphikoi* for Orphics in this sense does not appear in early evidence, unless it is restored in the one bone tablet from Olbia (463B), but certain persons are nonetheless associated with Orpheus and *orphika* with periphrases such as the Platonic οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα (*Cra.* 400c = OF 8 = 430iB).

5. J. Z. Smith 1982, xi.

ancient thinkers and the circumstances in which they made them. The recent attempts of scholars to define magic by such criteria can be extended and applied also to Orphism to reconstruct more clearly these categories of abnormal religious activity as they were constructed by the ancient Greeks.

Not only the Derveni Papyrus, but indeed much of the evidence labeled "Orphic" or "magic" by modern scholars can, when viewed from this perspective, provide information about the ways the ancient Greeks constructed their ideas of religion, normal and abnormal. In the absence of any sort of orthodoxy or even orthopraxy in Greek religion, defining "normal" religion is problematic.[6] Nevertheless, even if there was no single norm laid down and enforced by a central religious authority, the ancient Greeks had ideas of what normal religious behavior was and what was abnormal, and we can find evidence for these norms in the ancient descriptions and comparisons of religious behavior. In such a context, the act of comparison is never neutral but always normative, intended to show that one of the terms is somehow better than the other.[7] The particular frame of reference for comparison in any given description of Greek religion is selected to suit the agenda of the one making the comparison. For example, Herodotus' Panhellenic model, Pausanias' description of the practices of different poleis, or even Demosthenes' individualized depiction of the religious behavior of Aischines' mother all present an image of Greek religion, with varying scopes, from varying perspectives, and with different points in mind. Whereas Pausanias explains the details of the cult practice of particular poleis, drawing his contrasts between different city-states, Herodotus tends to lump the practices of the Greeks together in contrast to the religious customs of the non-Greek peoples he is discussing.[8] Demosthenes makes it clear that the way Aischines' mother practices religion is not up to the standards that the Athenian people (and their representatives on the Athenian jury) expect of respectable citizens.[9] These "acts of comparison and generalization" by ancient thinkers each produce a definition of Greek religion suited to the circumstances.

In each comparison, an implicit or explicit norm is contrasted with an abnormality, the ordinary with the extra-ordinary. Normality, however, is

6. Gordon (1999) puts forth a Weberian model of a continuum between ideal poles of fully normative and wholly illicit religious behavior or knowledge: "Legitimate religious knowledge in antiquity can roughly be defined in terms of performance, political-social location, objectivity, and ends. In relation to each, we can posit a normatively ideal form from which actual forms diverge in greater or lesser degree: the ideal form constructs the positive pole of a notional continuum of legitimacy whose opposite pole is constitituted by fully illegitimate religious knowledge. . . . The value of conceptualizing a continuum of possible values between fully normative and wholly illicit is that, while allowing the negative pole to be wholly imaginary, it leaves plenty of room for religious activity which for one reason or another is viewed askance" (191–92).

7. As J. Z. Smith (1987, 41) notes, no dichotomy is simply neutral; the choice is always valorized: "For there is a specious symmetry to language of the dual—the implication of equality, balance, and reciprocity. And yet, this is clearly not the case. *Up* and *down*, *front* and *back*, *right* and *left*, are almost never dualities of equivalence; they are hierarchically ranked in relations of superordination and subordination, with radically different valences."

8. Contrast, for example, Pausanias' description of particular Dionysiac rites in, e.g., Sikyon (2.7.5–6), with Herodotus' story of the Scythian king Scyles, who was rejected by his people for taking part in Greek Dionysiac rites (4.78–79).

9. Demosthenes 18.259–60; cf. 19.281 (577i and iv B) with reference to the city's prosecution of a similar priestess.

double-edged; it can be either better or worse than the abnormal. Not only can the margins be defined by those in the center who want to exclude or devalue others, but abnormal behavior can be self-defined by those who wish to devalue the norm in contrast to their own superior behavior. In either case, a picture of "normal religion" is constructed. Just as we can distinguish positive extra-ordinary status from negative abnormality, so too we can distinguish self-definitions of special status from the constructions by others in these categories of abnormal practice. While the accusations of magic hurled at Teiresias or Apuleius have proved fruitful sources for the understanding of ancient definitions of magic, it is also important to note the positive self-definitions of Empedokles or the Greek Magical Papyri. Likewise, the critiques of Theophrastus, Plato, or Euripides' Theseus against those who look to Orpheus must be weighed with the claims on the so-called Orphic gold tablets or in Euripides' *Cretans*. These ancient constructs, however, both positive and negative, differ significantly from modern constructs of "magic" and "Orphism." The double nature of these extraordinary categories can help make sense of the curious constellation of miracle and charlatanry, of purity and impiety, that appear in the ancient evidence for "magic" and "Orphism." I briefly examine the modern scholarly construction, first of Orphism, then of magic, before exploring ways in which the ancient categories of magic and of Orphism might be reconstructed. I then return to the Derveni papyrus to show how these reconstructions of the ancient categories can provide insight into the Derveni author and his religious context.

ORPHISM: THE MODERN CONSTRUCT

The modern construction of ancient Orphism, as it is still codified in the reference sources, basic textbooks, and collections of Orphic fragments, owes much to the scholarly controversies in the last century over the origins of Christianity.[10] Orphism was often cast as an authentically religious movement, to be compared with the otherwise formalistic and ritual practices of Greek religion.[11] As J. Z. Smith has pointed out, the categories at work here that define authentic religion are the Protestant or anticlerical critiques of the formal, hierarchical, and ritualized nature of Catholicism.[12] The modern

10. Orphism was often seen as paving the way for the true religion of Christianity (or, alternatively, as showing that Christianity offered nothing really new as a religion). Of the Orphics, Guthrie claims, "They far outstripped that social change in promulgating a religious theory, that of the brotherhood of mankind, which did not find even philosophical expression until the advent of the Stoics, and for its popular expression had to wait until the days of Christianity." However, "the gospel which they [the Orphics] preached with such enthusiasm and confidence was a cry in the wilderness, because it was a gospel for which the age was not yet ready" (1952, 235 and 238).

11. Cf., e.g., Watmough 1934, 50; Morford and Lenardon 1985, 291.

12. Smith 1990, 43. Watmough (1934, 56–57) even makes explicit the analogy that holds that Orphism is to "Homeric" religion (taken as the normal religion of the Greeks) as Protestantism is to Catholicism: "In the ancient world we have the religion of Homer, entirely concerned with sacrifice and ritual, entirely dominated by the note of 'Confiteor'—the confession of vows duly performed: and over against it the religion of 'Orpheus,' which emphasised the relation of the individual soul with God, for authority turning not to priests but scriptures. In the more modern world we have the mediaeval Church, a picturesque and colourful religious system based on sacerdotalism and ecclesiolatry: over against it the Protestant reformers with their 'justification by faith' and bibliolatrous attitude to the canonical writings."

category of Orphism was indeed fabricated on the model of Protestant Christianity, complete with the direct revelation from the founding divine figure, an emphasis on holy scripture, and a concern with "real" theological issues—creation, eschatology, and, most importantly, soteriology. In this model, Orpheus himself is the founding prophet, not without honor in Greece except in his own country of Thrace, where he is torn apart by local maenads. Plato's hubbub of books, the collections of pseudepigraphic poetry attributed to the mythical poet, become, in this model, the sacred scriptures, the Bible of the Orphics.[13] These scriptures are often imagined to contain, like the Christian Bible, complete and comprehensive accounts of doctrinally important matters: cosmogony and anthropogony, as well as eschatology.[14] The supposed myth, fabricated at the end of the nineteenth century, of the death and resurrection of Zagreus and the creation of humankind from the ashes of his Titanic murderers provides not only a dying and rising divine figure parallel to Christ but also a doctrine of original sin.[15] In this modern construction, all of these features, familiar from Protestant Christianity, show Orphism to be a real, doctrinal religion that could provide an authentic basis for a way of life, in contrast to the mechanical, ceremonial rituals and meaningless myths of traditional Greek religion.[16]

While the worst excesses of this construct remain only in outdated reference manuals and undergraduate textbooks, a number of the premises of this model persist even in the studies of scholars who accept the criticisms of individual elements. Soteriological elements or non-Homeric eschatologies in Greek religion are still often associated with Orphism or vague "Orphic influence," and scholars are reluctant to abandon the idea of a special connection between Orphism and sacred texts. The coherence of the modern construct of Orphism, the familiarity of its features, make scholars reluctant to abandon the model as a whole, even while they reject many of the elements.[17]

Martin West, for example, despite his admission that the Orphic poems had no doctrinal criterion that makes them Orphic, nevertheless attempts to reconstruct the Orphic theogonies with the assumption that the fragmentary or lost cosmogonies must be complete accounts from the creation of the universe to anthropogony, on the model of Hesiod's *Theogony* or perhaps

13. "Without Orphism there was no dogma in these matters [about the afterlife]. The Orphic had his *dogmata* set and hardened in the mould of a mass of religious poetry" (Guthrie 1952, 153; cf. also, e.g., 159, 202, 246, 287).

14. Cf., e.g., Rohde 1925, 338; Macchioro 1930, 129.

15. Rohde 1925, 338, 341; Macchioro 1930, 75–77; Morford and Lenardon 1985, 217–18. For the invention of this idea in the nineteenth century, see Edmonds 1999, 2004a, chap. 2.

16. Guthrie 1952, 84; Nilsson 1935, 224–25. Harrison ([1922] 1991) presents an interesting contrast to those scholars who use Orphism with an anticlerical critique, since she compares the dynamic and vibrant ancient Greek religion with the barren and dry Orphic movement. The categories are the same, but the evaluation is opposite.

17. Cf. Dodds 1951, 156. The strength of the collection of evidence comes from the fact that it fits into the familiar paradigm. See, e.g., Bianchi 1978; Bremmer 1999b, 2004; and Graf 1974, 1991, 1993, 2000. Some of the essays in Brisson 1995 begin to move beyond the older construct; see also now Calame 2002, 2006.

the Biblical Genesis.[18] Why must the theogonies be complete? West never argues this point, but simply assumes that even a poem that contains only a portion of a theogonic narrative, such as the Derveni Orphic text, must be an abbreviation of a hypothetical, complete narrative. Other scholars supply the reasoning. Only a complete creation-to-anthropogony narrative could provide the theological basis for an Orphic life; only a narrative that contained accounts not only of the creation of the world but the creation of mankind and the afterlife of the soul could justify the doctrines about the soul that were central to Orphism.[19] Scholars such as Bernabé argue that certain doctrines of the soul provide the essential nucleus of Orphism: the duality of body and soul, the original sin of the Titans' murder of Dionysos, which causes the soul to have to undergo transmigrations until it has expiated the offense, and the final return of the soul to the level of divinity.[20] Without such a generally recognizable nucleus, Bernabé claims, the ancient classification of texts or rites as Orphic would make no sense; doctrines of cosmogony, eschatology, and soteriology are the essence of the definition of Orphism, now that the earlier arguments for a coherent social entity, an Orphic church, have been dismantled.[21] Whereas West preserves scriptural texts without insisting on doctrines, Bernabé concedes that Orphic texts like the Derveni theogony may not have been comprehensive narratives, but insists that Orphism can be defined by its doctrines.[22]

18. "It is a fallacy to suppose that all 'Orphic' poems and rituals are related to each other or that they are to be interpreted as different manifestations of a single religious movement. . . . There was no doctrinal criterion for ascription to Orpheus, and no copyright restriction. It was a device for conferring antiquity and authority upon a text that stood in need of them" (West 1983, 3).

19. Thus, e.g., Parker 1995, 495: "It also explains why the Orphic theogony, in contrast for instance to Hesiod's, could be deployed in a context of initiation and mysteries. This is why it has been seen as the Orphic 'arch-myth': it founds Orphism's claim to be a religion of salvation, a religion which, by treating our present condition as a consequence of guilt, offers the hope that if we can efface that guilt we can accede to a condition that is altogether superior. Indeed, the Orphic doctrine that the body is a prison-house or place of punishment is incoherent unless a primal crime is identified, for which mankind is now being made to pay. It will not do to say that individuals are expiating their crimes in past existences, or their ancestors' as this leads to an eternal regress: for why had they or their ancestors been consigned to the prison-house of past incarnations?" See, too, Guthrie 1952, 84: "There is no Chronos in Hesiod, none of the curious second beginning of all things within the body of Zeus, above all none of the story of Dionysos and the Titans. From this it follows that the human interest with which the Orphic poem ends is entirely lacking in Hesiod, and his theogony is divorced from ideas of good and evil. . . . In short, the fundamental difference between the two systems lies here: the one could never be made the doctrinal basis of a religious life; the other both could be and in fact was"; and see, too, Nilsson 1935, 225: "Beginning with Chaos and ending with the creation of man the cosmogony is rounded off into a systematic whole which has *not only a mythical but also a religious meaning*. Its final aim is not to relate tales of the world and of the gods, but to explain the composite nature of man and his fate" (my emphasis).

20. "El creyente órfico busca la salvación individual, dentro de un marco de referencia en que son puntos centrales: el dualismo alma-cuerpo, la existencia de un pecado antecedente, y el ciclo de trasmigraciones, hasta que el alma consigue unirse con la divinidad" (Bernabé 1998, 172; cf. id. 1997, 39; 2004a, 208–9).

21. "Debemos denunciar la falacia de un argumento reiteradamente expresado: que no existe un orfismo como moviemento religioso, sino sólo libros atribuidos a Orfeo. Basta con preguntarse cuál es el motivo de que alguien atribuya un libro a Orfeo para descubrir que hay un punto referencia, un núcleo de pensamiento en el que cada escritor se integra o no. El orfismo es un ideología, y atribuirse una obra órfica es el resultado de haber optado previamente por una forma de pensar en materia de religíon" (Bernabé 1997, 38).

22. "Il n'aurait pas de prétention à la systématisation, comme la théogonie d'Hésiode, et ce ne serait pas un texte long" (Bernabé 2002a, 94–95). The eighty or so verses estimated by Tsantsanoglou (1997) make the Orphic poem seem closer in genre to the *Homeric Hymns* than to Hesiod's epics.

The textual nature of Orphism, the "bibliolatry" that was one of Watmough's reasons to identify Orphism with Protestantism, is given new resonance in Detienne's influential conception of the writing of Orpheus.[23] For Detienne, Plato's hubbub of books associated with Orpheus (and other references to texts by Orpheus) indicates a peculiarly Orphic attitude toward written text—Orphism as textual orientation. To the supposed Orphic reliance on text over traditional oral myth corresponds a religious attitude that rejects the traditional myths in favor of a truth derived from the exegesis of the particular words of Orpheus in his texts.[24] Exegetical writing, like that of the Derveni author, and pseudepigraphic writing in Orpheus' name become for Detienne the supreme Orphic religious activities.[25] Just as in the older Orphism-as-Protestantism model, ritual practices are devalued in contrast to scriptural exegesis and understanding.

Although the modern construct of Orphism no longer openly postulates an Orphic church, with organized clergy and worshippers, traces of the Protestant paradigm remain in the emphasis on Orphic scriptures and the essential nucleus of soteriological doctrines.[26] The critical work of sceptics such as Wilamowitz and Linforth, however, merely destabilized the certainties of the older model; it did not succeed in providing a new model for understanding ancient Orphism. Burkert's model of Orphics as marginal and itinerant religious craftsmen opens such a possibility, but much work

23. Watmough 1934, 57. Detienne's *The Writing of Orpheus* (2003) is a revised version, with a somewhat different selection of essays, of *L'écriture d'Orphée* (1989); see my review (Edmonds 2004b).

24. "The philosophical commentary, stemming directly from the philosophy of Anaxagoras and the operations of separation and differentiation, aims to show that what Orpheus thinks and says is always correct and that the meaning of words consciously adopted by the founder has existed ever since the time when things were separated out so as to form the world and all its parts. The words sung by Orpheus are charged with cosmic truths" (Detienne 2003, 154).

25. "The discovery of the Derveni papyrus, an Orphic book of Plato's day, indicates clearly enough that the writing of Orpheus is an open-ended text. His speech continues through exegesis—that is, through the commentaries that it prompts educated initiates to write. The papyrus found at Derveni is a text of philosophical hermeneutics, which refers to the system of Anaxagoras and its ideas of separation and differentiation. Its spirited exegesis sets out to show that what Orpheus thinks and says is always correct and that the meaning of words that Orpheus deliberately uses to express the world has existed ever since the time when things were separated out, giving birth to the world and all its parts. The song of Orpheus generates interpretations, gives rise to exegetic constructions that become or are an integral part of the Orphic discourse. This is polyphonic writing, a book with several voices. . . . Orphism thus involves a choice of writing, and an impulse to produce a plural book, an impulse that runs as deep as others' renunciations of the world and of the political and religious values of the city. For the kind of salvation that is cultivated amid circles of the purified and intellectuals can also be achieved through literature. It can be won through writing that tells of Orpheus' triumph over death and oblivion. The literate initiates of Orphism became the champions of books but at the same time rejected the world, setting up for themselves a secret library that revolved around Orpheus' unique voice. . . . In the space of Orpheus and the writing of his disciples, the sole purpose of the eschatological vocation that prompts them to write is knowledge, real knowledge of the genesis of the gods and of the world, knowledge that extends to the extreme isolation of the individual" (Detienne 2003, 135–36). As I have noted in my review (Edmonds 2004b), Detienne here seems to recreate the Orphics in his own postmodern and existential image (Edmonds 2004b).

26. Cf. Dodds' wry comments on the state of Orphic scholarship in his day (1951, 170 n. 88): "I cannot help suspecting that 'the historic Orphic Church,' as it appears, e.g., in Toynbee's *Study of History*, V. 84ff., will one day be quoted as a classic example of the kind of historical mirage which arises when men unknowingly project their own preoccupations into the distant past."

remains to be done if it is to be taken seriously as a way of understanding the evidence.[27]

MAGIC: THE MODERN CONSTRUCT

In turning to examine the modern construction of ancient magic, Frazer is, of course, the name to conjure with, and I can do no more than summarize some of the critiques that have been made of his categories for understanding magic, religion, and science.[28] In the definitions of magic employed by Frazer and those who followed in his wake, magic is characterized, in contrast to religion, by immediate and individual goals, a manipulative and coercive attitude toward the powers invoked, and an instrumental and mechanical type of action.[29] Once again, the premises of the Protestant critique of Catholic ritualism underlie not only the category of mechanical and instrumental action but also the characterization of such ritual action as essentially coercive rather than piously supplicative and as concerned with personal and this-worldly ends instead of properly soteriological religious concerns. Coupled with Frazer's evolutionary schema, the label "magic" becomes a way to mark as primitive and defective elements within the Christian religious tradition as well as the religions of others in contrast with the standard of modern, enlightened (Protestant) Christianity.[30]

These Frazerian (and earlier) premises often lurk, explicitly or implicitly, behind classifications of Greek religious phenomena, but more work has been done, by a variety of recent scholars, to move beyond this flawed modern construct of magic, than has been the case for Orphism.[31] While Versnel has

27. Burkert (1982) contrasts the organized religious group of the Pythagoreans with the religious craft of the Orphics, and he discusses the idea of the itinerant religious craftsmen further in Burkert 1983 and 1999. Burkert's model, however, has not been sufficiently developed to replace the older paradigm in understanding the evidence for Orphica; I hope to begin that work below in this article and to develop it at length in future work. Burkert summarizes his idea of the Orphics in Burkert 1998, 393: "Die Realität, die hinter diesen Texten steht, läßt sich mit hinlänglicher Sicherheit fassen. Nichts spricht für eine bakchische oder orphische 'Kirche' mit Klerus und Dogma. Es handelt sich um wandernde Reinigungspriester, καθαρταί, τελεσταί, die ihren Klienten durch Weihirituale 'Lösung' aus allerlei Not und Ängsten bieten, einschließlich der Angst vor dem Tod und vor Jenseitsstrafen."

28. As Gordon (1999, 161) points out, "The most urgent current academic debate about magic is whether the Frazerian ghost can be exorcized without embracing some more or less objectionable form of cultural relativism."

29. Luck 2000, 204; Dickie 2001, 26; Betegh (2004, 357–59) reverts to these categories in discussing the relation of the Derveni author to magic; cf. the critiques of the categories in Versnel 1991b.

30. The contrast of magic and science is more of a modern issue, since science becomes the dominant discourse in modern society, and magic becomes differentiated from it as an abnormal way of explaining or manipulating the cosmos. In the ancient world, the dispute between "scientists" and "magicians" is a critique from the margins by certain *physikoi* who wish to distinguish their methods from others (see pp. 30–31 and nn. 64–66 below on critiques from the margin).

31. The translation of the magical papyri (Betz 1986) by the team of scholars under the direction of Betz set off a wave of recent scholarship. I would note especially the contributions of Graf (especially 1997 and 2002); Versnel (especially 1991a and 1991b); Phillips (especially 1986 and 1991); J. Z. Smith (especially 1978, 1995, and above all 2003); Bremmer (1999a and 2002); and Gordon (especially 1987 and 1999). Johnston (2003) surveys the recent work and notes the fatigue with theorizing that has set in as a reaction. Nevertheless, she concludes that attempting to refine the definition of magic is both appealing and necessary: "Taking a crack at defining 'magic'—that most provocative of chimaeras—is simply irresistible; we should

challenged the usefulness and, indeed, even the possibility of moving from a modern, etic (i.e., from an outside perspective), system of classification toward an ancient emic (i.e., from an insider's perspective) one, we can still move beyond the categories grounded in nineteenth century anthropology and religion.[32] Of course, any re-construction of emic categories by an outsider will differ from the emic construction itself. Nevertheless, while we must begin with our modern etic categories, we can move toward an understanding of the ancient emic categories by examining the kinds of associations and classifications the ancient thinkers made.

MAGIC: RECONSTRUCTING THE ANCIENT CONSTRUCT

As Graf has noted, the term "magic" is not merely a modern invention but an ancient label in itself, and this double nature of the term provides us with a starting point for an examination of how the ancient and modern categories differ.[33] The term *magos*, originally a borrowed word referring to certain Persian priests, came quickly to be applied to a variety of ritual specialists whose practices were in some way abnormal.[34] As Segal has pointed out, magic is never a properly scientific term, but a polemical one, used rhetorically to highlight the abnormality of the phenomenon to which it is applied.[35] The foreign otherness of the Persian *magoi* translated easily into other forms of alterity, and the terms *magos* and *mageia* were applied to things along the whole spectrum of abnormal religious action, from the abnormally holy and effective to the abnormally ineffective or impious.[36] From the uses of these terms and the terms used in conjunction with them, we can see the way the category of magic was defined, both as a label for

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at least learn to do it better. The second reason is that we *need* definitions of magic, at least for heuristic purposes. Truly emic research is impossible; we are condemned to look at other cultures from the outside, and are better off confronting that fact and turning each attempt to define magic into an exercise in examining our conceptions about the practices and beliefs we categorize under that term" (p. 54).

32. Versnel 1991b, 181, 185.

33. Graf 1997, 18–35; cf. J. Z. Smith 1995, 17: "For, unlike a word such as 'religion,' 'magic' is not only a second-order term, located in academic discourse. It is as well, cross-culturally, a native, first-order category."

34. Important studies of the terms related to magic (*magos*, *goes*, *pharmakon*, etc.) include Nock 1972; Graf 1997; Dickie 2001; and Bremmer 1999a and 2002. While Gordon (1999, 163) plausibly suggests that the term *magos* became current in Greece at the time of the Persian war, that the *magos* was "invented" at the same time and in the same way as the barbarian (cf. Hall 1989), he does not pursue the idea, nor does there seem to be sufficient evidence to confirm or disprove the suggestion.

35. Segal 1981, 351; Braarvig 1999, 28; and see Gordon 1999, 162–64: "There was no single 'ancient view of magic.' Rather, a whole gamut of representations and claims competed in the market-place, each with its own agenda. Magic in the Greco-Roman world became good to think with. Beneath the overt representations and images deeper questions are being raised, positions staked out. . . . From the very beginning, magic has been a term whose semantic implications can only be understood by close attention to context, to the values and claims that it is made to sustain."

36. The category of Phillips 1991 of "unsanctioned religious activity" leaves out the positive connotations that the label often has. Gordon (1999) comes closer with his janus-faced category of magic: "One face is that of religious power used illegitimately, the other the dream of power to effect marvellous changes in the real world" (178). J. Z. Smith (1995, 19), however, cautions that the label of magic is not the only one possible to describe such phenomena: "Any form of *ressentiment*, for real or imagined reasons . . . , *may* trigger a language of alienating displacement of which the accusation of magic is *just one possibility* in any given culture's rich vocabularity of alterity."

the activities of others and for one's own practices. We must distinguish, however, the positive definitions of magic as supranormal practice from the negative definitions, as well as separating the self-definitions from those made by others.

On the one hand, the power of the *magos* might be recognized as extraordinarily effective, a special connection with the gods that was needed when ordinary measures would not suffice. Thus, the Platonic *Alcibiades* 1 (122a) uses the term *mageia* to refer to the special worship of the gods taught by the wisest man in Persia to the King's heir, so that he may have the best connection to the gods, just as he has the best of everything else. Likewise, Gorgias refers to the marvellous powers of his own art of rhetoric as *mageia* and *goeteia*; Gorgian oratory is magical, superior to everyday speech.[37] Apuleius, in his defence, refers to this sense of *magos* as a supremely holy person, and some of the Greek Magical Papyri make the claim that the power of their rituals is *mageia hiera* or *theia*, holy or divine magic, taught by the gods themselves to the specially initiated magician.[38] Although many of the recipes for magical rituals proclaim their special power, detailing the credentials for their authority, the term *magos* itself is more often reserved for negative other-definitions than for positive self-definition. Although Apuleius lists Empedokles and Epimenides as *magoi* (along with such prestigious figures as Orpheus and Pythagoras), Empedokles, who claims not only special insights into the nature of the cosmos but the practical power to perform a variety of miracles, calls himself not a *magos* or *goes*, but simply a god (*theos*) among men.[39] Herakleitos, however, uses the term *magos*, among others, to describe the itinerant ritual specialists who, like Epimenides, could be called in to deal with an extra-ordinary crisis.[40]

The term is also applied by Sophocles to the prophet Teiresias, who is called in by Oedipus to save the city from a plague and curse.[41] Oedipus begins by praising him as the only one who can help them in this crisis, because of his special insight into the ways of the gods. However, when Teiresias accuses Oedipus himself of causing the plague, Oedipus immediately accuses him of being a fraud and a *magos*, as blind of insight as of sight, who gives false prophecies to gain the favor of his patron, Creon. Oedipus' rapid shift of evaluation shows the ambiguous nature of Teiresias' extraordinary power—he is no ordinary speaker but is either supranormally holy and potent or subnormally ineffective and even impious. Teiresias is likewise abused as a charlatan in Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Bacchae*, but, since the context is tragedy, the seer is always, in fact, supranormally gifted with insight and truth, even though no one believes in his power until it is too late.[42] In comedy, by contrast, Aristophanes frequently portrays diviners and ritual specialists as charlatans, crudely looking for a handout and never

37. Gorg. *Hel.* 82B11.10 DK.
38. Apul. *Apol.* 25. *PGM* 1.127, 4.2449; 1.331.
39. Apul. *Apol.* 27: Empedokles 31B111, 112 DK.
40. Herakleitos 12B14 DK = Clem. Al. *Protr.* 22 = 587B.
41. Soph. *OT* 300–15, 385–95.
42. Soph. *Ant.* 1033–55; Eur. *Bacch.* 255–351.

endowed with real divine power.[43] Although some scholars have tried to use the evidence for skepticism about magic to chart the growth of rationalism or the decline of traditional piety, these examples show that skepticism about the power of magicians is not dependent on the individual's (or society's) progress from primitive stupidity to modern, enlightened, rational thought. Rather, if the authority of the magician is accepted, his abnormality is seen as positive and divine, whereas, if it is not, he is seen as a fraud, a charlatan whose abnormal practices are ineffective substitutes for normal action, whose claims to efficacy are mere deceit motivated by avarice.

In other circumstances, however, effective magic could be considered as even worse than fraud; the negative side of abnormality includes abnormally efficacious evil-doing as well as ineffective fraud. From the actual accusations of impiety leveled against makers of love potions to the gruesome literary descriptions of superwitches like Meroe, Pamphile, and Erictho, who draw down the moon, make rivers run backward, and tear the dead from their graves, the category of magic (whether labeled *mageia*, *goeteia*, *pharmakia*, or simply *asebeia*) was applied to those who used special rituals to achieve ends beyond the bounds of normal possibility.[44] But magic, in this negative sense of illicit or unsanctioned religious power, was not only a category for accusations, for other-definitions; the ancient Greeks at times performed rituals that they themselves considered an unfair use of unusual powers for socially unacceptable ends. Among the body of evidence for practices labeled magic by modern scholars are a variety of testimonia (curse tablets, papyrus formularies, and the like) that suggest, in their contents or in their contexts, that those who made use of them considered them to be illicit, a way of cheating in the various competitive arenas of the ancient Mediterranean world.[45] Unlike other means used to gain success, magical practices such as curse tablets were not boasted of publicly; they were performed in secret and anonymously.[46] Careful attention to the one making the definition as well as the person or practice so defined can thus reveal the boundaries of the category of magic among the ancient Greeks. The category is not limited to the use of particular labels like *magos*, nor is it confined to negative accusations and literary depictions. Rather, the category includes both positive

43. Cf. N. D. Smith 1989.

44. Apul. *Met.* 1.8. Cf. Erictho in Luc. *Pharsalia* 6.413–830; and the discussions of Ninos and similar figures in Versnel 1990, 114–31, and in Collins 2001. See further the discussions in Graf 1997, 41–42, 56–60; and Phillips 1991, of the legal treatment of magic in such texts as the Roman Twelve Tables and Plato's *Laws*.

45. Versnel 1991a, 62. Gordon, however (1999, 167), dismisses such evidence for self-defined use of magic as illicit religious power: "In my view, it is much too easy to be distracted by the archaeological survival of curse- and vindicative- tablets, and the remains of Graeco-Egyptian magical receptaries (grimoires), from the essential point, which is that the true home of magic is a body of narrative, what Cicero calls 'old women's tales,' which construct the social knowledge to which any event, real or supposed, fearful or peculiar, may be referred and in terms of which, if need be, explained."

46. Versnel's category of judicial curses would seem to be the exception that proves the rule, since many of these are publicly displayed or contain the names of the practitioners. As Versnel (1991a, 62–63) points out, those who performed these ritual actions did not see themselves as acting unfairly; such performances are rather to be classified with public execrations or tomb curses or even the kind of self-cursing that went along with an oath, calling on the power of the gods to reaffirm the normal order rather than to circumvent or distort it.

and negative representations, descriptions both of the self and of others, using a variety of terms whose valence varies with the context. The ancient construct of magic was not defined in the same ways as the modern construct, and the similarities that do exist in this category of abnormal religious ritual practices may indeed distract us from the differences.

ORPHISM: RECONSTRUCTING THE ANCIENT CONSTRUCT

As with the reconstruction of an ancient category (or categories) of "magic," the reconstruction of an ancient category of Orphism must begin with the recognition that Orphism is also, in some sense, an emic as well as etic category. Although -isms are a modern abstraction, the ancient Greeks recognized a category of religious actions that could be labeled *orphika* and people engaging in such activities who could be labeled *Orpheotelestai* or even (in later evidence) simply *Orphikoi*.[47] However, to limit the ancient category of "Orphism" to those things "sealed with the name of Orpheus," as Linforth did, would be to exclude people and things that the ancient Greeks would have classified together (as well as including other data that is nevertheless sealed with the name of Orpheus).[48] The name of Orpheus was one way of marking a category of religious activities, but, as with the term *magos*, the use of the term itself is insufficient to show the boundaries of the category. Once again, Orphism is abnormal religion, but "Orphic" covers a smaller range of phenomena than "magic." As with magic, we must examine not only the negative other-definitions of Orphism, but both other- and self-definitions, both positive and negative.

The corpus of Orphic pseudepigrapha offers a wide selection of positive self-identifications, since the authors who chose to write under the name of Orpheus or to borrow such well-known characteristics of Orpheus' poetry as an address to Musaeus or the *sphragis* line ("close the doors of your ears, ye profane") did so in order to appropriate the authority and the associations of Orpheus for their own work.[49] As James Redfield has pointed out, to connect the name of Orpheus to a story or ritual is "to bypass tradition and claim (as it were) a fresh revelation," to claim the authority, not of the familiar cultural tradition, but of a specially privileged individual.[50] Orpheus

47. The reading of *Orphikoi* on the Olbia bone tablet (463B) remains doubtful, but later Neoplatonists use the term. That Plato (*Cra.* 400c = OF 8 = 430iB) uses such circumlocutions as οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα indicates that a fixed term for the people was not familiar in his day.

48. Linforth 1941, xiii. The love stories of Orpheus and Eurydice, for example, while they necessarily include the name of Orpheus, would not necessarily have been put in the same category as the Orphic poem in the Derveni papyrus. Some tellings of the myth, if the descriptions of the underworld were sufficiently extra-ordinary or particularly geared to support an unusual ritual, might thereby qualify to be labeled Orphic in the minds of some of the audience, but the name of Orpheus alone would not suffice.

49. Bernabé (2004b) lists all the testimonies to this initial line as his Fragment 1, which appears in Orphic works from the Derveni papyrus to the Rhapsodies. It is also listed as 3 (Derveni Papyrus), 19 (Eudemian Theogony), 74 (Theogony of Hieronymus/Hellanicus), 101 (Rhapsodies).

50. Redfield 1991, 106. Of course, the potential for putting forth a new claim to religious authority was assisted by the medium of writing, which allowed for the multiplication of poems under the name of Orpheus, each of which could present a new alternative to the current norms. The caricature in Plato (*Resp.* 364b2–365a3 = OF 3 = 573B) and Euripides (*Hipp.* 948–57 = OT 213 = 627B) of the hubbub of books connected

is not only an extraordinary authority for the deeds of the heroes, since he was their contemporary and indeed went along with Jason and the Argonauts on their adventures, but Orpheus also has exceptional understanding of the divine world, whether from his parentage or his poetic inspiration or his experiences in the underworld. The authority of Orpheus was perhaps greatest among the Neoplatonists, who found in the Orphic myths, which they seem to have read primarily in the form that they took in the Orphic Rhapsodies, validation for their own cosmological, theological, and philosophical ideas, which were often at odds with the more traditional mythic cosmologies. In Orpheus they found a poet whose claim to direct, divine inspiration was even greater than Homer's or Hesiod's, and Proclus ranked the Orphica alongside the Chaldaean Oracles (another form of direct divine communication) as the supreme sources for true knowledge of the world. But even in Classical Athens, an orator could cite Orpheus in praising the ideal of Justice and expect a jury of stolid citizens to respect an Orphic poem as a source for pure and holy ideas about the gods.[51]

The orator bolsters Orpheus' authority by reminding the jurors that Orpheus is responsible for the holiest of rites (here, presumably, the Eleusinian Mysteries), and, throughout the sources, Orpheus is clearly associated with the founding of rituals in a variety of places in the Greek world.[52] The name of Orpheus sheds a positive luster on these rites; they are marked as extraordinary in some way, not just a run-of-the-mill local festival.[53] Even the prestigious Eleusinian Mysteries, which had a prominent reputation of their own, were at times said to have been founded by Orpheus or one of his pupils.[54] While many of these rituals are called *teletai*, the translation as initiations often evokes the wrong idea of a ritual that marks the participants' entrance into a designated group. On the contrary, such rituals were designed to bring the participant into a closer relation with a particular deity or group of deities, be it Dionysos, the Kabeiroi at Samothrace, or even Demeter and Kore at Eleusis. Such a special relationship would be beneficial not only after death, but in life as well.

In order to obtain or maintain such a special relationship with the divine, the ritual participant needed to be perfected, to be in an extra-ordinary state of religious purity, and Orphism, on the level of religious practice, seems most often connected with practices that maintain or restore an abnormal

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with Orpheus attests to the impression that this use of texts had on the contemporary audience. Since written texts attributed to an authority such as Orpheus were a useful device for religious innovators (or deviants) to urge their claims, such texts could be associated with deviants or innovators like Hippolytus even though he did not make use of such books.

51. [Dem.] 25.11 = OF 23 = 33B. See the comments of Linforth (1941, 144–45).

52. Linforth (1941, 262–63) provides a list of rites that Orpheus is said to have founded or helped to found.

53. Pausanias attributes the cults of Demeter Chthonia and Kore Soteira in Sparta, as well as the cult of Hekate in Aigina, to Orpheus (Paus. 3.14.5 = OT 108 = 533B; Paus. 3.13.2 = OT 109 = 534B; Paus. 2.30.2 = OT 110 = 535B).

54. Cf. Parian marble (*FgrH* 2B = OT 161 = 1096B); Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.20.1–21.2 = OF 52 = 395iB, Proc. *In R.* 2.312.16 = OT 102 = 517iiB. Theodoretus (*Graecarum affectionum curatio* 1.21.10 = OT 103 = 51B) even claims that Orpheus founded not only the Eleusinia but also the Dionysia, the Panathenaia, and the Thesmophoria. Cf. Graf 1974.

level of purity. The *orphikos bios* mentioned by Plato and others is notable for its purity, including abstention not just from violence and bloodshed but even from animal food.[55] Such a pure life was not necessarily linked explicitly with Orpheus, as the chorus from Euripides' *Cretans* indicates.[56] Indeed, the so-called "Orphic" gold tablets from Thurii have no mention of Orpheus, but the primary self-identification of the deceased as one who comes pure and from the pure indicates a concern for purity that outweighs all other considerations.[57] Rituals designed to purify someone from the stains of previous crimes (either one's own or one's ancestors') are sometimes credited to Orpheus.[58]

The concern for purity is characteristic even in negative representations. Plato indeed lumps together the wandering beggar-priests, who offer purificatory rituals and promise rewards in the afterlife, with those who cite as their authority the hubbub of books by Orpheus and Musaeus.[59] Theophrastus' *Orpheotelestai* cater to those who are so neurotically obsessed with purity that they are paralyzed by a weasel crossing their path.[60] Euripides' Theseus assumes that Hippolytus takes Orpheus for his lord because of his son's unusual avoidance of the impurities associated with sex.[61] These references show that Orphic purity was often considered, not as abnormally pure and thus a more effective or pious relation with the gods, but on the contrary as deviant from normal piety, either by taking unnecessary precautions or by masking true impiety with a fraudulent cover of extreme piety.[62] This Orphic purity is either no more effective than ordinary modes of living (and thus a ridiculous burden), or it is simply a sham purity that serves as a cover for deeper impurities.[63] The ancient category of Orphism, therefore,

55. Pl. *Leg.* 782c = OT 212 = 625iB; cf. Ar. *Ran.* 1032 = OT 90 = 547iB, which claims that Orpheus taught mankind to refrain from murder (φόνος). Whether or not φόνος here also implies the sacrifice and eating of animals is uncertain, but Orpheus is in any case associated with special abstention from bloodshed.

56. Eur. *Cretans* frag. 472 = Porph. *Abst.* 4.19 = OF 210 = 567B. Although modern scholars usually identify this Euripidean chorus as Orphics, it is worth noting that Porphyry, who was no stranger to Orphic material, refers to them simply as prophets of Zeus and does not link them with Orpheus.

57. A2 Zuntz 1971 = OF 32d = 489B.

58. Pl. *Resp.* 364b2–365a3 = OF 3 = 573B; cf. Damascius (*In Platonis Phaedonem* 1.11 = OF232 = 350B), who attributes to Orpheus verses describing men making hecatombs and prayers for relief from the lawless ancestors (λύσιν προγόνων ἀθεμίστων).

59. Pl. *Resp.* 364b2–365a3 = OF 3 = 573B.

60. Theophr. *Char.* 16 = OT 207 = 654B.

61. Eur. *Hipp.* 948–57 = OT 213 = 627B. Redfield (1991, 106) notes the unusual collection of elements in Theseus' condemnation: "Probably the Greeks themselves were vague about the category; Theseus assumes that since Hippolytus claims to be chaste (a claim not characteristic of the Orphics) he must also be a vegetarian and read Orphic books. All three would be tokens of a rejection of the world, and therefore mutually convertible."

62. Indeed, several variants exist for the anecdote of the wise king who asks the Orphic initiator why he doesn't just kill himself immediately if his rites provide such a great afterlife (in contrast to his shabby, itinerant life now): Plut. *Apop. Lac.* 224E = OT 203 = 653B; cf. Diog. Laert. 6.1.4 = OT 203.

63. Porph. (*Abst.* 4.16.8) expresses this double condemnation by the evil and ignorant (as he sees them) of special practices of purity: διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο οἱ μέτριοι τῶν κακῶν ματαιολογίαν ἡγοῦνται τὴν τοιαύτην παραίτησιν καὶ τὸ δὴ λεγόμενον γραῶν ὕθλον, οἵ δὲ δεισιδαιμονίαν· οἱ δ' ἐπίδοσιν ἐν τῇ σφῶν πονηρίᾳ πεποιημένοι ἕτοιμοι οὐ μόνον βλασφημεῖν κατὰ τῶν ταῦτα παραινούντων τε καὶ ὑποδεικνύντων, ἀλλ'ἤδη καὶ ἀγνὸν εἰς γοητείαν καὶ τῦφον διαβάλλειν ("For this reason, people who are averagely bad think that a plea such as this one is empty words, 'old wives tales' as the saying is, and others think it is superstition. Those who have made progress in their wickedness are ready not only to speak ill of people who give such advice and instruction, but even to accuse a pure person of sorcery and conceit" [trans. Clark]).

included both the positive self-definitions and the positive and negative other-definitions, many varying evaluations of abnormal religious purity.

RECONSTRUCTING RELIGION

In trying to reconstruct the religious categories of magic and Orphism as they were used in the ancient world, the modern scholar faces numerous difficulties, ranging from a lack of sufficient evidence to the basic problems of ever understanding emic categories from an etic point of view. These problems are further complicated by the overlap of terminology between the ancient and modern constructs and the direct historical connection, through the intervening millennia, of modern scholars and the ancient thinkers. Nevertheless, the attempt can be illuminating, especially in resolving what appear to be contradictions in the evidence over the evaluation of magic and Orphism. Understanding the ambivalent nature of being different from normal, either extra-ordinary or defective, is crucial to understanding why magicians or Orphics could be highly revered or deeply loathed, terribly feared or contemptuously scorned. These variations are not to be explained by an evolution toward rationalism or even by a split between elite skepticism and plebian superstition. Rather, they are options always present for someone encountering abnormal religious activity, and the shift between options may be as rapid as that of Oedipus in Sophocles.

Self-definition of one's religious activity as abnormal thus provides crucial evidence for understanding the ancient categories. There might be good reasons, especially in crisis situations, to claim to have extra-ordinary magical power or extra-ordinary ritual purity, but such claims always run the risk of backfiring, of exposing the claimant to charges of impiety, of negative, subnormal religious behavior. Such self-marginalization differs from the act of defining someone else as a magician or Orphic. In other-definitions, the marginalization of the person so labeled is influenced not only by the position of the defined within the society, but also by that of the definer.

While charges of magic (or, to a lesser degree, Orphism) are often made by those in the center of society against those who are already marginal, the most serious critiques often come from fights at the margins.[64] The medical and philosophical critiques of magic as fraud and impiety are designed to show that other claims to be extra-ordinary in the supranormal sense are false. Only the Hippocratic doctors or the Platonic philosophers, they claim, offer a truly superior alternative to normal practice; the quack magicians and healers, or the *agyrtes* and sophists may claim extra-ordinary status, but their practices are as inferior, if not more so, than the normal ones.[65] Thus,

64. Graf (1997, 35) has pointed this out well for magic; cf. Frankfurter 2002, 174–76 on the benefits to local ritual experts of critiques of outside rivals, real or imaginary. Note that, despite the fact that Plato often sounds as though he were expressing ideas and categorizations that were accepted by all (or, at least, all with even a modicum of sense!), the philosophers are and largely remain marginal figures to the mainstream of society, even after the foundation of philosophical institutions like Plato's Academy.

65. The Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* lumps *magoi* together with purifiers and begging priests as charlatans who claim superior knowledge and piety (*Morb. sacr.* 1.22–28 = 657iB): ἐμοὶ δὲ

the comparisons of normal, subnormal, and supranormal in these marginal polemics tend to be detailed and specific, which makes it tempting for scholars to overprivilege them as resources for defining the precise boundaries of the categories. By contrast, the laws regarding magic and other critiques from the center tend to lump all the margins together: the philosophers with the magicians, the sophists with the wandering hucksters and diviners.[66] Aristophanes, for example, makes such a generalization with his portrait of Socrates in the *Clouds*.[67] Our modern constructs, however, owe a great deal to some of the originally marginal ideas of the philosophers and doctors, whose theological, cosmological, and epistemological premises have moved from the margins to the center in the intervening centuries. The characterizations of magic as coercive or concerned only with personal and concrete goals stem ultimately from these philosophic ideas, these originally marginal polemics.[68]

Indeed, it is important to remember that the boundaries of these categories were not static but remained dynamic, shifting like a living language with each use. Nevertheless, the constructs of magic and Orphism were categories that were part of the cultural tradition, ready at hand when an ancient thinker wanted to engage in acts of comparison and generalization, and were recognizable to an audience even as they were continuously redefined. These constructs were useful when someone wanted to pass judgment on the religious activity of others, to separate the sheep from the goats, but they were also used in the process of self-definition, in claims to come pure from the pure.

THE DERVENI AUTHOR

In this light, then, we can see the Derveni author's use of the text of Orpheus and mention of the *magoi* as part of his definition of himself as an extraordinary ritual specialist, and his "acts of comparison and generalization" provide us with more evidence for the ancient categories of Orphism and magic. Whatever the intended audience of the Derveni papyrus, one of the

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δοκέουσιν οἱ πρῶτοι τοῦτο τὸ νόσημα ἀφιερώσαντες τοιοῦτοι εἶναι ἄνθρωποι οἷοι καὶ νῦν εἰσι μάγοι τε καὶ καθάρται καὶ ἀγύρται καὶ ἀλαζόνες, ὁκόσοι δὴ προσποιέονται σφόδρα θεοσεβέες εἶναι καὶ πλέον τι εἰδέναι. οὗτοι τοίνυν παραμπεχόμενοι καὶ προβαλλόμενοι τὸ θεῖον τῆς ἀμηχανίης τοῦ μὴ ἴσχειν ὅ τι προσενέγκαντες ὠφελήσουσιν, ὡς μὴ κατάδηλοι ἔωσιν οὐδὲν ἐπιστάμενοι, ἱερὸν ἐνόμισαν τοῦτο τὸ πάθος εἶναι ("They who first referred this malady to the gods appear to me to have been just such persons as the conjurors, purificators, mountebanks, and charlatans now are, who give themselves out for being excessively religious, and as knowing more than other people. Such persons, then, using the divinity as a pretext and screen of their own inability to afford any assistance, have given out that the disease is sacred" [trans. Adams]).

66. See further the discussions in Graf 1997, 41–42, 56–60, and Phillips 1991 for the legal treament of magic in such texts as the Roman Twelve Tables and Plato's *Laws*. Actual laws pertaining to magic are rather rare and generally subsumed under more general laws regarding causing harm, but there are abundant associations of magic with people or practices that are strange or marginal, even if they are not forbidden by law.

67. So, too, Apollonius of Tyana complains that Pythagorean philosophers (as he defines himself) are lumped with *magoi* and Orphics (Apollonius of Tyana *Epistulae* 16 = OT 85 = 818B).

68. The historical connection between the ancient and modern constructs should not lead us to dismiss the modern controversies in anthropology and the study of religion that have shaped the modern constructs, as does, e.g., Hoffman (2002, 184).

aims of the text was to establish the credentials of the Derveni author as an authority on religious matters, one who was able to give an explanation in support of his ritual practices. He speaks of his clientele, for whom he consults oracles, and he disparages those who perform *teletai* without providing as comprehensive and authoritative an explanation as he himself does.[69] Like Empedokles, the Derveni author had an elaborate physical theory that was integrated with his religious ideas; the contrast between sophist and seer, *physiologos* and *mantis*, was not significant for him, in the way it is for modern historians of science.[70] The significant contrast is between himself and rival practitioners offering similar services; the Derveni author denigrates, not the practice of *teletai*, the offering of sacrifices, or the consultation of oracles, but rather the inferior way in which others perform these religious acts.[71] The Derveni author's critique is thus an example of the polemics among the marginal figures we find in the Hippocratic denunciations of other healers or in the Platonic condemnation of the sophists, where the lines drawn are more fine and precise than any distinction an ancient mainstream observer might have made.[72]

Modern scholars, then, should classify the Derveni author as an Orphic, not simply because he refers to Orpheus,[73] but rather because he claims special knowledge and expertise in religious matters pertaining to purification, initiation, and other practices that might provide a better relation with the

69. αὐτοῖς πάριμεν [εἰς τὸ μα]ντεῖον ἐπερ[ω]τήσ[οντες,] τῶν μαντευομένων [ἕν]εκεν. . . . ("For them we go into the oracular shrine to inquire for oracular answers. . . ." [col. 5.4–5]); ὅσοι δὲ παρὰ τοῦ τέχνημ ποιουμένου τὰ ἱερά, οὗτοι ἄξιοι θαυμάζεσθαι καὶ οἰκτε[ί]ρεσθαι ("But all those who [hope to acquire knowledge?] from someone who makes a craft of the holy rites deserve to be wondered at and pitied" [col. 20.3–5]).

70. Cf. Riedweg 1995 and Betegh 2004, 370–72. Janko (2001, 6) claims, however, that "the Derveni papyrus is the work, not of a seer (as Tsantsanoglou inclines to believe), but of a sophist," and he seems to argue (in Janko 1997) that physicist and hierophant are separate categories, as if a thinker who theorized about cosmology could not also perform rituals and interpret oracles. Janko (2005) sees the Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, or even Plato himself, as a better parallel than Empedokles, but Obbink (1997) has remarked upon the Derveni author's focus upon cult and ritual practice as a significant difference from Plato. Again, the mainstream contemporaries of the Derveni author would have been unlikely to distinguish between sophists, physicists, seers, and initiators, however vociferously certain practitioners among these marginal groups might have tried to distinguish themselves from one another.

71. Contra Kouremenos who proposes (2006, 52) that a militantly rationalist Derveni author is at least as plausible as any of the alternatives previously suggested: "On the contrary, he is wholeheartedly committed to what can be called a 'protoscientific'/naturalistic worldview and has no use for mystery cults with their obscurantist conception of the world as subject to capricious intervention, not only of supernatural powers but also of mere humans, and the related eschatological concerns."

72. Betegh (2004, 353–55) compares his polemic to the medical authors, but does not note the importance of such a polemic context to the precision of the distinctions. Rather, he focuses on the systematizing move common to both, integrating their ideas into a broad cosmological framework: "The Derveni text can be seen as an attempt to implement for the *orpheotelestes*' craft a certain type of professional attitude, methodology and argumentative strategy which we can see most notably in the sphere of the medical art" (p. 355).

73. Cf. Bernabé 2002a, 97–98: "Il y a beaucoup de manières d'être 'orphique' et notre commentateur, du moment où il recherche le 'sens véritable' du text d'Orphée, peut être considéré comme orphique, même si sa formation et ses préférences l'amènent à effectuer un commentaire du text de caractère philosophique et étymologique et à en biaiser extrêmement l'interprétation." The fact that the papyrus is sealed with the name of Orpheus would be enough for the skeptic Linforth, but, as Parker (1995, 487) notes: "The claim that Orphic poems have nothing in common except a spurious paternity is too extreme; it neglects the patterns that can be observed in the subjects that they treated."

gods. One might question whether the Derveni author can be disqualified as an Orphic on the grounds that his interpretations vary too widely from some idea of standard Orphic belief, that central nucleus of doctrines that scholars such as Bernabé see as the essence of Orphism. Parker asks rhetorically, "Could a poem abandon metempsychosis and vegetarianism and Titanic guilt and still be 'Orphic'?"[74] The Derveni author discusses none of these ideas in what remains of his commentary, nor do any of his ideas about the cosmos depend upon Bernabé's central nucleus of Orphic doctrines.[75] Nor indeed does the text of Orpheus he cites seem to focus on any of these issues.[76] Rather than providing a complete account from the origin of the world leading up to the creation of mankind to explain the fate of the human soul, the Orphic poem in the Derveni papyrus seems to focus on the episode of Zeus' swallowing the cosmos and then bringing it back into existence.[77] The Derveni author is not preaching sacred scripture to members of a secret sect, but displaying his expert knowledge and understanding through his explication of a difficult poetic text.[78] This understanding does not consist of some secret doctrine that provides the key to salvation; rather, it is his skill at exegesis itself that demonstrates his religious competence, just as diviners proved their skill by providing the best explanations of the oracle or omen.[79]

Some scholars have disputed whether an interpreter who so mangles the obvious sense of Orpheus' text can be an Orphic or whether the Derveni

74. Parker 1995, 503.

75. In fact, there are indications that some of his practices, such as the sacrifice of birds, may run counter to the imagined orthodoxy of Orphism. Betegh (2004, 77–78) hesitantly and rather unconvincingly argues that col. 2.7 and col. 6.11 cannot refer to bird sacrifices because an Orphic would not advocate the spilling of animal blood.

76. Not even West (1983, 94–95) believes that the entire story of the anthropogony from the ashes of the Titans who killed the Dionysos who was born of Zeus and Persephone is implied by the reference in the poem to Zeus' desiring to sleep with Rhea/Demeter, although he does think that reference to this union, which would presumably bring forth Persephone, does imply that the mating of Zeus and Persephone was at least implied, if not narrated in his hypothetical, comprehensive Protogonos theogony: "Salvation is what we should expect the Derveni Orpheus to be proclaiming. . . . It is significant that as soon as the poet got the world back into shape he went straight to the act which resulted in the birth of Kore. She must have been an important figure in his gospel" (p. 94).

77. Betegh 2004, 219–23; cf. the analysis in Bernabé 2002a.

78. Cf. the exegesis of the Simonides poem in Plato *Protagoras* 339a–347a. The scene there brings out the agonistic element of interpretation, as Socrates demonstrates his superiority to Protagoras, Prodicus, Hippias, and the other claimants to wisdom. Just as the moral authority of the famous and canonical poet Simonides is taken for granted by all the interlocutors, so too the extra-ordinary authority of Orpheus is assumed by the Derveni author. That he describes Orpheus as relating a holy discourse in his engimatic language does not imply some sort of formal sacred scripture, or even that the text had some direct use in a ritual. The Derveni author is contrasting Orpheus' use of words that conceal an important hidden meaning with that of sophists (like the pair, e.g., in Plato's *Euthydemus*) who use enigmatic language eristically, just to baffle and triumph over their audience: [ὁ δ]ὲ [Ὀρφεὺ]ς αὐτο̣[ῖς] [ἐ]ρίστ' αἰν[ίγμα]τα οὐκ ᾔθελε λέγειν, [ἐν αἰν]ίγμασ̣[ι]ν δὲ [μεγ]άλα. ἱερ[ολογ]ε̣ῖ̣ται μὲν οὖγ καὶ ἀ̣[πὸ το]ῦ πρώτου. ("But Orpheus did not intend to tell them captious riddles, but momentous things in riddles. Indeed, he is telling a holy discourse from the first" [col. 7.5–7]).

79. Thus the Derveni author (col. 20.3–12) sneers at other ritual performers who do not provide explanations and condescendingly pities the misguided clients of such inferior religious craftsmen. Aristophanes parodies the disputes of competing interpreters (e.g., *Eq*. 997–1111), but the famous dispute of Themistokles and his rivals over the Delphic oracle concerning the "wooden wall" in the Persian War (Hdt. 7.141–43) shows that the agonistic element was always present. Betegh (2004, 364–70) provides a useful comparison of the Derveni author's process of interpretation to that of diviners, although he stresses the epistemological rather than the agonistic aspect.

author is better seen as an anti-Orphic or even a heretical Orphic.[80] Yet the Derveni author undoubtedly claims Orpheus as his authority for religious knowledge; his own function is simply to explicate to his audience the truths Orpheus revealed enigmatically. It is this very appeal to his own specialized, esoteric knowledge, deriving from a source outside of the familiar Panhellenic epics or the ancestral traditions of religious practice that defined polis religion, that marks the commentator as an extra-ordinary religious expert. His claims to be holier-than-thou, to have special access to efficacious rituals denied to the ordinary, shows him to be just the sort whom a Euripidean Theseus, for example, might associate with Orpheus—an Orphic, that is, in the broad, ancient sense. For the Derveni author, too, the ultimate justification for his disparagement of his rivals is his superior understanding of Orpheus, the ideal extra-ordinary religious authority. The evidence of the Derveni author, the way he compares himself to his rivals and generalizes about the nature of religious authority, shows that for the ancients the essence of Orphism was not particular doctrines of the soul or the origin of the world, but precisely this kind of competitive claim to extra-ordinary religious power.

Such a claim to extra-ordinary religious power might, in some circumstances, cause the Derveni author to be labeled a *magos* as well as an Orphic—and perhaps, like Teiresias, as a tricky quack, who has eyes only for profit.[81] But the Derveni author seems to distinguish himself from the *magoi*, by the way he makes comparisons with what the *magoi* do. In column 6, he refers to the songs of the *magoi* and the sacrifices they make, and compares them to the sacrifices made by *mystai* in an unspecified ceremony (col. 6.1–11):

> . . . prayers and sacrifices appease the souls, and the enchanting song of the *magoi* is able to remove the *daimones* when they impede. Impeding *daimones* are revenging souls. This is why the *magoi* perform the sacrifice, as if they were paying a penalty. On the offerings they pour water and milk, from which they make the libations, too. They sacrifice innumerable and many-knobbed cakes, because the souls, too, are innumerable. *Mystai* make the preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides in the same way as the *magoi*. For the Eumenides are souls. On account of these things, he who is going to sacrifice to the gods, first birdlike . . .[82]

80. Casadio (1987, 386) complains: "È aberrante ritenere che l'autore del comm. al poema orfica sia parimenti un orfico. Lo spirito dell' anonimo commentatore è decisamente estraneo alla temperie orfica, come dimostrano i vistosi fraintendimenti del testo del poema." Parker (1995, 488–89) also has doubts: "If the commentator thought of himself as an Orphic, he was surely one of a very singular stamp. For our purposes, he is just the misty glass though which we seek to gaze at Orpheus." By contrast, Most (1997, 121) suggests that he is an Orphic who distinguishes himself by doctrine from other Orphic groups, but such a model of doctrinal schism can only apply to more rigidly defined sects; cf. Casadio 1986, 299: "ma un iniziato orfico ben strano e un interprete inetto o eretico doveva essere il nostro commentatore."

81. Soph. *OT* 387–89: μάγον τοιόνδε μηχανορράφον, / δόλιον ἀγύρτην, ὅστις ἐν τοῖς κέρδεσιν / μόνον δέδορκε.

82. [εὐ]χαὶ καὶ θυσ[ί]ο̣ι μ[ειλ]ί̣σ̣σ̣ουσι τ̣ὰ̣[ς ψυχάς,] ἐπ̣[ωιδὴ δ]ὲ̣ μάγων δύν[α]ται δαίμονας ἐμ[ποδὼν] γι̣[νομένο]υς μεθιστάγ̣αι. δαίμονες ἐμπο[δὼν ὄντες εἰσὶ] ψ[υχαὶ τιμω]ροί. τὴν θυσ[ία]γ̣ τούτου̣ ἕνεκε[μ] π̣[οιοῦσ]ι̣[ν] οἱ μ̣ά̣[γο]ι̣, ὥ̣σ̣περεὶ ποινὴ̣γ̣ ἀποδιδόντες. τοῖ⟨σ⟩ δὲ ἱεροῖ[ς] ἐπισπένδουσιν ὕ[δω]ρ καὶ γάλα, ἐξ ὧ̣νπερ καὶ τὰς χοὰς ποιοῦσι. ἀνάριθμ̣α̣ [κα]ὶ̣ πολυόμφαλα τὰ πόπανα θύουσιν, ὅτι καὶ αἱ ψυχα[ὶ ἀν]ά̣ριθμοί̣ ε̣ἰσι. μύσται Εὐμενίσι προθύουσι κ[ατὰ τὰ] α̣ὐτὰ μ̣ά̣γοις· Εὐμενίδες γὰρ ψυχαί εἰσιν. ὧν ἕνεκ[εν τὸν μέλλοντ]α θεοῖς θύειν ὀ̣[ρ]νί̣θ̣[ε]ιον πρότερον . . .

The Derveni author here provides an explanation of the ritual practices of both *magoi* and *mystai*, and then goes on to provide his own expert advice on the best procedure, based on this explanation. The lamentably fragmentary state of the papyrus does not allow us to be certain of the details of the comparison, but we can be reasonably certain that, however efficacious the practices of the *magoi* might be, the Derveni author presents his own solutions as superior.[83] Although the *magoi* do not seem to be presented in a negative light as charlatans and quacks, we need not conclude that the Derveni author and his audience would understand these *magoi* to be authentic Persian priests.[84] The fundamental ambivalence of the term *magos* admits a sense of both a positive and a negative abnormality, and the shift from positive to negative is not a chronological, but a situational shift, dependent upon who is labeling whom and for what reasons.[85] The Derveni author refers to *magoi* as experts in certain rituals, but doubtless goes on to explain why his own expertise goes a step beyond even these extra-ordinary figures. Again, we can note the difference between the distinctions made by marginal figures (extra-ordinary ritual specialists) among themselves and the way such distinctions between marginal categories of Orphic or magician are easily blurred by those in the mainstream, for whom the most salient feature of all these types is their abnormality.

From his own perspective, then, the Derveni author is an Orphic but not a magician, a specialist in *teletai* for the *mystai* but not one of the *magoi*. Modern scholars' confusions over how to classify this fascinating figure stem not only from the troubled history of the categories of magic and Orphism in twentieth-century scholarship, but from the fact that even the ancient, emic categories of magic and Orphism are ambivalent, depending on the perspective or agenda of the one making the classification. By taking these perspectives into consideration, however, we as modern scholars may gain a better understanding of the ways in which the ancient Greeks constructed

83. As Betegh points out (pers. comm.), the possibility that the Derveni author considered himself one of the *magoi* cannot entirely be ruled out on the grounds that he refers to the *magoi* and *mystai* in the third person, describing what "they" do. "The sentence 'Classicists tend to write long footnotes' can be written by a classicist." However, not only is such a third-person construction more common in English than Greek, but the Derveni author does use the first person plural to refer to the activities of specialists like himself. αὐτοῖς πάριμεν̣ [εἰς τὸ μα]ν̣τεῖον ἐπερ[ω]τ̣ήσ[οντες,] τῶν μαντευομένων̣ [ἕν]εκεν. . . . ("For them we go into the oracular shrine to inquire for oracular answers [col. 5.4–5]). It is not impossible that the "we" here refers only to people who labeled themselves *magoi*, but it seems more probable that the *magoi* are one type of religious specialists, from whom the Derveni author is distinguishing himself in the passage on sacrifices.

84. As Tsantsanoglou (1997, 102–3) suggests. See Jourdan 2003, 37–39, and Bernabé 2006 for arguments against reading *magoi* here as Persian priests. Jourdan sees the reference here as a pejorative referring to charlatans, whereas Bernabé prefers to read it as a positive label for Orphic ritual practitioners, applied by the Derveni author to himself. Bernabé's distinction (95) between "internal" and "external" perspectives on the term *magos* is useful, but I would point out that internal and external labels do not necessarily correspond to positive and negative labels; *magos* could be used positively of someone else, just as "Orphic" could be used, either positively or negatively, either of one's own practices or someone else's.

85. Cf. the chronological emphasis in Betegh 2004, 82: "As a self-description, it was capable also of appropriating the authority of the Persian priests, whereas it later received negative connotations through diverse attacks starting with Heraclitus."

their ideas of religion, especially how, in the absence of fixed norms of orthodoxy or even orthopraxy, they outlined the category of normal religion by the contrast with the abnormal and provided a model of the way an ordinary person might conduct his religious affairs by the comparison with extraordinary people.

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