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WOMEN AND PYTHAGOREAN PHILOSOPHY

DUTSCH (D.M.) *Pythagorean Women Philosophers. Between Belief and Suspicion*. Pp. xiv + 306, ill. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Cased, £80, US\$105. ISBN: 978-0-19-885903-1.

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The Greek historiographer Timaeus of Tauromenium (c. 350–after 264 BCE) – probably referring to Philochorus’ *Collection of Heroines or Pythagorean Women* (third century BCE) – records that a daughter of Pythagoras led a maiden chorus when she was unmarried and one of women after she got married (*FGrHist* 566 F 131 = Porph. *VP* 4; cf. also Iamb. *VP* 170). Timaeus does not name this figure, but the fragment sets itself at an early stage within a long tradition concerning Pythagorean women, whose roles, tasks and moral standing are affirmed in the famous discourse that Pythagoras himself would have addressed to the Crotonian women (Iamb. *VP* 54–7; a brief reference, without contents, in Porph. *VP* 18, whose source seems to be Dicaearchus of Messana, fr. 40 Mirhady = 33 Wehrli).

In the last few decades Pythagorean women and their intellectual status have aroused the interest of some scholars of ancient Greek philosophy and women in antiquity (C. Montepaone, ‘Teano la pitagorica’, in N. Louraux [ed.], *Grecia al femminile* [1993], and S. Pomeroy, *Pythagorean Women* [2013], among the best known; on the musical side, E. Rocconi, ‘Un manuale al femminile’, in M.S. Celentano [ed.], *Ars/Techne* [2003]); against this background the present book is a most welcome, innovative and indispensable instrument for scholars interested in Pythagoreanism and in women in antiquity, for it deals with Pythagorean women philosophers between ‘critique and compliance’ (pp. 3–4), that is, as the subtitle says, with both belief and suspicion, the two foundations of hermeneutics highlighted by P. Ricoeur (*De l’interprétation* [1965], p. 46; *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* [1981], pp. 145–64). Such a critical positioning induces D. to analyse anecdotes and pseudepigrapha, which ‘offer a critique of the dominant discourse’ (p. 10), in search for a possible identity of Pythagorean women philosophers at the margins of official discourses and texts.

The book is divided into three parts: Part 1, ‘Portraits’, is focused both on the evidence concerning Pythagoreanism and women in Plato’s dialogues and the Hellenistic tradition, and on *chreiai*, anecdotes, reported sayings and/or meaningful and relevant actions attributed to specific female characters; Part 2, ‘Impersonations’, deals with pseudepigraphic treatises – texts that redefine, with their combination, selection and rewriting of existing material (p. 153) in a context of ‘distributed authorship’, the ‘archaic’ Pythagorean system in relation to Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, leaving room for the women’s intellectual potential to be highlighted –, and letters attributed to Pythagorean women philosophers, who emerge as authoritative figures giving advice to other women in texts presenting a clear combination of practical advice with philosophical principles; Part 3 presents ‘Texts and Translations’ relevant for D.’s discussion.

With a rigorous effort to establish a chronology of the evidence taken into account, and a clear-cut and engaging style, D. succeeds both in showing the shaping of female sages against the background of Pythagorean ethics and thought and in highlighting the influence of ideological and cultural trends, of time and gender on the Pythagorean woman sage’s *Fortleben* as a ‘philosopher’, the highly significant title she was granted in later tradition – for instance by Philo of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa and John of Stobi (fifth century CE) – through the lens of female figures in Plato’s dialogues and also in Aristotle’s footsteps (Sappho as a philosopher in *Rh.* 1398b29–30, 1367a7–15 = fr. 137 L&P).

D. shows, on the one hand, how *chreiai* – a fully Pythagorean product, for their ‘memorability’ – and pseudepigrapha, while illustrating a ‘Pythagorean catechism’ (p. 157) for women, grant them an illusion of agency in accepting standard precepts. On the other hand, D.’s most significant merit consists in going beyond the relationship between religion and the social role of the Pythagorean women acknowledged in testimonies; for she delineates with originality and vitality the figure of the Pythagorean woman sage that lurks behind the *chreiai* and explores in detail female voices within pseudepigrapha.

Considering that the historical identity of Pythagorean women philosophers (a catalogue of seventeen in Iambl. *VP* 267 – discussed on pp. 47–50 –, modified over time; cf. C. Huffman, ‘Two Problems in Pythagoreanism’, in P. Curd and D.W. Graham [edd.], *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy* [2008], pp. 293–300) is ‘an unanswerable question’ and distancing herself (p. 216) from both L. Zhmud’s (*Philologus* 163 [2019], 11) ‘dismissive position’ (female authorship as a forgery aimed at bending the genuine tradition towards a more persuasive *admonition* [italics in D.’s text] of women in Pythagorean communities) and Pomeroy’s (2013, esp. pp. 41–59) fideistic approach, which takes the historicity of Pythagorean women philosophers at face value, D. thoroughly examines the positioning of women philosophers within the ‘pluralistic’ (G. Cornelli, *In Search of Pythagoreanism* [2013], p. 51) image of Pythagoreanism, exploring the continuous remodelling of iconic women in the long Pythagorean tradition and the changing epistemic paradigms over time, which dictate the different possible roles for women. In fact, independently of literary genres, Pythagorean women seem to be conceived as ‘nomadic subjects’ (R. Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* [1994], p. 6; quoted by D. on p. 28), who we can encounter as icons existing in a shared imaginary space, as ‘photoshopped’ (p. 30), that is, contrived so as to fit specific ‘agendas’ of historians and biographers (p. 43), paradigms resulting from the manipulation of literary references, characters and beliefs and from the creation for propaganda of ideas, values and features of the Pythagorean way of life.

Therefore, I would assert that the Pythagorean woman sage seems to result in a kind of cyborg, a composite from diverse entities (male and female) responding to Pythagoras’ eccentricity: if he blurs the categories human and animal (puppy anecdote, p. 19), he might plausibly have done the same with male and female, so that Pythagorean women were requested to make their male part – courage, determination and silence – prevail over the female one, as in the figure of the pregnant Timycha, who bites off her tongue in order to deny the tyrant Dionysus II access to Pythagorean knowledge, considering the group she belongs to more important than her own family (the model is Plato, as thoroughly illustrated on pp. 55–8).

It seems to me worth noting in *chreiai* – whose characters D. convincingly compares to the Hellenistic *hetaerae* – a sort of over-exposure of women for what concerns the sexual sphere, aimed at identifying a specific field in which a peculiarly female *ethos* is shaped: happiness and wisdom for the Pythagorean woman consist in fidelity to her husband. If such an aspect, on the one hand, can be linked to sexual ethics associated with procreation and eugenetics (Aristoxenus, fr. 39 Wehrli; Plato, *Laws* 783b etc., discussed on pp. 45–7), the central importance of marriage, on the other hand, can be connected with Aristotle (*Pol.* 1252a26–31, *EN* 1158b13–35, 1161a22–5, 1162a17–9; cf. also Plat. *Leg.* 840d–1e) and – more – with Stoicism (pp. 201–3).

On the other hand, marriage involves for women a kind of superimposition of the public sphere on the private one. In fact, although women’s independent thought is discouraged, they preserve wit and intelligence in accepting their role, that is, in consciously fitting in the Pythagorean template of marriage, and in the programme attached

to it: a woman can achieve in marriage moral perfection in the performance of her duties towards her husband, children and household, thus offering her proper contribution for the sake of the whole community, as D. shows through the relationship between the two treatises ascribed to Pythagorean women and male voices on women's virtues in Ocellus', Callicratidas' and Bryson's treatises, in which the Aristotelian architecture of husband and wife as ruler/ruled remains unaltered (p. 152). Furthermore, she shows the affinities between topics and perspectives in Pythagorean letters ascribed to women and in Stoicism, especially Musonius, delineating very accurately their cultural and ideological context and emphasising (in Theano's letter to Euboule: Text 3, pp. 242–4 D. = vol. 5.166, 168 Städele; 195–6 Thesleff; 603 No. 4 Hercher) the maternal role in the education of small children (the influence of mothers' ethical teachings at an early stage of one's life is highlighted at Plat. *Prot.* 325c–6a and also lurks in Arist. *EN* 1161b27, where the maternal special affection is highlighted; cf. N. Sherman, *The Fabric of Character* [1989], pp. 151–6).

I highly recommend this book, for it fully succeeds in showing that Pythagorean women sages – independently from their real, historical identity – set out a strategy for teaching other women in their group that family is the space in which they can achieve outstanding moral value, the precinct in which they can give their 'philosophical' contribution.

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HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

INWOOD (B.), WARREN (J.) (edd.) *Body and Soul in Hellenistic Philosophy*. Pp. viii + 266. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Cased, £75. US\$99.99. ISBN: 978-1-108-48582-1.
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This fine book is the late but not too late fruit of the 'Symposium Hellenisticum' 2016, which took place in Utrecht in the Netherlands. Under its somewhat unoriginal title we find sophisticated, substantial and occasionally exciting new essays on the Hellenistic philosophy of mind. This at least is how the editors Inwood and Warren describe the topic around which the essays of the volume revolve. They emphasise the similarities with the situation in contemporary philosophy of mind when they say that in Hellenistic times philosophers self-consciously argued against the backdrop of a long history that fully explored the conceptual landscape of possible positions on the mind–body problem, while there was also much philosophical attention paid to the then burgeoning findings of empirical science. Of course, this fruitful comparison has its limitations. Much of the Hellenistic debate concerned questions that are not covered by the mainstream of modern philosophy of mind, which does, for instance, not even dream of speaking about the immortality of the intellect or about a cosmic soul. And there is also the question of whether the Hellenistic conception of the mind was the same as ours in the first place. The essays bring out the dissimilarities in full. They also make clear the high level of sophistication both of the philosophical positions of Hellenistic thinkers and of the scholarly endeavours of bringing their views back to light.

S. Berryman's 'Hellenistic Medicine, Strato, and Aristotle's Theory of Soul' makes a start with a bold discussion of Strato of Lampsakos' views on body and soul. Against