

FLEISCHER (K.J.) **Dionysios von Alexandria, *De Natura* (περὶ φύσεως): Übersetzung, Kommentar und Würdigung, mit einer Einleitung zur Geschichte des Epikureismus in Alexandria.** Turnhout: Brepols, 2016. Pp. 513. €100. 9782503566382.  
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In this book, Fleischer takes a twofold approach: (1) to document and elucidate Alexandrian Epicureanism and (2) to provide a commentary on Dionysios' *On Nature* – a polemical treatise against Epicureanism. To this end, the book is divided into two parts. The first part, 'The history of Epicureanism in Alexandria', comprises eight chapters that seek to highlight the evidence for Epicureanism in Alexandria (and at times larger Egypt) from the beginning of the third century BC to the end of the fourth century AD. Based on his reading of Plutarch's *Adversus Colotem*, Fleischer argues that Epicureanism arrived in Egypt as early as the reign of Ptolemy I Soter (53), which is somewhat earlier than previously thought. In the second part, 'Dionysios of Alexandria, *On Nature*: translation, commentary, and appraisal', the book transitions into a detailed analysis of Dionysios, his literary output and especially the treatise itself. Fleischer's treatment of *On Nature*, which he argues was written sometime between AD 232 and 248, is extensive; the Greek text consists of only ten pages (240–49), but the commentary and appraisal span over 150 pages. For the Greek text, he draws upon the 1956 edition of K. Mras, but on three occasions deviates from this edition in favour of other readings (237–38); he also includes five additional fragments from John of Damascus' *Sacra Parallela*. Contrary to earlier scholarship, Fleischer asserts that while Dionysios addresses the treatise to 'his son' Timothy, there was likely a wider need for the work among the Christian community in Alexandria where Epicurean influences may have been prevalent and deleterious.

The commentary is meticulous and comprehensive, as Fleischer attempts both to analyse individual phrases and words and to draw some more general conclusions about Dionysios and his literary output. Since it is divided into sections, Fleischer's interpretation and evaluation of any given passage is easily accessible. In several places within the commentary, he notes that there are only 15 scriptural quotations/allusions in the work and that, due to the overall philosophical tone of the treatise, it

could have been written by a non-Christian anti-Epicurean philosopher were it not for these scriptural references. In addition to the commentary, Fleischer also attempts to elucidate the background, context, larger purpose(s) and reception of the work.

Fleischer's volume is a welcome contribution for two particular reasons: it offers the first systematic overview of Alexandrian Epicureanism as well as the most comprehensive treatment to date of Dionysios' *On Nature*. It can serve as a useful reference work in both areas given the arrangement of the book where clearly demarcated sections and subsections treat individual aspects and indices readily facilitate topical searches of all kinds. While there is a large amount of Greek and to a lesser extent Latin in the book, Fleischer typically provides translations, which are rendered with skill and care. Furthermore, he has done a commendable job in consulting secondary literature; he has collected sources in a variety of languages (English, French, Italian) and includes recent publications as well as those that are now over 100 years old.

Notwithstanding the overall quality of the book, it does suffer from a few minor shortcomings. Despite his comprehensive treatment of *On Nature*, Fleischer's brief surveys (234–36) of Dionysios' theology and scriptural interpretative strategies do not provide a sufficiently in-depth background with which to frame the treatise; however, his earlier introduction to Dionysios and his works is considerably more thorough (217–33). On another note, while Fleischer endeavours to provide an exhaustive survey of Alexandrian Epicureanism up to the fourth century AD, there are some notable Alexandrian sources that are absent from his treatment. For example, Didymos the Blind (*ca.* AD 313–398) includes various references to Epicurus and Epicureanism in his scriptural commentaries, but Fleischer does not cite any of these (for example *EccI*T 24.1–11, 209.26–210.1). Moreover, Didymos even preserves a previously unknown Epicurean fragment that goes unmentioned by Fleischer (*Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini* 1.2.153–56, 163–64). This is a notable omission because it has been suggested that some of Didymos' knowledge about Epicureanism may have been derived directly from Dionysios' works (A.B. Nelson, *The Classroom of Didymus the Blind*, Ph.D. Diss. Michigan 1995, 118–19). Despite these shortcomings, this volume still has much to offer and fills a valuable niche in scholarship.

Given its overall breadth and depth, it should be required reading for anyone interested in Alexandrian Epicureanism or Dionysios' treatise *On Nature*.

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PACHOUMI (E.) **The Concepts of the Divine in the Greek Magical Papyri** (Studien in Texte zu Antike und Christentum 102). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017. Pp. 258. €79. 9783161540189.

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This concise and enjoyable book takes the reader through the different levels of the divine apparatus that comprises so-called Graeco-Egyptian magic. Pachoumi bases her study on the most important testimonies of this kind of magic – the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (PGM), the *Papyri Demoticae Magicae* and the *Supplementum Magicum*. Through the analysis of a wide range of spells, she points out the different religious, philosophical and mystical traditions that enrich this ritual manifestation. Her main aim is to dissect the academic concept of Hellenistic religious syncretism which the *Magical Papyri* transmit.

Pachoumi divides her book into three chapters with an introduction and a profuse appendix, bibliography and indices. Her introductory chapter addresses all that one needs to know about the material: a brief summary about the eventualities suffered by the main edition of the *Magical Papyri*, with references to the English translations and the transmission of the Graeco-Egyptian magical handbooks; other testimonies of this kind of magic, such as *tabellae defixionis* and amulets; the structural characteristics of the *Greek Magical Papyri* and its magic; and her methodology.

The first chapter focuses on an important concept for later magic and theurgic manifestations: the personal *daimōn*. It is the first connection with Greek philosophy, at the very central level of ritual action – the communication between the individual and the divine. This happens in the form of the ritual called *sustasis*, a term that can be translated as ‘conjunction’. The author analyses several spells with explicit references to the personal *daimōn*, as in philosophical Greek sources, and its nature as an internal divine entity in the individual, leading to implicit expres-

sions. Entities such as the shadow, the soul or even certain lesser gods acquire the characteristics of this internal relationship with the divine. She explains this important appropriation as a flux between a ‘ritualising-philosophy’ tendency and a ‘philosophising-ritual texts’ reflection (32–33).

The second chapter develops a magical concept that could be confused with the previous one: the *paredros* or ‘assistant’. While the personal *daimōn* is scarcely mentioned in the PGM, *paredroi* are used very often. Pachoumi gives a definition of the term from Greek sources and a thorough categorization of the types of magical assistants that can be invoked in these spells. A *paredros* can be a *daimōn* or angel, a resurrected dead body, a divinity revealed as another entity, even an object such as a tablet inscribed with Homeric verses. They are external entities that the magician must internalize through different magical means. Therefore, the assistant is a medium between the magician and the divine, or an angel in the Gnostic or Judaeo-Christian sense. And it is capable of transformable manifestations. The concept of ‘assistance’ is, in the author’s opinion, ‘an aspiration to create unity out of the apparent diversity’ (61), which turns her argumentation towards the Neoplatonist or Stoic concept of god as ‘one and many’, as the central question of the henotheistic character that draws this esoteric manifestation.

The third chapter resumes the conceptualization of what god is in this magic, whether of polytheistic or henotheistic nature. Through a deep analysis of the main divine figures and the different religious and philosophical representations that dress them, Pachoumi revises the idea of religious syncretism. They are important gods of the Mediterranean pantheon. However, other essential features that they have in common seem to be crucial for their predominance. Firstly, they are ‘many-named’ and ‘many-formed’ (167), which allows the assimilation that characterizes the phenomenon of syncretism. Secondly, they reflect concepts of union and what she calls ‘megatheism’: Aphrodite or Eros and Typhon-Seth represent the Empedoclean and Platonic ideas of love and strife, respectively, which hold the cosmos together; Helios, the Creator-God, Chrestos, Aion, Dionysos-Osiris are rulers, great gods that symbolize that very same cosmos and its powers. Pachoumi succeeds in revealing a long process of syncretism in several steps: ‘internal’, using Richard Gordon’s terminology, since it happened early and in the original religious tradi-