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Dorota M. Dutsch, *Pythagorean Women Philosophers: Between Belief and Suspicion*.

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Dorota M. Dutsch's book is a detailed study of the ancient sources and prevailing literature on Pythagorean women. The overall goal of her book is to include women in philosophical or intellectual history as "female philosophers." Biographical tradition shows that women were very present in Pythagorean communities. Not only do all three main biographical sources on Pythagoras (Iamblichus, Porphyry, and Diogenes Laertius) claim women's inclusion among his followers but there is also one author—Johannes Stobaeus—who prepared an anthology of the most important pieces of ancient Greek literature that included texts of three Pythagorean women (Theano, Phintys, and Perictione). Apart from Johannes Stobaeus' contribution, texts ascribed to Pythagoreans, whether male or female, were scattered throughout much of the ancient philosophical literature. A standard collection of these texts was prepared by Holger Thesleff in 1965. This collection contains excerpts from some 120 texts attributed to forty–six author–figures, including Pythagoras himself, and several of them were attributed to women. Standard problems with Pythagorean corpus concern the authenticity of texts (since it is believed that Pythagoras did not leave behind any writing of his own) and their authorship, in particular female authorship. To avoid such problems, Dutsch argues that "female agency is inscribed in pseudonymous texts and that Pythagorean women philosophers are crucial to our understanding of how the Greeks thought about women's capacity for philosophical knowledge" (p. 216). To give grounds for these claims, Dutsch employs a specific interpretative strategy.

Her strategy consists in shifting the "emphasis from author to text and then from a single text to groups of affiliated texts" (pp. 128–129), which consequently enables her to find evidence that Pythagorean women were unmistakably important, and that they appear "as witnesses to an inclusive version of Greek philosophical history" (p. 216). The idea is fairly simple if we break it down into two parts: shifting the emphasis from author to text and placing the emphasis on a single text among a group of affiliated texts.

To understand why Dutsch is suggesting shifting the emphasis from author to text, we need to know what the standard interpretative approach to Pythagorean women is. Thankfully, Dutsch kindly reports her reasoning in the "Introduction: What is at Stake?" where she acknowledges two standard yet opposed interpretative strands. According to the first, women were insignificant in understanding and creating philosophical knowledge in antiquity. They are often marginalized and presented as purely literary figures within the Greek intellectual tradition. On the other hand, according to the second strand of interpretation, which is far more permissive, women can be seen as historical philosophers whose ideas are detectable in *their own* texts. The discrepancy between these two directions nudges Dutsch towards a different, more subtle path. Without being

obliged either to accept and defend such a strong claim about female authorship as evidence of the achievements of a historical woman, or reject an entirely dismissive one, she finds a middle path to prove her point. As is evident from the title, she takes a middle path between, on the one hand, belief in women's significance and devoted engagement within the intellectual tradition, and, on the other hand, suspicion, that is, considering their authorship a fabrication. This middle path shows that it is not necessary to insist on female authorship since the texts themselves offer evidence that women were engaged in the philosophical discussions of Pythagorean society.

This leads us to the problem of understanding the emphasis on a single text among groups of texts. Dutsch is inspired by some of Bruno Latour's and Paul Ricœur's ideas on how to interpret texts. Both of them give a certain amount of independence to the text (in relation to the author) and insist on maintaining a critical distance from it. According to them, it is sufficient to follow the testimony which a text delivers (or "listen to the text itself") and place the testimony within the so–called hermeneutical arc (the context in which it is produced) while at the same time taking a critical stance towards it. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who "does not assume that ideology determines all but allows herself to hope and to be surprised by the meanings she discovers" (p. 12), also has a strong influence on Dutsch's attitude towards the texts. Different influences combined bring Dutsch "to read the testimonies to Pythagorean women with attention to the ideological and cultural trends that shaped them—but also to attend to the possibilities that these testimonies articulate" (p. 4). She emphasizes the "possibilities that these testimonies articulate" and ultimately the "articulation of new possible identities" (p. 10). The only way to examine these possibilities is by placing the text or any type of testimony within the realm of ideological and cultural trends, which is precisely what Dutsch does. She focuses on "the marginal spaces of anecdotes (and pseudepigrapha)" (p. 10) to carve a path for female inclusion, which leaves space for being surprised by the findings. This step allows her to surpass the authorship problem and situate texts into the network of pseudepigrapha (the term *pseudepigraphon* is used to express concern with authorship in the Hellenistic period). By doing so, the book's main concern is the "heuristic potential of texts, independent of their precise referential value as historical testimonies" (p. 14).

Vague referential value of texts as historical testimonies gives Dutsch the freedom to observe how the corpus depicts Pythagorean women, and even gives her the chance to articulate female identity as a vital part of Pythagorean communities and at the same time indispensable in the distribution of authorship of treatises circulating under the names of men. This possibility is driven by the idea that women "joined Pythagoras as his disciples and, consequently, shaped the very foundations of Greek philosophy" (p. 216).

Dutsch's specific interpretative strategy is evident from the layout of the book. The book begins with a brief outline of Pythagoras as a historical figure, which is followed by a quick transition to the topic of women with-

in the Pythagorean community, depicted by "various accounts in male voices which mention or allude to Pythagorean women, through Theano's short *chreiai* (sayings), which introduce her in third person and briefly 'cite' her words, [and ends with presenting male voices as well as] treatises and letters composed in female voices" (p. 15).

Dutsch's book examines texts dating from the fourth century BC to the fifth century AD that portray women as intellectual figures. However, the lack of arguments for the explicit presentation of women as philosophers turns out to be a surprising element. Nonetheless, if we shift our attention back and consider that she reads the texts independently of their precise referential value as historical testimonies and that she is trying to find the possibilities that these testimonies articulate, then the problem concerning the presentation of women as philosophers does not follow. It is sufficient to find implicit proof that women were present as witnesses within the community. The network of texts acknowledges female significance. Considering women as possible participants in the authorship of treatises circulating under the names of men is a far–fetched possibility that is conveyed as a mere possibility, which is part of Dutsch's specific interpretative strategy.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part, "Portraits," begins by presenting Pythagoras as a historical figure who once was, according to the theory of reincarnation, a (prostitute) woman named Alco. Reincarnations enabled Pythagoras to be compassionate to any group of people, with whom he knew how to communicate. More importantly, this particular reincarnation—that turned him into a woman—made him insightful of how it is to be a woman. From then on, women were seen as knowing subjects rather than objects of male knowledge (cf. p. 25). To trace and elaborate on this idea of women as knowing subjects, Dutsch assembles snapshots—all together ten of them—that represent the Pythagorean community or, as she calls it, the "Pythagorean Family Album" (p. 30), and the role of women in it. The collection of these snapshots announces women as valuable assets who produce offspring necessary for the preservation of society; persons who have the capacity for knowledge and virtue; disciples of Pythagoras (among whom Theano became the famous one); persons who were famous enough to be listed in the appendix of Iamblichus' *On Pythagorean Life*; heroines (e.g. Timycha who bit off her tongue not to disclose Pythagorean secrets); a group who respected Pythagoras' clear distinction between philosophy and household; obedient and loyal mothers and daughters—"perfect intermediaries between the famous man [and other followers] and the world" (p. 65).

These snapshots can either lead us to a positive side of interpretation or a negative one. The positive side presents Pythagoras as someone who experienced multiple ways of knowing (thanks to his reincarnations), which enabled him to be "hospitable to the figure of a female intellectual" and thus someone who finds women worthy of being considered as knowing subjects (p. 66). The negative side emphasizes women's domesticity as opposed to their intellectual side, which depicts Pythagorean women as either "being female or a philosopher but not both at the same time" (p. 66).

To achieve her goals, Dutsch insists on the positive interpretation of the snapshots. By using Theano's short *chreiai* to portray women as intellectually present, Dutsch suggests a belief in a female sage that is devoted and involved in the intellectual tradition. Theano's sayings were used in elementary and secondary school curricula as the basis for rhetorical exercises (cf. p. 73). They mainly promoted advice on how to live a good, virtuous life and how to be a good wife to your husband. Snapshots compiled with Theano's sayings help the reader visualize Pythagorean woman "only briefly and from distance" (p. 117).

The second part of the book, "Impersonations," discusses longer pseudonymous texts, and places them into the network of Pythagorean pseudepigrapha that connects texts attributed to both female and male authors. The network of texts that were written under a false name (pseudonymously), placed alongside texts whose authorship is uncertain (pseudepigrapha), brings Dutsch to examine clusters of texts, which are a "more appropriate category in analyzing pseudepigrapha than the author–and–her–work" (p. 120). As Dutsch points out: "[p]seudepigrapha are part of a rich tradition of ventriloquizing ancient Pythagoreans. They were a vital locus of reception of Pythagorean thought and today constitute the vast majority of Pythagorean literature" (p. 136). Cluster of texts "provide a trans–temporal link to the 'living script' and realize after a fashion this ideal of plurality" (p. 120). The idea of "living scripts" amounts to the fact that Pythagoras, as far as the evidence shows, thought that oral tradition was superior to writing, which is why he did not leave behind any writing of his own. It is believed that his later admirers, disciples, and devotees produced treatises and wrote his name on them (cf. p. 119). These texts, "articulating the 'living script' from different points of view, ... ventriloquize multiple witnesses, creating multiple author–figures, including Pythagoras' female disciples and members of his family" (p. 120). If the texts articulate female presence as author–figures, then there is a possibility to "go further and postulate female participation in the distributed authorship of treatises circulating under the names of male disciples" (p. 136). However, Dutsch does not insist on this possibility, but rather she stresses the fact that texts ascribed to women should be read in connection with other texts from the corpus or network in which women are impersonated; that is how a female intellectual is born. In the desire to assure the presence of female intellectuals, Dutsch presents and elaborates on three treatises attributed to male disciples (Ocellus, Callicratidas, and Bryson). Essentially, these treatises discuss the Pythagorean concept of universe and cosmology, sexual conduct, household management, advice on marriage, and even women's capacity for rational thought and virtues, which are necessary for women—either for managing household and estate or for being a resource to her husband. "All her good qualities are valuable because they best serve the husband's interests. A clever wife will increase rather than decrease her husband's wealth" (p. 152). Texts ascribed to male authors present women as a resource, even though it is not evident how they can achieve such a status. Pseudepigrapha ascribed to female authors can help in discerning

that. Dutsch presents two treatises and five letters that portray Pythagorean women as figures who are virtuous, thinkers, modest and moderate, harmonious, organized and excellent in housewife work, loyal, obedient, self–restricted or self–controlled, morally impeccable, non–confrontational, and even capable of practicing philosophy (even though this is more suitable for men).

For an overall portrait of Pythagorean women, it is best to look at the third and last part of the book which contains the texts and their English translations. That said, Dutsch did a marvelous job interpreting the texts and tracing interconnections among them, as well as among their readers, which is why there are a lot of references to Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics across the book. By doing so, she examined the corpus with philosophical and literary vigor. This book is an excellent read and an extensive guide to understanding Pythagorean women.

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