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## Timaeus and Aristoxenus on the Pythagorean Way of Life

While it is true that Pythagoreanism in the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC had already “sank into the quicksand of school controversies” (Burkert 1972), it is also true that Aristoxenus and Timaeus had a more profound knowledge about it than their contemporaries, even though for different reasons.

The aim of this paper is to reassess the overall meaning of the evidence provided by the fragments of both Aristoxenus and Timaeus, especially with reference to the picture they drew of the way of life and identity of the Pythagoreans, as well as of the Pythagoreanism as a cultural and historical phenomenon.

As a starting point for discussion I will take Plato, *Republic* 10, 600a8-e1 and the assumption to be found there that Pythagoras succeeded in steering his followers through their lives and in gathering together many *hetairoi*. Then the 4<sup>th</sup>-century debate on the ideal life will be briefly recalled as a crucial element of the Athenian cultural context in which Aristoxenus and Timaeus got involved.

As for Aristoxenus, I will argue that beside his polemic –more or less veiled- against other scholars, we should admit that there is not simply rationalism and apologetics, but a coherent attempt to construct a paradigm of ‘philosophic’ life through the Pythagoreans serving as an example. In such a context, polemic is no more than a means to strengthen this construct. From an historical point of view, however, it is important to remark that Aristoxenus’ contentious arguments should be taken as implying not only different contemporary views, but also more ancient realities: social practices, styles of life, ways of thought. According to this approach, Aristoxenus’ polemical stance is telling, and indirectly gives us an idea of the changing Pythagorean identities in 5<sup>th</sup> century South-Italy.

Timaeus, on his part, is a truly ‘external’ witness, but it is arguable that his treatment of Pythagoreanism was an integral part of a more general historiographical aim, with reference the role played in history by the Greek West. In addition to that, Timaeus must have developed an interest for the issue of what Pythagorean identity was, at least in his times, but probably also in 5<sup>th</sup>-century South Italy, as treatment of the saying *koina ta philōn* clearly shows.

What is still an open question is the nature of Timaeus’ treatment of Pythagoreanism. Did he devoted at least one book to an account of Pythagoreanism in itself (Jacoby)? Or on the contrary there was no self-contained narrative but only scattered references to Pythagoras and his ‘school’, as most recently Christopher Baron (Baron 2013) is inclined to think? My point here is that we should not limit ourselves to take into account the ‘fragments’, but we should try to get an idea of the topics and themes which Timaeus was interested to when it came to Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism. From this point of view neither a maximalist approach (‘an excursus devoted to Pythagoreanism’), nor a minimalist one (‘a bunch of scattered references’) seems to be advisable. Most probably Timaeus did not write in terms of ‘Pythagoreanism’. Nevertheless he must have perceived the historical and cultural importance of the role played by Pythagoras and his followers within the South-Italian cities, and spotted the novelty and impact of those communities of ‘friends’ (*philoī*).