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in Classical Humanities

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ARISTOXENUS OF TARENTUM

DISCUSSION

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY STUDIES IN CLASSICAL HUMANITIES VOLUME XVII

EDITED BY CARL A. HUFFMAN

TRANSACTION PUBLISHERS NEW BRUNSWICK (U.S.A.) AND LONDON (U.K.)
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Aristoxenus and Music Therapy
Fr. 26 Werther within the Tradition on Music and Catharsis
Antonietto Provenza

1. Introduction

The importance of music for the ancient Pythagoreans, together with recognition of its therapeutic function, already attested at the

1 My heartfelt thanks to Professor Carl Huffman and all the participants in the Aristoxenus Conference for their interest in my paper and comments. I will always remember those days at DePauw University as wonderful and happy. I wish also to thank Professor Salvatore Nicolis, my research tutor, for having read and discussed with me this essay at different dates. Translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

2 Still indispensable for a general overview of early Pythagoreanism and the question concerning it is Burkert (1972). Among Burkert’s main emphases is the Pythian contamination of sources on Pythagoreanism since the 4th century BCE and the representation of Pythagoreans as a “wise man” with shamanistic features (although the unsuitability of the notion of shamanism for ancient Greek culture has been since highlighted in Schramm’s [1983] 29–48 and [2002] 27–40; cf. also Minoz [1971]), rather than as a “scientist”, since “scientific Pythagoreanism” is not clearly anesthetized until Philolaus. Most important among the studies opposing Burkert’s “shamanistic” Pythagoras and giving prominence to the “scientific” side of early Pythagoreanism and to its relationship with Near eastern science are Kahn (1974), van der Wierden (1979) and Zhmud (1997). Also see on Pythagoreanism and its sources: Centrone 91
musical ethos was prominent, it traces back to the Pythagoreans, as influential and authoritative representatives of the traditional use of music therapy based on experience, the conception of therapy of the soul as complementary to that of the body.