

Iamblichus and the Foundations of Late Platonism

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THE PYTHAGOREAN WAY OF LIFE IN
CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA AND IAMBlichUS

Eugene Afonasin

Introductory Remarks

In his *De communi mathematica scientia* Iamblichus famously distinguishes two orders of initiation within the Pythagorean School.¹ However anachronistic, this distinction reflects a profound change of attitude to Pythagoreanism which took place in the process of transition from the Late Hellenistic to the Early Roman period.²

Clement of Alexandria as a 'Neopythagorean Philosopher' is relatively badly served, however. It will be useful therefore to collect various observations on this issue in a single outline. Clement is not only a good source, which enhances our knowledge of the Pythagorean tradition. He also was one of the first Christian philosophers to adopt the ancient theory of symbolism and to sow it in the new Christian soil. In his works the conceptual system of the second-century Middle Platonists and Neopythagoreans and the method of allegorical exegesis of Philo of Alexandria were incorporated

¹ 76, 16 ff. Festa. Cf. also *De vita Pythagorica*, 81. For text, translation and discussion see the article by Luc Brisson, included in this volume.

² As a part of the classical heritage, transmitted to Late Antiquity, the Pythagorean tradition is relatively well documented by the extant sources, fragments and *testimonia*, and much work has recently been done in the field. One can also observe the real renaissance of interest to philosophical biography in recent scholarship. This is especially true about the mysterious figure of Apollonius and the Neoplatonic philosophical biographies. The subject in general is covered in M. Hadas and M. Smith (1965). Also consider the numerous publications on Apollonius of Tyana, such as the progressive editions and translations of his *Letters*, Eusebius' polemical work and Philostratus' *Bios* (F. Conybeare 1950, R. Penella 1979, and Ch. Jones 2005–2006), now classical monographs on Apollonius by M. Dzielska (1986) and G. Anderson (1986), an account of scholarship on the subject by E. Bowie (1978), as well as more recent studies by J.-J. Flinterman (1995) and Th. Schirren (2005).

Cf. also J. Bollansée (1999) on Hermippos, as well as M. Edwards (1993 and 2000b), G. Clark (2000) É. Des Places (1982), A.-J. Festugière (1937), J. Dillon and J. Hershbell (1991), G. Staab (2002), Al. Oikonomides (1977), P. Athanassiadi (1999 and 2006) and D. O'Meara (1989 and 2006) on the Neoplatonic biographies by Porphyry, Iamblichus, Marinus, and Damaskius. One can also recollect studies on Diogenes Laertius and Hippolytus (A. Delatte 1922, A.-J. Festugière 1945, B. Centrone 1992, and J. Mansfeld 1992).

in the open texture of the Christian Weltanschauung. His distinction between fundamental belief (*koine pistis*) and the highest faith, on the one hand, and the scientific knowledge (*episteme*) and *gnosis*, on the other, became fundamental for the later Christian theory of knowledge. The highest faith and *true gnosis* were considered to be the final steps leading to Gnostic perfection, and symbolism played the central role in the process of its achievement. Clement believed that the student should be directed and educated according to a certain model (partially cast, as I shall argue, according to the Pythagorean paradigm). The education under the direction of a learned instructor required time, ability to listen and understand, and a special disposition towards knowledge, fortified by faith that the real knowledge could be achieved. In the process of *paideia* the student was supposed to acquire a certain state of moral perfection, in a symbolic way learning things, that could not be perceived otherwise, and exercising his analytical ability by means of natural and precise sciences.

Clement is not unique in his interest in Pythagoreanism. It is quite probable that, in his case, it was inherited from Philo (the best example being a community of the Pythagorean type, described by Philo in his *De vita contemplativa*), but equally possible is that the process went in both directions: Philo, the Gnostics, Clement (and other Christian philosophers), on the one hand, and Platonists like Nicomachus, Porphyry and Iamblichus, on the other, more or less independently created an image that agreed with the best ideals and expectations of the epoch. As a result, Clement's Pythagoras resembles the true Gnostic, while the lives of Pythagoras and such 'Neoplatonic saints', as Plotinus, Proclus or Isidorus are often reminiscent of the Christian *vitae* and even the Gospels.³

Working with Clement I have found it useful to compare his approach to the Pythagorean tradition with that of Iamblichus. The reasons, I believe, will become clear below, but what should be mentioned at the outset is that my interest is substantially based on the fact that, developing their variants of the "exhortation to philosophy" (*protreptikoi logoi*), these men were much concerned with the educational value of the Pythagorean way of life rather than (however important) biographical circumstances, designed to place the ancient sage in the proper cultural context. Besides, Clement

³ A well known example is Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica*, 12, where Thales is said to proclaim 'good news'. J. Dillon and J. Hershbell (1991) rightly suspect a Christian influence here. Especially on the subject, see a useful though doubtful book by I. Lévy (1927) as well as the studies by M.L. Lagrange (1936–1937), P. Jordan (1961), D. Blanch (1972), J. Schattenmann (1979), D. Dombrowski (1987), R. Grant (1980), and J. Thom (1994).

clearly occupies an intermediate position between the Neopythagorean biographical tradition, firmly based on Nicomachus, and that more or less vague and diffuse literary situation which preceded the great Neoplatonic synthesis. Finally, as a relatively independent student of Pythagoreanism, freely appropriating his sources for quite external purposes, Clement often appears to be a good and disengaged *testis*.

*What Did Clement Know about
Pythagoras and the Pythagorean Tradition?*

Let us now turn to Clement's writings, looking everywhere for the Pythagorean elements in them.⁴ Clement speaks about Pythagoras in various contexts and dedicates a special chapter (*Stromateis* V 27–30) to the Pythagorean symbolism. No surprise that for the lover of mysticism Pythagoras was an ancient sage and religious reformer; a God-inspired transmitter of the spiritual tradition, which itself reaches back to the most ancient times. From the very beginning the Pythagorean School functioned as a secret society and was shrouded in mystery.

Pythagoras from Samos,—says Clement,—was a son of Mnesarchus, as Hippobotus says. But Aristoxenus in his book the *Life of Pythagoras*, as well as Aristarchus and Theopompus say that he came from Tyre, Neanthes from Syria or Tyre, so the majority agrees that Pythagoras was of barbarian origin.
(*Strom.* I 62, 2–3; cf. Diog. Laert. VIII 1)

He was a student of Pherekydes⁵ and his *floruit* falls at the time of the dictatorship of Polycrates of Samos, around the sixty-second Olympiad [ci. 532–529 BCE].⁶ But the real teacher of his was certain Sonchis, the highest prophet of the Egyptians.⁷ Pythagoras traveled a lot and even “... underwent circumcision in order to enter the Egyptian shrines to learn their philosophy”. He communicated with the best among the Chaldaeans and the Magi.

⁴ The works of Clement are extracted according to Otto Stählin's edition. The *Stromateis* I–III are quoted according to J. Ferguson's translation, occasionally altered; for the rest of Clement's text I use William Wilson's translation with alterations. A partial earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference “The Quest for Truth: Greek Philosophy and Epistemology” (Samos, Greece, August, 2000).

⁵ *Strom.* I 62, 4. Cf. Diog. Laert. I 12 and VIII 2.

⁶ *Strom.* I 65, 2.

⁷ *Strom.* I 69, 1. Actually, Clement makes almost all the Greek philosophers Egyptians, and even Homer ‘as the majority agreed’ was of Egyptian origin (*Strom.* I 66, 1). So, Homer was a local man, while Plato, Pythagoras, Thales and many others, though from the other place, studied there. Apparently, the idea that he lived in a historic and intellectual centre of the world was dear to Clement's heart.

And their “common table (τὸ ὄμακοεῖον) symbolizes (αἰνίττεται) that which is called the Church (*Strom.* I 66, 2)”. Pythagoras was enthusiastic about Zoroaster, the Persian Magus, and the followers of Prodicus’ heresy claim to have obtained secret books of this prophet and religious reformer. “Alexander in his book *On Pythagorean Symbols* says that Pythagoras was a student of an Assyrian, named Zaratas”.⁸ In addition, he believes that Pythagoras has learnt many things from Gauls and Brahmans (*Strom.* I 69, 6–70, 1).

Clement is inclined to think that Pythagoras composed some writings himself, but gave them out as if they contained ancient wisdom, revealed to him for the first time. So did some of his students:

Ion of Chios⁹ in his *Treblings* says that Pythagoras attributed some of his works to Orpheus. Epigenes in his book *On Poetry attributed to Orpheus* says that the *Descent into Hades* and the *Sacred Doctrine*¹⁰ are works of the Pythagorean Cercops and the *Robe* and the *Physics* of Brontinus.

(*Strom.* I 131, 4–5)

Pythagoras was by no means a mere transmitter; he himself was a sage, prophet and the founder of a philosophic school:

The great Pythagoras applied himself ceaselessly to acquiring knowledge of the future (*Strom.* I 133, 2). The Italian Pythagorean school of Philosophy, which settled in Metapontum, lasted here for a long time.¹¹ (I 63, 1)

Students underwent serious tests and exams before entering the school. And even after being accepted they for many years remained only ‘hearers’, or (ἀκουσματικοί), those who heard the voice of the master, but he himself stayed hidden behind a curtain. Only after many years of preliminary studies did they become initiated or “learned enough” (μαθηματικοί)

⁸ Hippolytus (*Ref.* I 11, referring to Diodorus and Aristoxenus) even retells the teaching of this Zaratas about two *daimones*, the celestial and the ‘*khthonion*’. Cf. Porphyry, *VP* 41 which seems to be based on the same source (Alexander Polyhistor).

⁹ Cf. Diog. Laert. I 120. The testimony of this tragic poet (circa 490–422 BCE) and other early references to Pythagoras are conveniently assembled in Kirk–Raven–Schofield 1983, 216 ff., esp. on this text, 220–221.

¹⁰ Ὁ ἱερός λόγος. Cf. ἱερός λόγος in Herodotus, II, 81. The historian says here that it was Pythagoras, not Orpheus who borrowed the sacred rites from the Egyptians and introduced them to the Greeks. Cf. Diog. Laert. VIII 7.

¹¹ Having accepted the notion of continuity of the Pythagorean tradition, Clement was quite comfortable with various Pseudo-Pythagorica; at any rate no mention of the Anti-Pythagorean revolt is recorded (for complete accounts of the historical Pythagorean School cf. W. Burkert 1972, Ch. Kahn 2001 and L. Zhmud 2011 (forthcoming); on the Pseudo-Pythagorica cf. H. Thesleff 1961, 1965 and 1971, W. Burkert 1961, A. Städele 1980, B. Centrone 1990, C. Macris 2002).

and accorded a privilege of seeing the Master himself.¹² If a candidate was rejected or accused of a bad deed a burial mound was erected in commemoration of his 'death'.

Imagine now, that we are students at the Alexandrian school allegedly founded by Clement's teacher Pantenus,¹³ and listen to his lectures. What shall we learn about Pythagoras?

Clement would tell us that Pythagoras was a perfect example of righteousness among the Greeks who was worth following. But the road that leads to perfection is full of labor and everybody has to overcome it personally:

Pythagoras used to say, that it is reasonable to help a man to lift a burden up, but there is no obligation to help him down.¹⁴

Pythagoras instructed one to clean one's body and soul before entering the road by means of strictly drawn dietary regulations.¹⁵ One of the reasons for this is that the burden of food prevents soul from 'rising to higher levels of reality', a condition which, after certain exercise, could be reached during sleep or meditation. Maintaining self-control and a right balance is therefore absolutely necessary for everyone entering on the path of knowledge:

'A false balance (ζυγά δόλιχα) is an abomination in the Lord's eye, but a just weight is acceptable to him.' (*Prov.* 11.1). It is on the basis of this that Pythagoras warns people 'Step not over a balance (ζυγὸν μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν)'.¹⁶

It is said that the Pythagoreans abstain from sex. My own view, on the contrary, is that they married to produce children, and kept sexual pleasure under control thereafter. This is why they place a mystical ban on eating beans, not because they lead to belching, indigestion, and bad dreams, or because a bean has the shape of a human head, as in the line: *To eat beans is like eating your parents' heads*,—but rather because eating beans produces sterility in women.¹⁷

(*Strom.* III 24, 1–2)

¹² *Strom.* V 59, 1 (cf. V 67, 3). Note that Clement happened to be the first writer to use these terms.

¹³ On the question of historicity of the school see A. van den Hoek (1997).

¹⁴ *Strom.* I 10, 3; the very first reference to Pythagoras in the *Stromateis*.

¹⁵ *Strom.* II 92, 1. For a detailed account of the dietary regulations and philosophy beyond them see R. Grant (1980) and D. Dombrovsky (1987).

¹⁶ *Strom.* II 79, 2 and V 30, 1; cf. Iamblichus, *Prot.*, 21.

¹⁷ For this well attested Orphic fragment (648 Bernabé / 291 Kern) cf. also Diog. Laert. VIII, 34–35 (where Alexander Polyhistor, quoting from Aristotle, relates that abstention from beans is advised either because they resemble privy parts, or because they are like the gates of Hades ..., or because they are destructive, or because they are like the nature of the universe, or, finally, because they are oligarchical, being used in the choice of rulers by lot), Iamblichus, *VP* 61 (a curious story on how Pythagoras taught an ox to abstain from beans) and 109 (on

Pythagoras advised us to take more pleasure in the Muses than in the Sirens, teaching the practice of all form of wisdom without pleasure (*Strom.* I 48, 1).¹⁸ Heraclides of Pontus records that Pythagoras taught that happiness is the scientific knowledge of the perfection of the numbers of the soul.¹⁹

(*Strom.* II 130, 1)

The goal of the Pythagoreans consists therefore not in abstaining *from* doing certain important things, but rather in abstention from harmful and useless things *in order to* attain to a better performance in those which are really vital. As in the case with marriage (above), Clement generally disagrees with those who put too much emphasis on self-restriction. He has a good reason for doing this, as we shall see later whilst analyzing Clement's critique of some Gnostic ideas that are closely connected with the Pythagorean problematic. Pythagorean *abstinentia* should be based on reason and judgment rather than tradition or ritual. Thus *κοινωνία και συγγένεια* unites not only all mankind, but also all living beings with the gods. This alone is the sufficient reason for abstaining from flesh meat:

I think that it was a splendid statement of Hippodamus the Pythagorean: 'Friendships are of three kinds, one group arising from knowledge of the gods, one from the service of human beings, and one from animal pleasures.' These are respectively the friendships enjoyed by philosophers, ordinary men and animals (*Strom.* II 102, 1) ... I personally think that Pythagoras derived his gentle attitude to irrational animals from the Law. For example, he declared that people should refrain from taking new births out of their flocks of sheep or goats or herds of cattle for immediate profit or by reason of sacrifice.

(*Strom.* II 92, 1)

Blaming those who justify unnecessary cruelty because of avarice or similar external reasons, Clement completely ignores the traditional Pythagorean explanation, based on the concept of the 'unity of all living beings', i. e. the doctrine of reincarnation. Clement certainly knows this, but definitely

the fact that abstaining from beans has many unnamed sacred, natural and psychological reasons) and the very end of his *Protreptikos* (where a theological reason is given). Hippolytus (*Ref.* I 14, relaying on the above mentioned Zaratas) and Porphyry, *VP* 43 (also mentioning the Chaldeans two sections above) say that beans were created simultaneously with men and even suggest two experiments designed to prove this!

¹⁸ Cf. the beginning of the last chapter of Clement's *Protreptikos*. In order to clean and harmonize the soul the Pythagoreans had a habit of playing the lyre before going to sleep, a fact also attested in Plutarch (*De Iside et Osiride*, 384a) and Iamblichus (*De vita pyth.* 110–115).

¹⁹ The whole passage II 131, 2–133, 7 is obviously taken from a doxography, which records various 'opinions of the philosophers about happiness'. Clement even indicates where he has finished copying, saying 'so much of that' at the end of the extract.

prefers another, more practical explanation, leaving metempsychosis to the Gnostics who, according to his opinion, are guilty of a distortion of the Pythagorean doctrine. Pythagoras is taken here as a good example, opposed to those who also claim to derive their views from the ancient sage, but tend to misuse and misinterpret them.

Among the sources of his information²⁰ Clement acknowledges Aristarchus, Aristoxenus, Heraclides, Hippobotus, Theopompus, Neanthes, Alexander, Epigenes, Didymus, and some others.²¹ The extracts and comments on the Pythagoreans are scattered all over his voluminous writings and he does not fail to mention almost all the authors known to have written on the subject.²²

We know nothing about the nature of Pythagorean works by Aristarchus.²³ Aristoxenus of Tarentum was a student of Aristotle, who is reported to have known the 'last generation' of the Pythagoreans (Diog. Laert. VIII 46; Iambl., *VP* 251). As opposed to his contemporaries Dicaearchus and Heraclides Ponticus,²⁴ he is valued as the author of the first 'serious' biography of Pythagoras and a balanced description of the Pythagorean way of life (including the accepted rules of behavior, dietary regulations, the role of sciences and music in educational discipline, etc.).²⁵ Two more early

²⁰ On Clement's sources in general see: Vol. 4 (Indices) in the Stählin edition of Clement's works. Also there is a book by J. Gabriëlsson, *Ueber die Quellen des Clemens Alexandrinus* (Uppsala, 1906–1909) in two vols.

²¹ In order to see the context the reader is encouraged to refer to the passages cited above.

²² With the important exception of Dicaearchus (who is mentioned once in *Prot.* II 30, 7, but in a different context), Hermippos of Smyrna (mentioned in *Strom.* I 73, 1 in relation with the Greek mythology; wrongly identified with Hermippos of Berytos, the author of *On the Hebdomad* referred to in *Strom.* VI 145, 3; cf. Diog. Laert. VIII 41 and Bollansée 1999), Satyrus (cf. Diog. Laert. VIII 40 on Pherecydes), and some others. Apollonius (either a Pythagorean miracle-worker, or an alleged author of a biographic work on Pythagoras referred to by both Porphyry and Iamblichus) is also never mentioned. Having noticed Numenius, Clement could know the work of another Neopythagorean philosopher Nicomachus of Gerasa (roughly the beginning of the second century CE; cf. Dillon 1996, 352 ff.), the major source for Porphyry and Iamblichus, but he never mentions the man and his writings (which does not necessarily mean he does not use him).

²³ Unless this in fact is a reference to Aristotle, as O. Stählin suggests (cf. Arist. fr. 190 Rose). A certain Aristarchus of Samothrace was an Alexandrian librarian (the second century BCE).

²⁴ In his dialogue *Abaris* Heraclides lists the reincarnations of Pythagoras and describes his underworld journey, while Dicaearchus in his *On the Greek way of life* portrays Pythagoras as a skilled sophist, who attracted people in Croton by his speeches.

²⁵ Quite naturally, Clement refers to Aristoxenus again in his discussion of the musical styles (*Strom.* VI 88, 1). For the fragments of Aristoxenus, Dicaearchus and Heraclides see Wehrli, Bds. 1, 2, 7. Carl Huffman is preparing a new collection of Aristoxenus' fragments.

historians, Timaeus of Tauromenium and Duris of Samos, are mentioned several times, but not in connection with Pythagoras.²⁶ The Hellenistic historians, Theopompus of Chios²⁷ and Neanthes of Cyzicus,²⁸ contribute to the question of Pythagorean origin and, in line with Hippobotus,²⁹ rely that Pythagoras' father Mnesarchus (not Mnemarchus as in Iamblichus) came from Syria or Tyre, not Samos (*Strom.* I 62, 2–3, quoted above). Epigenes was a grammarian of the Hellenistic period, quoted by Clement in *Strom.* I 131, 4–5 (above) and V 49, 3, in relation with the Pythagoreans.

Of later authors Didymus' *On the Pythagorean Philosophy*³⁰ and Alexander Polyhistor's *On Pythagorean Symbols*³¹ (both no longer extant) are known to be also used by Diogenes Laertius, Nicomachus of Gerasa, Porphyry and Iamblichus. The Pythagorean Androcydes (mentioned in *Strom.* V 45, 2) had also written a book on the Pythagorean symbols, which was among the principal sources of the later tradition.³²

Judging from the variety of the sources used, one is inclined to think that in the majority of cases the opinions of the Pythagoreans (along with

²⁶ For Timaeus, cf. *Strom.* I, 64, 2, in the context of a long succession of philosophers; both Timaeus and Duris are referred to in I, 139, 4, on the date of the Trojan War and universal chronology, etc. Timaeus is a source for later reports about the Pythagorean community. He says, for instance, that citizens converted the house of Pythagoras in Metapontum into a temple, that Pythagoras' daughter (Theano?) led the chorus of woman in Croton, and that all Pythagorean converts had to undergo careful examination before being allowed to see the master face to face. Cf. Porphyry, *VP* 4, Diog. Laert. VIII 10–11, Athenaeus, IV 56, etc. Duris of Samos records a story about Pythagoras' son Arimnestus, who erected a dedicatory monument in the temple of Hera with an epigram and seven mathematical formulas (*σοφίας*). A certain musicologist Simos had stolen one of the *κωνών* and destroyed the monument (Porphyry, *VP* 3; cf. Burkert 1972, 455). This instance of *κλοπή* would definitely interest Clement who produced a huge list of similar stories at the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth books of the *Stromateis*.

²⁷ A historian, the fourth century BCE. For details cf. FGrHist 115 and M. Flower 1994.

²⁸ The end of the fourth century BCE. He knew Plato's secretary Philippus of Opus and is used in Philodemus' *Academica*. For details cf. FGrHist 84 and S. Schorn 2007.

²⁹ A historian of philosophy, of the third century BCE.

³⁰ (Arius) Didymus is also used by Diogenes Laertius, Eusebius and Stobaeus. Hermann Diels has identified him with the Stoic philosopher and confidant of Augustus, Arius of Alexandria (around 70–75 BCE). 'During the last 15 years there has been a gradual recognition that the hypothesis has its shaky aspects, but no direct challenge was mounted',—note J. Mansfeld and D. Runia in their *Aetiana* (1997, 240; esp. on Clement 239, fnt 129).

³¹ The historian Alexander (the first century BC) had also written the *Succession of Philosophers*, from which Diogenes Laertius (VIII, 25) derived his famous account of the Pythagorean doctrine. See A.-J. Festugière (1945).

³² Androcydes lived in the third century, or later, as W. Burkert suggests (1972, 176, 174). Cf. also P. Corssen (1912).

those of many other thinkers) had traveled to the pages of Clement's works directly from various collections. Therefore, in order to get the information Clement gives us, one could, I would suggest, simply consult a good anthology and possibly (but not necessarily, a biography) without undertaking actual studies of more extensive Pythagorean works.³³ It goes without saying that the history of the Pythagorean school and the life-story of Pythagoras had already become an established legend long before Clement's time and (probably, though not necessarily) the original sources were no longer available. But, given the keen interest of Clement in Pythagoreanism, we should not rule out the possibility that he carried out some study himself and consulted more specialized books. It will be safe to presuppose, I trust, that, in addition to an extensive doxography and isolated records, picked up in writings of various origin (mostly Platonic, Gnostic, and Christian), he must have had at his disposal a *Vita of Pythagoras* (quite possibly, that by Nicomachus or another Neopythagorean variation) and some Pseudo-Pythagorica (these two can easily, by the way, go together). A source used by Clement in his account of the Pythagorean symbolism is close to that utilized by Plutarch.³⁴

What Did Clement Make of the Pythagorean Ideas?

The texts quoted and pointed out above, combined with some other, quite numerous, instances, where Clement makes use of traditional Pythagorean wisdom, signal clearly that these ideas mean for him something more than just accidental references. Although sometimes he almost automatically copies from anthologies, in the majority of cases, the Pythagoreans (second only to Plato) seem to supply him with necessary means to state his own position in a more conventional way.

The Pythagorean community, with its specific regime, walks alone (κατὰ μόνας), common table and temple, ascetic practice, abstinence, ἐχεμυθία, ἀπάθεια, μετάνοια,³⁵ ἐγκράτεια, etc., resembles greatly the Christian monastic

³³ Indeed he refers to a certain collection of biographies by Neanthes. Some list of philosophical successions must have also been used (a long account of philosophic schools in *Strom.* I 59–65 is a perfect example of this sort).

³⁴ In concentrated form the examples of Pythagorean 'symbols' and their interpretation see in Clement's *Strom.* V 27, 1–30, 5 and the final sections of Iamblichus' *Protreptikos*. For detailed analysis cf. A. Le Boulluec (1981, vol. II, p. 114 ff.) and E. Afonasin (2003, 161 ff., 311 ff.). See also an important study by J. Thom 1994.

³⁵ Cf. e.g. *Strom.* V 67, 1. This 'repentance' recalls Plato's περιωγή (Rep. VII 518 d 4).

ideal, definitely known to Clement.³⁶ He adds a great deal of Pythagorean coloring, depicting a portrait of his true Gnostic first at the end of the *Stromata* VI, and then, in enormous detail, in *Stromata* VII.

Who are, according to Clement, the 'Pythagoreans'? We find him referring to and quoting from Cercops (*Strom.* I 139, 3),³⁷ Brontinus (I 131, 1 above), Theano (I 80, 4; IV 44, 2; 121, 2),³⁸ Zamolxis (IV 58, 13),³⁹ Philolaus (III 17, 1),⁴⁰ Hippodamus (II 102, 1),⁴¹ Theodotus (IV 56, 1),⁴² Lysis, Hipparchus (V 57, 3)⁴³ and Hippasus (*Prot.* 5, 64 and *Strom.* I 51, 4),⁴⁴ Timaeus Locrus (V 115, 4),⁴⁵ Eurysus (V 29, 1–4),⁴⁶ and some other ancient and later Pythagoreans, a

³⁶ P. Jordan (1961, 438) says: "At any point we meet parallels which would suggest a certain affinity in concept between Pythagoras and early Christian monachism".

³⁷ This Cercops, as presented in Arist. fr. 75 and Diog. Laert. II 46, appears to be a legendary rival of Hesiod. So he was made a Pythagorean later and no doubt on the ground that Orphica and ancient cosmogony became an integral part of the Pythagorean doctrine. Cf. Burkert 1972, 130 n. 60–61.

³⁸ Brontinus was the father or husband of the Pythagorean Theano. Theano is also mentioned by Clement: 'Didymus in his work *On Pythagorean Philosophy* records that Theano of Croton was the first woman, who wrote philosophic and poetic works' (*Strom.* I 80, 4). Cf. also *Strom.* IV 44, 2 and 121, 2 where Clement cites from some 'works' of Theano. Diogenes Laertius (VIII 42) reports two alternative traditions concerning Theano: she was either a daughter of Bro(n)tinus and the wife of Pythagoras, or the wife of Brontinus and a student of Pythagoras.

³⁹ "A servant of Pythagoras". Cf. Diog. Laert. VIII 2; both Clement (expressly) and Diogenes (tacitly) depend on Herodotus, IV, 93.

⁴⁰ Quoted in the context of anti-Gnostic polemics. On this most important Early Greek philosopher cf. Huffman 1993.

⁴¹ Quoted from a doxography (see above); a Pythagorean of the fifth or fourth century BCE (?), but also the Pseudo-Pythagorean author of *On the republic* (Thesleff).

⁴² An otherwise unknown character of Timotheus of Pergamum's book *On the fortitude of philosophers*. He endured tortures but did not disclose a secret (not clear, whether Pythagorean or not). The information is based on Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit*, 16 ff.

⁴³ Lysis belonged to the younger generation of the Pythagorean School, of whom the story (based on Aristoxenus) is told that, together with certain Archippos, he managed to escape from the fire that killed all the rest in the house of Milo in Croton (see, for instance, Iamblichus, *VP* 248), but Clement does not know this. Hipparchus is otherwise unknown and occurs only in the context of the *Letter of Lysis to Hipparchus*, which Clement quotes. For details, see below.

⁴⁴ Mentioned twice in doxographic contexts (cf. fr. 5 DK), not associated with the role the man allegedly played as the founder of the 'mathematic' branch of ancient Pythagoreanism.

⁴⁵ An ancient Pythagorean, the character of Plato's dialogue and a Neopythagorean philosopher, and the author of *De natura mundi et animae*, a pseudopythagoric tract, allegedly used by Plato in his *Timaeus* (Marg 1972 and Baltes 1972).

⁴⁶ Must be Eurytus, who is recorded among the most ancient and "committed" (Iamblichus, *VP* 226) members of the school, along with Philolaus, Lysis, Empedocles, Zamolxis, Alkmaion, Hippasus, etc. (Iamblichus, *VP* 103, esp. 139 and again in 148), but what is quoted by Clement is an extract from the Pseudo-Pythagoric Ekphantus (Thesleff 1965, 78–84 and

'Pythagorean' collection of sayings by Sextus (*Pedagogue* I, 81, 3, II 46, 3, 99, 3),⁴⁷ the Neopythagorean philosopher Numenius (I 71, 1),⁴⁸ but also Numa, king of the Romans⁴⁹ (I 71, 1; V 8, 4), Pindar (V 102, 2),⁵⁰ the Gnostic Isidore (II 114, 1), Philo of Alexandria (I 72, 4; II 100, 3) and even a literary personage, the 'Pythagorean' of Plato's *Statesman*!

Such diversity requires explanation. What made Clement affiliate all of them with Pythagoreanism? Clement states his approach quite plainly:

I do not speak of Stoic, Platonic, Epicurean or Aristotelian philosophy, but apply the term philosophy to all that is rightly affirmed by members of each of these schools concerning righteousness in accordance with sacred science. All this I call, in an eclectic way, philosophy. (*Strom.* I 37, 6)

Clement appears to have no intention to bother his listeners by sharp distinction between the schools and their theories. Quite on the contrary, he is much concerned to show that *essentially* they all are similar, since they ultimately ascend to the same ancient tradition. "There is just one unique truth", but the philosophic sects, like Maenads that scatter around the limbs of Pentheus, claim individual opinions to be the whole truth (*Strom.* I 57, 1). They have forgotten, says Clement, that there is the only one originator and cultivator of the soil⁵¹ and there is the only one way of truth, while many paths, leading from different places, join it (*Strom.* I 129, 1).

1961, 39, 65, 69 n. 4, 70). E. Goodenough (1932) argues that this tract was used by Philo in his *Quis rerum divinarum heres*. Actually Eurytus is also found among the Pseudo-Pythagoreans, as the author of a treatise *On fate* (extracted in Stobaeus; Thesleff 1965, 87–88).

⁴⁷ The *Sentences* 231, 280 and 283 (Chadwick) of a famous collection, enjoyed popularity in Christian circles and preserved in the original Greek, as well as in numerous translations, including the Coptic (The Nag Hammadi Library, Cod. XII 7). See a detailed study of the collections and the principles of their organization by Martha Turner (1996, 99 ff., on Clement; 104 ff., on Sextus). The text is preserved in four separate witnesses (two Greek manuscripts, a Syriac manuscript and a selection in Stobaeus), and all these collections are ascribed to Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans. Clement seems to be among the first authors to use these texts. Numerous extracts from a similar 'Pythagorean collection' are found in Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella* (cf. Turner 1996, 109 for a useful stemma).

⁴⁸ The earliest reference to the author, which gives the *terminus* for dating Numenius' life.

⁴⁹ Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome (715–673 BCE), was indeed a religious reformer. It is almost certain that Plutarch's *Numa*, 8 is Clement's source here.

⁵⁰ He quotes the beginning of the *Nem.* 6: "ἐν ἀνδρῶν, ἐν θεῶν γένος, ἐκ μιᾶς δὲ ματρὸς πνέομεν ἄμφω", and adds "scil. τῆς ὕλης". With a degree of imagination this indeed can be interpreted in a Pythagorean sense. On metempsychosis in Pindar cf. K. von Fritz 1957.

⁵¹ *Strom* I 34, 1 and again 37, 2: 'the only cultivator of the soil who from the beginning of the universe has been sowing the seeds and who sends rain when it is needed in the form of his sovereign Logos'. Compare this with Numenius, fr. 13 Des Places.

Entering this path presupposes a certain technique of teaching, which starts from a preliminary level⁵² and gradually proceeds towards special instructions directed to those of the students who are not only more gifted by nature in comparison with the rest, but also are 'inclined to virtue' and, consequently, are able to make better progress.⁵³ Finally, only those 'struck by the thyrsus', with great effort, attain to 'epoptic' knowledge.⁵⁴ For those who have approached the highest knowledge, school-distinctions are no longer valid, since they have already seen a glimpse of the true doctrine.

Well aware of the past and present school controversies, Clement knew the difference between, say, the Stoic and Pythagorean styles of thinking much better than we do now. At any rate, he certainly was better informed. Interestingly enough, that whilst speaking about the Peripatetic, Stoic or Pythagorean philosophers, Clement never uses the term 'Platonic' applied to a specific writer. Moreover the names of all his Platonizing contemporaries (definitely known to him) seem to be deliberately avoided. Did he think that the Platonic school no longer existed? Or can it mean that, for some reason, Clement did not like his Platonizing contemporaries and preferred to seek support in Plato himself? The only Neopythagorean Platonic philosopher he refers to, but not necessarily approves of, is Numenius. The epithet Pythagorean is perfectly in place here. Clement is quite moderate in his tone and certainly does not appeal to the authority of the ancient sage. His implied meaning is something like, [Even] Numenius the Pythagorean philosopher has (or is willing) to admit that Plato is no one but *Μωυσης ἀττικίζων*,⁵⁵ gives the argument its force here. Numenius, in the same way as the 'Peripatetic' Aristobulus,⁵⁶ is quoted in support of the 'dependence theme' favored by Clement.⁵⁷

Clement does not fail to mention the major Ancient Pythagoreans (with a conspicuous omission of Archytas), but the references are short and betray his dependence on an established doxographic tradition.⁵⁸ The epithet Pythagorean applied to Numa could well be a commonplace or borrowed from

⁵² *Strom.* I 45, 1 and 32, 4 ff.

⁵³ *Strom.* I 34, 3 ff.

⁵⁴ *Strom.* I 14, 1 and I 5, 1.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Strom.* I 150, 4 = fr. 8 Des Places.

⁵⁶ *Strom.* I 72, 4, cf. V, 97, 7; 99, 3. For fragments cf. Walter 1964.

⁵⁷ For a detailed account cf. D. Ridings 1995.

⁵⁸ As in *Strom.* II 127, 1 ff., where Pythagorean views on happiness, reported by Heraclides Ponticus, occur in a list of opinions on the same subject of such philosophers as Epicurus, Hieronymus the Peripatetic, Zeno the Stoic, Anaxagoras, Critolaus, etc.

Plutarch.⁵⁹ To call the *Italian* stranger in Plato's dialogue the Pythagorean instead of Eleatic, as it is traditionally taken, is an understandable mistake.⁶⁰

The remaining two instances, however, pose a problem. To call Isidore and Philo the Pythagoreans is certainly quite ingenious. Philo's 'Pythagoreanism' has been discussed by David Runia. His point here is that (1) the epithet Pythagorean, applied to Philo twice⁶¹ is a sign of Clement's favor or a compliment towards his Jewish predecessor, rather than an attempt to conceal his Jewishness, as it was sometimes suggested and (2) in general, Clement qualifies thinkers on the ground of 'affinity of mind', rather than any actual 'membership in' or 'affiliation with' this or that school (Runia 1995, 18). Indeed, while Philo's Jewishness is more or less obvious, various numerological speculations and some other elements of his thought betray clearly their 'Pythagorean' origin. The words of Clement quoted above (*Strom.* I 37, 6) perfectly agree with the latter assumption, and, given the context in which the epithet is used, the former one also appears to be quite justified. So, basically I find myself in agreement with D. Runia. One may say now that Clement literally rediscovered Philo and saved his works from possible oblivion.⁶² Since Clement considers Philo as belonging to the same exegetical tradition, he probably thinks that acknowledgment of a friendly source is not so important.⁶³

The Gnostic Isidore's 'affinity of thought' with the Pythagoreans points in quite a different direction. Isidore misuses Pythagoras, but nonetheless he has a good reason for doing this: "Isidore postulated two souls within us,

⁵⁹ Cf. Plutarch, *Numa* 8. One must suspect direct or indirect influence of Plutarch on Clement, judging from close parallelism, observed in such places like, e.g. *Strom.* I 70, 4 (just before the passage on Numa!) as compared with Plutarch, *The Oracles at Delphi (Moralia,* 397c-d).

⁶⁰ I mean *Strom.* I 48, 2 where Clement says: 'The Pythagorean in Plato's *Statesman* suggests ...' (and a quote from the *Statesman*, 261e is following).

⁶¹ *Strom.* I 72, 4 and II 103, 1. Philo is mentioned by name only two more times in *Strom.* I 31, 1 and I 152, 2, though Clement uses him to a much greater extent.

⁶² For details cf. Hoek 1988. To do Clement justice, one can remember that he acknowledges his debt to Philo, since his name is expressly mentioned in the beginning of three of the four long sequences of borrowings which constitute (as A. van den Hoek has calculated) approximately 38% of all real quotations, while the majority of disconnected 'citations' where O. Stählin suspected Philo's influence are in fact nothing more than reminiscences or literary commonplaces, which nobody would expressly acknowledge (Hoek 1996, 223-243, esp. 232).

⁶³ On the contrary, he always gives the exact reference in the cases of polemics. Clement's attitude towards the material and ideas borrowed from his Jewish predecessor is very 'creative': normally, he appears to use several Philo's treatises simultaneously and always extends his interpretations beyond Philo's exegetical limits, offering at least one new simile with expressly Christian meaning.

like the Pythagoreans” (*Strom.* II 114, 1). It is the Pythagoreans who should be blamed for propagation of the two-soul theory, and Clement thinks that the Pythagorean doctrine, especially in the form taken over by Isidore, must be abandoned, as well as the Pythagorean ‘isonomia’, appropriated by some Gnostics.⁶⁴ Lack of criticism and bad will brought these theories forth:

It is strange, that the zealots (ζηλωτάς) of Pythagoras of Samos, when called for [positive] demonstration of the objects of their investigation, found ground for faith in *Ipse dixit*, holding that in those words there was enough to establish all that they had heard. (*Strom.* II 24, 3)

My second example concerns Marcion. According to Clement, he and his followers derived their doctrine that birth is evil from Plato and the Pythagoreans. In accordance with Philolaus they hold that the soul is punished in the body and transmigrates (III 12, 1ff.; 13, 1–3):

The follower of Pythagoras says: “The theologians and the wise man of old witness that the soul is yoked to the body to undergo acts of punishment and is buried in it as in a grave”.⁶⁵

(*Strom.* III 17, 1 = Philolaus, fr. B 44 DK / 14 Huffman)

Porphyrus and Iamblichus testify that the doctrine of two souls (as opposed to a distinction of rational and irrational parts within one soul) was accepted only by Numenius (fr. 43–44 Des Places). Moreover, this makes Cronius, Numenius and Harpocration think that “all embodiments are evil” (Iamblichus, *De anima*, 29; Finamore–Dillon 2002, 57). It is interesting that Iamblichus approves and develops this concept in *De mysteriis* (VIII 6), *The Letter to Macedonius* (fr. 4 Dillon–Polleichtner) and elsewhere with the exception that not each contamination with matter is evil, since the most

⁶⁴ For instance, the Pythagorean ideas of the Monad and ‘community spirit’, understood badly, are found among the sources of the Carpocratian heresy. The founder of this heresy, says Clement, taught his “son” Epiphanes “the knowledge of the Monad”. In an otherwise unknown tract *On Righteousness* of this Epiphanes, quoted by Clement at some length, it is said that God in his ‘righteousness’ treats everybody equally, all men as well as irrational animals. Consequently, if God created everything in common and brings the female to male in common and joins all animals in a similar way, why should human beings be an exception to this rule and not hold wives in common? (*Strom.* III 5, 1ff.). While the idea of ‘isonomia’ itself is dear to Clement’s heart (cf. *Strom.* II 92, 1), the conclusion derived by Epiphanes is rejected. In this particular case it is not so difficult indeed, because the argument of Epiphanes is based on quite an obvious confusion of the terms *common* and *equal*.

⁶⁵ Scholars note that this fragment must be a later attempt to prove that Philolaus anticipated Plato and Aristotle’s doctrines, which places it in the Neopythagorean context. Huffman (1993, 404–406) is also inclined to think that the fragment is spurious (mostly on the basis of its style and vocabulary).

pure souls remain immaculate (ἄχραντοι) in their descent “for the salvation, purification and perfection of this realm” (*De anima*, 29 Finamore–Dillon).⁶⁶

Philolaus is also quoted in *Strom.* V, 140, 1, but in this case with obvious approval. The number seven is called by the Pythagoreans ἀμήτωρ, says Clement, which is perfectly correct and even corresponds with Lc. 20: 35.⁶⁷ A similar idea is repeated in *Strom.* V 126, 1.⁶⁸

Speaking about the adherents of Pythagoras (the ζηλωτάς as opposed to the listeners, ἀχροαταί) who prefer *Ipse dixit* to positive demonstration of the objects of their investigation, “holding that in those words there was enough to establish all that they had *heard*” (*Strom.* II 24, 3, above), Clement definitely alludes to the so-called ‘Hearers’ (ἀκουσματικοί), who, as opposed to the ‘Scientists’, or Disciples (μαθηματικοί) preferred to stay on the firm ground rather than pursue an inquiry which could bring about very unexpected and shaky conclusions. Apparently, the Gnostics are not on

⁶⁶ This is discussed in detail by J. Finamore and J. Dillon (2002, 156 ff.) and D. Taormina in her article included in this volume.

⁶⁷ Fr. B 20 DK / 20 Huffman; Clement does not mention the name, but the information is borrowed from Philo (*De opificio mundi*, 100; *Legum alleg.* 115; *Quis rerum div. heres*, 170). The fragment is genuine, although Thesleff identifies a Pseudo-Pythagorean Onetor behind the testimony (Huffman 1993, 334 ff.).

⁶⁸ Quoting here from an Orphic poem (fr. 248 Kern / 691 Bernabé) Clement approves of the (well attested) concept of μητροπάτωρ as applied to the divinity. A close parallel in the Gnostic literature is found in a certain Monoimos the Arabian (Μονοίμος ὁ Ἄραψ), an otherwise unknown person, whose work of doubtful provenance is summarized by Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VIII 12, 1–15, 2. Developing a numerological scheme based on the Pythagorean Decad, interpreted as the letter Iota (“a single Stroke”), this author says: “The man is a single unity, incomplete and indivisible, composite and divisible; wholly friendly, wholly peaceable, wholly hostile, wholly at enmity with itself, dissimilar and similar, like some musical harmony, which contains within itself everything which name and leave unnoticed, producing all things, generating all things. This unity is Mother and Father, the two immortal names (*Ref.* VIII, 12, 5; cf. V 6, 5, trans. G.C. Stead)”. Hippolytus ends by quoting from a letter of this Monoimos to a certain Theophrastus: “Cease to seek after God and creation and things like these, and seek after yourself of yourself, and learn who it is who appropriates all things within you without exception and says, “*My God, my mind, my thought, my soul, my body*”, and learn whence comes grief and rejoicing and love and hatred, and waking without intention (μὴ θέλοντα) and sleeping without intention, and anger without intention, and love without intention. And if you carefully consider these things”, he says, “you will find yourself within yourself, being both one and many like that stroke, and will find the outcome of yourself” (*Ref.* 15, 1). We have no idea who this Monoimos could be. According to Julian (*Or.* IV 150 d), a god named Monimos was worshipped in Emesa, therefore in this case we may deal with a ‘Pythagorean’ letter ascribed to the name of a certain deity. Probably this is a mere coincidence, but from Photius (*Bibl.*, cod. 181) we learn that, according to Damascius, among Iamblichus’ ancestors there were Sampsigeramos and Monimos. Dillon (1987, 865) notes that Sampsigeramos was the founder of the line of priest-kings of Emesa, while, Monimos, if we emend Stephanus of Byzantium’s record (s. v. Χάλκις: πόλις ἐν Συρίᾳ, κτισθεῖσα ὑπὸ Μονικοῦ τοῦ Ἄραβος), could become none other than the founder of Iamblichus’ native city.

the safe side. Still, himself being obsessed with mystery, Clement definitely prefers the second possibility, embracing the way of inquiry, leading to things concealed from the multitude, and the Pythagorean ‘two levels of initiation’ (*Strom.* V 59, 1), along with the real or alleged esotericism of other philosophical schools, is perceived as an example which is worth following:

Objects, visible through a veil, look greater and more imposing than they are in reality; as fruits seen through water, and figures behind the curtain, which are enhanced by added reflection to them ... Since the thing expressed in a veiled form allows several meanings simultaneously, the inexperienced and uneducated man fails, but the Gnostic apprehends (σφάλλεται μὲν ὁ ἄπειρος καὶ ἀμαθής, καταλαμβάνει δὲ ὁ γνωστικός). Now it is not wished that all things be exposed indiscriminately to everybody, “or the benefit of wisdom communicated to those who have their soul in no way purified, for it is not just to give to any random person things acquired with diligence after so many labors or to divulge to the profane the mysteries of the word”.⁶⁹ They say that Hipparchus the Pythagorean was expelled from the school, on the ground that he had published the Pythagorean theories, and a mound was erected for him as if he had already been dead. In the same way in the barbarian philosophy they call those dead who have fallen away from the teaching and have placed the mind in subjection to the passions of the soul.

(*Strom.* V 56, 5–57, 4)

Fortunately, the text appropriated, the so-called *Letter of Lysis to Hipparchus*, has come down to us independently and is quoted in greater length by Iamblichus (*VP* 75–78) and other authors, although Clement is the first writer to use it.⁷⁰ What is wrong with Hipparchus?

⁶⁹ “οὐδὲ κοινοποιεῖσθαι τὰ σοφίας ἀγαθὰ τοῖς μηδ’ ὄναρ τὴν ψυχὴν κεκαθαρμένοις· οὐ γὰρ θέμις ὀρέγειν τοῖς ἀπαντῶσι τὰ μετὰ τοσοῦτων ἀγώνων πορισθέντα οὐδὲ μὴν βεβήλοισ τὰ τοῦ λόγου μυστήρια διηγείσθαι” (Dillon–Hershbell’s translation is consulted).

⁷⁰ The original text runs: ὅστιον κάμῃ μεμνάσθαι τῶν τήνου θεῶν τε καὶ σεπτῶν [ἀνθρωπειῶν] παραγγελμάτων, μηδὲ κοινὰ ποιεῖσθαι τὰ σοφίας ἀγαθὰ τοῖς μηδ’ [οὐδ’] ὄναρ τὰν ψυχὴν κεκαθαρμένοις. οὐ γὰρ θέμις ὀρέγειν τοῖς ἀπαντῶσι τὰ μετὰ τοσοῦτων ἀγώνων (σπουδᾷ) πορισθέντα, οὐδὲ μὴν βεβάλοισ τὰ ταῖν Ἐλευσινίαν θεῶν μυστήρια διαγέεσθαι. “For it is pious to remember the divine and holy [in Iamblichus: human] precepts of the famous one, not to share the good things of wisdom with those who have their souls in no way purified. For it is not lawful to give to any random person things acquired with diligence after [so many] struggles, or to divulge to the profane the mysteries of the Eleusinian goddesses” (Dillon–Hershbell’s translation). The complete text see in Thesleff 1951, 111–114; text, translation and analysis in Stådele 154–159, 203–251; for a detailed study cf. Burkert 1961, 16–43, 226–246 and Tardieu 1974 (esp. on Clement). The letter, written in ‘Pythagorean Doric’, is ascribed to Lysis, one of the last Pythagoreans, who survived after the revolt in Croton in around 450 BC. Its author blames certain Hipparchus for his infidelity and reminds him the story about Pythagoras’ daughter Damo, who did not break his father’s will and saved the texts entrusted to her. Iamblichus quotes the letter in *VP* 75–78, starting from the end with an unexplainable exclusion of the story about Damo and her daughter Bistala. Diogenes Laertius VIII 42, on the other hand,

They say you philosophize in public with ordinary people, the very thing Pythagoras deemed unworthy, as you learned, Hipparchus, with zeal, but you did not maintain, having tasted, good fellow, Sicilian extravagance, which ought not to happen to you a second time. If you repent of your decision, I will be pleased, but if not, you are dead (εἰ δὲ μὴ γε, τέθνακας).

(Thesleff 1965, 114, l. 2–3 and 12;
Iamblichus, *De vita pyth.* 75, Dillon–Hershbell’s translation)

A nice warning in the spirit of Sicilian vendetta! In a less radical manner Clement adds that this is exactly what the Christians do with those who have proven to be untrue, lamenting over them as if they are dead. Could the story described in the letter correspond to a historical event? We will never know this. Suppose, one Hipparchus was a talented mathematician, who decided that he is “learned enough” to pursue independent studies. It is quite imaginable that more orthodox members of the society did not like the situation and determined that it is time to intervene and restore order. Being symbolists they punished him in a symbolic manner, while the later generations of the Pythagoreans, being unable to see the real reasons behind the old controversy, invented several plausible hypotheses with a metaphysical meaning, as if, as in the novel by the Strugatski brothers *Definitely Maybe*, Nature itself retaliates for this deed.⁷¹ In this vein Plutarch warns that disclosure of a mysterious geometrical demonstration could invite a smaller or bigger disaster (*Numa* 22, 2–4). Commenting on the well-known story about the wrongdoer (Hipparchus or Hippasos), who has died as the result of a shipwreck, Pappus writes:

This is most probably a parable by which they sought to express their conviction that firstly, it is better to conceal every surd, or irrational, or inconceivable in the universe, and, secondly, that the soul which by error or heedlessness discovers or reveals anything of this nature which is in it or in this world,

is interested in Damo only and identifies this Hipparchus with Hippasos, the well known ‘Apostate’, who disclosed the mystery of irrationality to the laymen (see 18 DK). Iamblichus clearly distinguishes these two men: the quote from the letter remains the only mention of Hipparchus, while Hippasus is on the record three times and is included in the catalogue (VP 81, 88, 104, 257). Curiously enough, affirming that ‘some say that Hippasus came from Croton, some from Metapontum (81)’, he then mentions him in the catalogue as a citizen of Sybaris. Although Clement quotes two purely doxographical reports about Hippasus (*Prot.* 5, 64 and *Strom.* I 51, 4; cf. fr. 5 DK) he does not seem to associate these men with each other and, in general, tends to level all the breaks in the Pythagorean tradition.

⁷¹ Or *A Billion Years Before the End of the World* (1974), a story about an astrophysicist who, working on his thesis “Interaction of Stars with Diffused Galactic Matter” feels that someone or something is trying to prevent the completion of his work and finally realizes that the mysterious force is the natural reaction on the human scientific pursuit which threatens to harm the very essence of the Universe.

wanders thereafter hither and thither on the sea of non-identity, immersed in the stream of coming-to-be and passing-away, where there is no standard of measurement.

(*Syn.* I 2, p. 64 Junge–Thomson, quoted after Burkert 1972, 457–458)

Proclus echoes this, making them hint at the fact that all that is irrational likes to hide and that the intruder would not get away with that (Proclus, *In Euclid.* I, 44). Iamblichus informs us that Hippasus' fault consisted in unauthorized publication of a geometric theorem on the sphere constructed of twelve pentagons (that is to say, the dodecahedron), and he was lost at sea for his impiety (*De vita pyth.* 88).⁷²

This is a deviation, however regrettable, but what about the norm? On two possible interpretations of the split within the Pythagorean society—and we clearly have to choose between two schools (those of Pythagoras and Hippasus)⁷³ or two types of order within a single school—the later authors almost unanimously opt for the second. Clement (*Strom.* V 59, 1) says that the Pythagorean School was subdivided into two levels of initiation by its founder himself. The picture is quite peaceful and this division has nothing to do with the break of secrecy:

But the Pythagorean society (ἡ Πυθαγόρου συνουσία) and two-fold communication (διττῆ κοινωνία) with its associates, the majority, ἀκουσματικοί, and the so-called μαθηματικοί, genuine philosophers, signifies that “something was said openly, while something had to be kept secret”. (Hom. *Od.* XI 443)

Thus, Pythagoras discoursed about sciences with those inclined to philosophy, while the rest received ethical maxims in a ‘symbolic’ manner. The terminology occurs in Clement for the first time and it is safe to suppose that it can be traced back to Neopythagorean biography.⁷⁴

⁷² The Pythagoreans are less bloodthirsty than ‘nature’. Iamblichus says that if this kind of problem happened at any time after the surrender of goods by a student, he received the double of what he had brought to the community (*De vita pyth.* 118). Dodecahedrons were probably cult objects, later interpreted as the images of the whole (as in Plato's *Timaeus*). For a detailed study cf. Burkert 1972, 460 ff. At any rate, unlike Pappus or Proclus, Clement, Iamblichus and similar ‘pure humanitarians’ are not really concerned with mathematical peculiarities, taking ‘irrationality’ in the epistemological and even everyday sense of the word.

⁷³ Cf. Diog. Laert. VIII 7, based on Heraclides Lembos (where Hippasus is reported to attack the good reputation of his relative Pythagoras by disseminating the *Sacred Logos* under his name), Iamblichus, *DCMS* 76, 19 and *De vita Pyth.* 88, 246 and 257.

⁷⁴ For detailed accounts see W. Burkert (1972, 192–217) and L. Zhmud (1997, 93 ff. and, in developed form, 2011, Ch. 5; I am grateful to the author for allowing me to consult the work prior to its publication). Could the historical truth be stripped of later inventions? This is the question which admits no single solution for us and the ancient authors alike. W. Burkert

It is remarkable to observe how Iamblichus manages to combine these two approaches together. He says that a certain ‘hearer’ Hippomedon was teaching that the ἀκούσματα are in fact the remnants of the old wisdom, once explained by Pythagoras and widely understood. But because their original sense is now lost they must be interpreted in a symbolic manner, and this task has been assumed by those among the Pythagoreans who are most concerned with ethical and political problems. On the contrary, the μαθηματικοί busied themselves with scientific inquiry (“as Pythagoras called geometry”) and followed the teaching of Hippasus, who introduced this novelty. Therefore the μαθηματικοί agree that the ἀκουσματικοί are genuine Pythagoreans, but insist on the superiority of their teachings.⁷⁵

Still the idea itself comes back to Pythagoras: when he came from Samos to Italy some leading politicians got interested in his teachings. Since they were too busy with current politics, he gave them very short instructions without explanation (“just as those medically treated, even when not learning the reason why each thing must be done to them, no less attain health”). On the other hand, young peoples interested in science had enough time and disposition to receive the complete instructions. This is the origin of the two groups, says Iamblichus, remarking that Hippasus, although he was a Pythagorean, died in the sea for his impiety (*De vita pyth.* 88–89, cf. 81):

Those who heard Pythagoras either within or without the curtain, those who heard him accompanied with seeing, or without seeing him, and who are divided into the “in” (esoteric) and “out” (exoteric) groups are properly

traces the evidence back to Aristotle and admits that ‘it must be taken seriously as an expression of historical facts’ (1972, 205), although he accepts that the terms ‘do not go back to the original schism, but were only later applied to the rival groups’ (217, n. 80). L. Zhmud argues that it was Iamblichus (*VP* 82–83, 85), who associated ἀκούσματα with the Pythagorean σύμβολα, and that the terminology could hardly go back further than Nicomachus. Cf. Porphyry, *VP* 37 who, as Iamblichus below, could also be based on Nicomachus.

⁷⁵ Thus in *De vita pyth.* 87; while a few sections earlier (81) ‘the μαθηματικοί do not agree that the ἀκουσματικοί are Pythagoreans, or that their mode of study derived from Pythagoras, but from Hippasus’. In *De com. math. scientia* 76, 19 these two passages stand together, but the μαθηματικοί and the ἀκουσματικοί are reversed, which results in the claim that the μαθηματικοί were willing to accept the ἀκουσματικοί as the low level of initiation within the Pythagorean school, while the latter continued to dismiss the former as deviant followers of Hippasus: τούτων δὲ οἱ μὲν ἀκουσματικοὶ ὁμολογοῦντο Πυθαγόρειοι εἶναι ὑπὸ τῶν ἐτέρων, τοὺς δὲ μαθηματικούς οὗτοι οὐχ ὁμολογούν, οὔτε τὴν πραγματείαν αὐτῶν εἶναι Πυθαγόρου, ἀλλὰ Ἰππάσου. The extract is based on Nicomachus, and the text in *DCMS* is considered to be the original, changed in *VP* to suit Iamblichus’ theory (Burkert 1972, 193, n. 8). Clement may also take this from Nicomachus, as Burkert (1972, 459, n. 63) and other scholars suspect. Leonid Zhmud (2011, Ch. 5) takes the authorship of Nicomachus for granted, although evidence adduced is clearly insufficient to decide upon the matter.

not to be considered other than those already mentioned; and the political, economic, and legislative divisions are to be ranked as subdivisions of the same groups. (Dillon–Hershbell’s translation)

Besides, people asked him to give a series of public lectures which certainly could not contain explanations and technical details, more suitable for a sufficiently prepared audience. These lectures were concerned with ethical and political problems and made him a famous ‘sophist’. Young people started to flock around him seeking for instruction, but he did not allow everybody to enter the inner circle, “behind the curtain”, the place reserved to the genuine disciples. This is how the *ἀκουσματικοί* and politicians differ from the *μαθηματικοί* and philosophers.⁷⁶

Clement, however, does not want to know about any schism: this two-fold education is considered by him a well-designed technique, which gradually leads the students to the ‘revealed knowledge, reserved for the elite’ (“only the Gnostic apprehends”). Moreover, he argues, that this kind of teaching was commonly accepted by all ancient philosophic schools, including the Stoic, Epicurean and even Peripatetic (*Strom.* V, 58ff.). As prolegomena to the true knowledge, symbols and *ἀκούσματα* reveal the basic truths worth following, but their meaning remains hidden and could only be discovered by those capable of keeping on the way of intellectual inquiry. As preliminary instructions they help the student “to lift a burden up” but the labour remains everybody’s personal endeavour. However different in details from Iamblichus, Clement vindicates the fame of the old sage, although the highest knowledge (*gnosis*) revealed to the initiate has nothing to do with the irrationality in mathematics and the original “mysteries of the Eleusinian goddesses” are replaced with “the mysteries of *Logos*”.

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⁷⁶ Pythagoras’ eloquence is mentioned already by Isocrates (*Busiris*, 28) while his speeches at Croton, attracted young people, women etc. and ‘reproduced’ by Iamblichus, are alluded to by the Peripatetic Dicaearchus (fr. 33 Wehrli = Porphyry, *VP* 18).

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