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Part II

Philosophical *Agōn*

Federico Casella¹
**Conflict and Opposition: Pythagorean Strategies for the
Construction of an Identity**

Studying the history of Pythagoreanism is a difficult task. The majority of the information we have comes from post-Pythagorean authors, who often were offering—and endorsing—a view separate from Pythagoreanism. As a result, they tended to characterize Pythagoreanism narrowly as a religious movement, a philosophical system, a circle of mathematicians, and so on. Even so, a cross-comparison between various sources allows us to focus on some events whose authenticity can be accepted with a high degree of certainty. I shall analyze the revolts against the Pythagoreans that broke out in Magna Graecia in (possibly) two different centuries, events that played a pivotal role in the history of Pythagoreanism. By reconsidering these revolts, I reveal a recurring attitude within them: I argue that Pythagoras himself and his disciples constructed a Pythagorean identity by directly opposing an ‘external’ element, from which each Pythagorean was asked to distance himself and against which he had to agonistically build his particular βίος, his particular “way of life.”

Competing histories

A version of the events that led to the destruction of Pythagoras’s school in Croton is reported by Iamblichus, who borrows his information from Aristoxenus of Tarentum. “A conspiracy” (ἡ ἐπιβουλὴ) was hatched by a citizen of Croton, Cylon. The story goes that he was very eager to become a member of the Pythagorean community, but he was rejected because of his personality, which was deemed violent and despotic. In response, Cylon organized several attacks against Pythagoras and his disciples, thus forcing the first to flee to Metapontum, where he died. The peak of violence in Croton was a fire set in the house of

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one of the most famous Pythagoreans, the athlete Milo, where he and his fellow disciples had gathered to discuss public affairs. Only two Pythagoreans from Tarentum escaped unharmed: Archippus—who should be identified with Archytas—and Lysis. The first went back to Tarentum, the second took refuge in the Peloponnese and finally moved to Thebes, where he became the master of Epaminondas. “The remaining Pythagoreans” (οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ τῶν Πυθαγορείων) left Italy. At this point, the text presents a gap and it is impossible to determine how the story proceeded.²

Iamblichus also offers another version, presumably from Nicomachus of Gerasa, which matches perfectly with Aristoxenus’s story. The only difference is that Pythagoras was not present during the attacks, because he was at Delos with Pherecydes of Syros.³

The last source for Iamblichus was Apollonius of Tyana. According to his words, a cloud of “jealousy” and “suspicion” (ὁ φθόνος τῶν ἄλλων) began to spread among the population of Croton when its citizens realized that Pythagoras stopped interacting with them, preferring to meet only with his disciples. Moreover, an increasing number of Pythagoreans were given positions and roles in the city government, whose affairs were discussed only within the Pythagorean community. Pythagoras and his disciples also refused to distribute the land taken from Sybaris among the wider population of Croton. Finally, the Pythagoreans always displayed an open refusal to embrace the customs of the other—uninitiated—citizens. As a result, a revolt broke out (“social unrest” ἡ διάστασις). At its head were Cylon, the leader of the wealthiest citizens, and Ninon, from the popular classes. Both of them asked to extend access to public offices to non-Pythagoreans. Cylon gave a public lecture from a pamphlet, which he declared was written by Pythagoras himself: its title was “Holy Speech” (λόγος ἱερός). In accordance with his words,

² Iamblichus, *The Life of Pythagoras*, 248-51. Direct translations from Greek are marked by “” and are mine, if not stated otherwise.

³ Iamblichus, *The Life of Pythagoras*, 251-3.

Pythagoras urged his disciples to “establish a tyranny” (τυραννίδος ὀρέγεσθαι) and to “despise the rest of the people” (τοὺς δ’ ἄλλους ὥσπερ τὰ θηρία χειροῦσθαι). In response to this revelation, a large number of citizens suddenly attacked the various Pythagorean circles, forcing some of their members to flee from the city. Later, a trial was entrusted to the judgment of delegates from three cities—Tarentum, Metapontum, and Caulonia—who were bribed by Cylon. They declared the Pythagoreans guilty of plotting against Croton, and banned them all with their families.⁴

Porphyry transcribed the report from Dicaearchus of Messana word-for-word:⁵ Pythagoras was present during the uprisings, and was involved in the burning of Milo’s house, an event that harmed only the Pythagoreans from Croton.⁶ Pythagoras managed to survive, and fled first to “Port Caulonia” (εἰς Καυλωνίαν τὸν ὄρμον σωθῆναι) and to Locris, where he was rejected. The elders of the city feared that Pythagoras would force them to revise the constitution of the city. He then went to Tarentum, but the city doors closed before him because its citizens were hostile to Pythagoreanism. In the end, Pythagoras took refuge at Metapontum, where he died.⁷

Porphyry also quotes another source. Though the author is anonymous, he was probably Neanthes of Cyzicus. The source states that Pythagoras committed suicide immediately after the burning of Milo’s house because he could not bear the loss of so many disciples. Archyppus (i.e., Archytas) and Lysis were the only survivors—the other details are close to Nicomachus’s and Aristoxenus’s versions.⁸

⁴ Iamblichus, *The Life of Pythagoras*, 254-64.

⁵ As noted by Édouard des Places, *Porphyry. Vie de Pythagore; Lettre à Marcella* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982), 63, n. 5.

⁶ Dicaearchus states that the version which claims Pythagoras to be absent – because he went to Pherecydes of Syros – is false, as Pherecydes had died earlier: Dicaearchus proves to know Nicomachus’s version.

⁷ Porphyry, *The Life of Pythagoras*, 56-7.

⁸ Porphyry, *The Life of Pythagoras*, 55, 57.

Polybius briefly mentions the revolts. After the main conflict in Croton, civil strife and violence spread in every city of Μεγάλη Ἑλλάς.⁹ Finally, information is provided by the book dedicated to Pythagoras in Diogenes Laertius's *Vitae Philosophorum*. He reports an anonymous version, according to which Pythagoras was involved in the fire at Milo's house, set by an unnamed citizen of Croton, who was "envious" (διὰ φθόνου) of the Pythagorean circle because he had been previously rejected. Pythagoras miraculously escaped, and he reached the edge of a broad-bean field, where he decided to stop and allow himself to be captured, instead of crossing it. He was taken and slaughtered. About forty of his fellows were imprisoned, and only a few, including Archytas and Lysis, survived unharmed.¹⁰

It is difficult to say which of the conflicting testimonies is true. Finding a definitive solution for this problem is likely to be impossible. And yet we can still draw historical conclusions from the various and seemingly contradictory sources.

Aristoxenus

From the story of Aristoxenus reported by Iamblichus, the importance of Tarentum emerges clearly. The only two survivors, Archytas and Lysis, came from this city. In addition, they played a pivotal role in the survival of the Pythagorean movement outside of Croton: in Magna Graecia thanks to Archytas, and thanks to Lysis in continental Greece. Lysis became the master of one of the most famous and influential Greek figures, Epaminondas of Thebes.

The story of the revolts against the Pythagoreans seems to refer to a single, continuous process—in Iamblichus's text the word for the revolt is singular, it is "the conspiracy" (ἡ ἐπιβουλή)—which began in the final years of the sixth century BCE, once the war between Croton and Sybaris ended. This conspiracy is said to involve not only Pythagoras and Milo—whose activity ended in the last years of the sixth century BCE—

⁹ Polybius 2.39.1-4.

¹⁰ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers*, 8.39-42.

but also Archytas and Lysis—who were born in the middle of the fifth century BCE and were active in the fourth century BCE.

Aristoxenus probably rejected rigorous chronology in his description of the events, preferring to connect influential Pythagoreans from Tarentum to Pythagoras's last moments in Croton regardless of the period to which all the characters really belonged. There is a logic of '*a-chronia*,' the lack of concern for chronological order. Because he took this approach, Tarentum emerges as the true heir of the original community of Croton. Archytas could thus be seen as the 'new' Pythagoras.

Aristoxenus probably relied on stories spread in Magna Graecia by the Pythagoreans of Tarentum in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Their purpose was to celebrate Tarentum's community, not to provide an accurate historical reconstruction. In fact, Aristoxenus of Tarentum was very close to the Pythagorean circles of his city, which had played an important role in his education before he entered Aristotle's school. In addition, Aristoxenus wrote a book entitled *Life of Archytas* in apologetic tones. Therefore, Aristoxenus did not passively accept the exaltation of Tarentum's Pythagoreanism from his sources, he promoted it directly.¹¹

Nicomachus and his primary source, Neanthes, were also based on Aristoxenus's account. Even though they introduced some minimal variations in the story, they both inherited the underlying apologetic spirit.¹² Neanthes could be responsible for

¹¹ For all this, see Domenico Musti, "Le rivolte antipitagoriche e la concezione pitagorica del tempo," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 36 (1990): 35–65, esp. 39–55.

¹² The biography of Pythagoras offered by Nicomachus, which is based on Neanthes's information, was the primary source for Iamblichus: he borrowed the passages of Aristoxenus reported in *The life of Pythagoras* 248–51 from Nicomachus: see Kurt von Fritz, *Pythagorean Politics in Southern Italy. An Analysis of the Sources* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 105–7; Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, trans. Edwin L. Minar (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 97–9. For the tradition Aristoxenus–Neanthes–Nicomachus, see Fritz, *Pythagorean Politics*, 3–4.

the misinterpretation that lead him to unite two distinct revolts into one, as will be explained below. Neanthes likely misread the information from Aristoxenus's text, due to its lack of historical clarity.¹³

Apollonius of Tyana

The story by Apollonius of Tyana is based on information provided by Timaeus of Tauromenium, who used not only Pythagorean sources, but also other kind of testimonies, such as inscriptions and official documents from the city archives.¹⁴ He had a rational approach towards his sources, selecting versions that were not manifestly contradictory or historically inaccurate.¹⁵ In fact, an attempt by Apollonius of Tyana to show the historical and social causes of the revolts can be easily recognized. Therefore, it could be more of a reworking than an exact reconstruction of the events that occurred.

The claim that the citizens of Croton were hostile to the Pythagoreans can be accepted as a plausible explanation for the uprisings. The Pythagorean community in Croton was probably closed and exclusive, a city within the city, whose behavior and precepts were manifestly different from the ones followed by the rest of the population. The public lecture given from the pamphlet attributed to Pythagoras confirms this tendency. Pythagoreans attracted suspicion from the rest of the citizens, who probably depicted them as members of a limited community that plotted constantly against uninitiated people in the pursuit of absolute

¹³ For this, see Edwin L. Minar, *Early Pythagorean Politics in Practice and Theory*, (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1942), 68.

¹⁴ For the dependence of Apollonius from Timaeus, perhaps not direct but intermingled from various other authors, and the sources used by the latter, see Fritz, *Pythagorean Politics*, 65–7; Minar, *Early Pythagorean Politics*, 52; Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 104–5.

¹⁵ For this and for Timaeus's approach, see Christopher A. Baron, *Timaeus of Tauromenium and Hellenistic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 138–61, and the bibliography there cited.

power in spite of the traditional customs of Croton.¹⁶ This resentment towards Pythagoreanism could have led to an open revolt once Pythagoras and the disciples who held political charges refused to distribute the land taken from Sybaris among the wider population of Croton. This can be considered reliable information: Pythagoras had ties with the aristocracy of both Croton and Sybaris, neither of which were eager to distribute lands to the broader, and poorer, part of the citizens.¹⁷

Dicaearchus

Dicaearchus's story differs completely from Aristoxenus's. Dicaearchus puts Tarentum in a bad light, as it denied hospitality to the master and the founder of Pythagoreanism himself. In addition, Locris appears obtusely anchored to the customs of its forefathers, which Pythagoras threatened to change. Regarding Caulonia, a colony of Croton, the city is not depicted as autonomous, only as a port—"Port Caulonia" and not "the port of Caulonia." Dicaearchus's account was probably based on a Pythagorean source hostile to Tarentum and Locris. It also shows Caulonia as still subject to Croton's rule, as a port. Therefore, this story originated from Croton, and its main purpose was to prevent any claim by Pythagorean communities of other cities to being the true heir of Pythagoras.

In Dicaearchus's account, no one is said to have escaped the attacks. It is possible that the original source listed Pythagoreans from Croton as the sole survivors and Dicaearchus deliberately omitted it because, in this case, the celebratory intent trumped the historical one. Dicaearchus probably adopted the version from

¹⁶ I follow Gabriele Cornelli, "Una città dentro la città: la politica pitagorica tra i *lógoi* di Pitagora e le rivolte antipitagoriche," in *Pensare la città antica: categorie e rappresentazioni*, eds. Gabriele Cornelli and Giovanni Casertano, (Napoli: Loffredo, 2010), 21–38.

¹⁷ The aristocrats had strong influence in Croton and Sybaris: regarding the aristocrats of Sybaris, they were often accused of indulging in luxury. For this see Robert Gorman and Vanessa B. Gorman, "The *Trýphe* of the Sybarites: A Historiographical Problem in Athenaeus," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 127 (2007): 38–60.

Croton because it was the closest to a plausible account, without manifest contradiction in its chronology, even though it was less known due to the great fame and influence of the Pythagorean circles of Tarentum. Dicaearchus probably purged his sources of what he saw to be inaccurate details in an effort to make them look more coherent, even though he inherited their latent hostility to Tarentum.¹⁸ Therefore, we must not immediately accept his testimony as a valid reconstruction. It is based on stories not interested in offering a work of history, and it is also the result of Dicaearchus's demand for rigor and plausibility—he could have altered certain data.¹⁹

Polybius

According to Polybius, the revolts harmed all the Pythagorean communities in Magna Graecia, but it is difficult to recognize which territory he had in mind. The story of a Magna Graecia created by the Pythagoreans, and centered on Croton and Pythagoras, is reported both by Porphyry (VP 20) and by Iamblichus (VP 29-30): therefore, it could be information borrowed from Nicomachus of Gerasa, who is a common source for the two authors. However, since Polybius depicts a similar Magna Graecia, we should seek a more ancient source than Nicomachus: in Polybius's text, massacres, proscriptions, and civil wars were mentioned in similar words to those of Apollonius of Tyana, who, in turn, based his information on Timaeus's accounts. Therefore,

¹⁸ For Dicaearchus, see Giuseppe Cordiano, "La diaspora pitagorica in Dicearco e in Aristosseno: tradizioni pitagoriche a confronto," *Kokalos* 45 (1999): 301–27.

¹⁹ For Dicaearchus's rationalizing approach, see Stephen A. White, "Principes Sapientiae: Dicaearchus' Biography of Philosophy," in *Dicaearchus of Messana. Text, Translation and Discussion*, ed. William W. Fortenbaugh and Eckart Schütrumpf (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2001), 195–236. Dicaearchus was also a Peripatetic biographer: he made ancient philosophers the protagonists of some anecdotes in order to promote a particular aspect of philosophy, namely ethical-political activities. Aristoxenus followed the same path, but emphasized the theoretical activity: see Craig Cooper, "Aristoxenos, Περὶ βίων, and Peripatetic Philosophy," *Mousetion* 2 (2002): 307–39.

Polybius's Μεγάλη Ἑλλάς can be traced back to Timaeus of Tauromenium: the territory in which the struggles took place were thus Croton and its domain.²⁰

A passage from Iamblichus contributes to supporting this hypothesis. There is a second depiction of Magna Graecia, which is not centered on Croton but involves other places and characters, such as Tarentum, Rhegion, Velia, and Sicily, with Parmenides, Empedocles, and other figures. This second Μεγάλη Ἑλλάς could be dependent on the existence of Pythagorean communities that arose in various places after the first great rebellion in Croton and its subject cities, while Pythagoras was still alive. The second Magna Graecia is not focused on Pythagoras's teachings and activities, but on his disciples'. In both of these descriptions, Magna Graecia is a Pythagorean creation.

Competing Communities

To summarize, each group of Pythagoreans that survived the revolts kept a different record of these events. The various versions were forged in closed environments, transmitted orally and reconfigured to exalt or to challenge the importance claimed by individual circles.²¹ At the same time, a reaction took place which was dedicated to reconstructing the history of the Pythagorean movement by distorting information, or making fun of Pythagoras to denigrate his legacy. Hence the emergence of *Holy Speech* as anti-Pythagorean propaganda, or the anecdotes from Diogenes Laertius according to which Pythagoras preferred to die rather than cross a broad-bean field (the hatred for broad-beans was one

²⁰ As pointed out by Minar, *Early Pythagorean Politics*, 76.

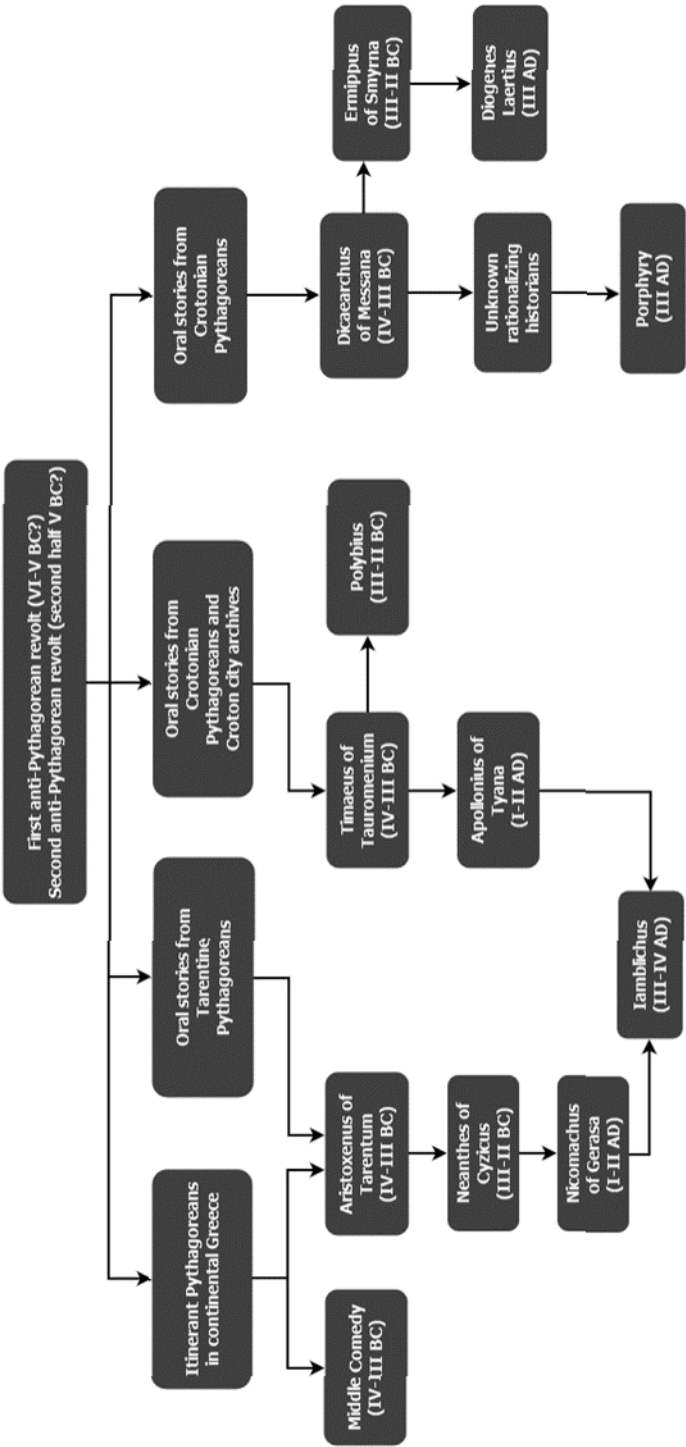
²¹ The tendency to reconfigure events regardless of their historicity is typically Pythagorean. It can be recognized also in a version of the defeat of Sybaris by Croton: the first was beaten because it was impious, while Croton won thanks to its devotion to the gods, spread by Pythagoras. See Marco V. García Quintela, "La destrucción de Síbaris y la mitopoyesis pitagórica," *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 28 (2002): 19–39. This is a perfect example of how the various Pythagorean circles were active centers in the forging of anecdotes.

of the most recurrent Pythagorean stereotypes).²² In response to these multifaceted sources, ancient historians either tried to reconcile all the information, or embraced some apologetic details. In Porphyry's and Iamblichus's works, these testimonies converged. The relationships between the authors cited above are shown in Fig. 1.

Due to this great variety of sources and their hidden intents, it is impossible to reconstruct with absolute certainty the events regarding the revolts against the Pythagoreans. We can only accept what appears in all the testimonies. We can thus confirm that a series of attacks from people hostile to Pythagoras and his disciples took place in Southern Italy starting from the end of the sixth century BCE. This event forced the survivors to escape and disperse to other Italian cities or to continental Greece.

There probably were two revolts. The first took place in Croton and possibly the territories subject to it, which hosted small Pythagorean enclaves, shortly after the end of the war between Croton and Sybaris in the last years of the sixth century BCE, or at the beginning of the fifth century BCE. The second can be traced to the middle of the fifth century BCE. This revolt affected various Pythagorean communities in Southern Italy—Tarentum, Locris,

²² It is difficult to establish what led Diogenes Laertius to choose his sources. In the book dedicated to Pythagoras's life, there are different kind of reports: some that follow a historical approach, others that tend to offer extraordinary stories and anecdotes. For Diogenes Laertius see Armand Delatte, *La vie de Pythagore de Diogène Laërce*, (Hildesheim: Olms, 1988 [Bruxelles 1922]), 9–46; Bruno Centrone, "L'VIII libro delle «Vite» di Diogene Laerzio," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992), 2.36.6.4183–217. The broad-bean field episode was probably borrowed from Ermippus of Smyrna, a Peripatetic who was also a disciple of Callimachus of Cyrene. The absence of reverence towards the figure of Pythagoras emerges clearly from the episode mentioned above: Ermippus shared the ironic attitude of his master, giving space in his numerous works to sources hostile to Pythagoreanism. Therefore, he was not a totally reliable historiographer. For Ermippus's works and his irony against Pythagoras, see Jan Bollansée, *Hermippus of Smyrna and his Biographical Writings* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 44–52, 118–41, 182–4.



Croton, etc.—and involved Archytas and Lysis.²³ The ‘material’ and ‘spiritual’ unity of the Pythagorean movement was thus shattered, because two of the elements that held Pythagorean identity together were destroyed, namely, the capital center of Croton and the presence of Pythagoras himself. The remaining Pythagoreans founded small circles in the cities where they had found refuge.

The Pythagoreans of Southern Italy in the fifth century BCE limited their direct relationships with other Pythagorean communities in order to maintain their identities. Each claimed to be the sole successor of the original school of Croton by denigrating the rival circles. The anachronism of some testimonies regarding the history of Pythagoreanism depends originally on the story written and spread by Pythagoreans who aimed not to provide a work of historiography but a competitive apology. The Pythagoreans who settled in continental Greece, meanwhile, probably assumed the same attitude as the original Pythagoreans of Croton under Pythagoras’s rule: they deliberately distinguished themselves from the customs of the cities in which they took cover.

Aristoxenus mentioned Xenophilus of Thrace, Echecrates, Polymnastus, and Diocles of Phlius among “the most important” Pythagoreans (οἱ σπουδαιότατοι).²⁴ These names also appear in Diogenes Laertius, who called them “the last” Pythagoreans (τελευτᾶται). Aristoxenus was probably listing the main Pythagoreans of the fourth century BCE who resided in mainland Greece. According to his text, these last Pythagoreans finally disappeared, but they achieved exceptional fame, giving “a glorious end” to the history of the movement (ἐφύλαξαν μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἦθη καὶ τὰ μαθήματα, καίτοι ἐκλειπούσης τῆς αἰρέσεως, ἕως εὐγενῶς ἠφανίσθησαν). Aristoxenus’s aim was not only to celebrate the final moments of Pythagoreanism, but also to oppose criticism of the Pythagoreans of Greece, who were

²³ For the possibility to distinguish two different revolts see Fritz, *Pythagorean Politics.*, 92–3; Minar, *Early Pythagorean Politics*, 70–9; De Vogel, *Pythagoras*, 20–7; Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 115–20.

²⁴ Iamblichus, *The Life of Pythagoras*, 251.

the primary object of irony in some of the fragments from authors of the Middle Comedy (the authors between Aristophanes and Menander).

Very little survives from the comedies *Pythagoristés* by Aristophon, *Tarantínoi* by Cratinus the Young, *Pythagorízousa* and *Tarantínoi* by Alexis.²⁵ Their target was Pythagorean custom: the clothing and appearance (frugal and very similar to those of the Cynics), the vegetarian diet, the habit of only drinking water, various deprivations that turn into useless penalties, the belief in the immortality of the soul and the interest in rhetoric and sophistry. Their “way of life,” their βίος, was mostly despised.²⁶ Although the existence of individuals who claimed to be followers of Pythagoreanism in mainland Greece during the fourth century BCE can be admitted, I do not mean to say that the fragments from the Middle Comedy are historically reliable sources. Rather, the comedians’ intent was to mock certain figures, thus emphasizing and exaggerating some of their traits by following Comedy stereotypes, such as the eccentric sage, the parasite, the useless philosopher, and so on.²⁷ Still, there is a common ground shared with other Pythagorean sources.

²⁵ The title *Tarantínoi* could raise the immediate association between Tarentum and Pythagoreanism among the public, as the city was the last place in which the movement flourished and found an authoritative fame. For an analysis of the – unclear – titles see William G. Arnott, *Alexis: the Fragments. A commentary* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 579–86, 624–5.

²⁶ For Aristophon, see Rudolf Kassel and Colin Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci: Aristophon-Crobylus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1983), F 9, 10, 12, for Cratinus the Young, F 7. For Alexis, see Rudolf Kassel and Colin Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci: Agathenor-Aristonymus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), F 201-2, 223. According to Alexis, the precepts that the Pythagoreans used to follow were νόμος, or ἔθος according to Cratinus.. For the depiction of the Pythagoreans in the fragments of the Middle Comedy, see Sandra Novo Taragna, “Alessi e il pitagorismo (fr. 223 K.-A.),” in *Voce di molte acque. Miscellanea di studi offerti a Eugenio Corsini*, ed. Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti (Torino: Zamorani, 1994), 119–27.

²⁷ Radislav Hosek, “Die Gestalt des Philosophen auf der Bühne der mittleren attischen Komödie,” *Acta Universitatis Carolinae. Philologica, Graecolatina Pragensia* 13 (1991): 23–35, esp. 25–7; Jorge L. Sanchis Llopis, “Los

We can draw other, similar historical conclusions from Aristoxenus and Nicomachus of Gerasa. The first says that Pythagoreanism increasingly faded, although the last Pythagoreans honored the greatness of the movement with their way of life; the second states that, after the revolts, the Pythagoreans dispersed far and wide and lived secluded and alone where they took refuge, deliberately avoiding the company of other people, even though they constantly and manifestly underlined their philosophical nature.²⁸ The testimonies of Aristoxenus and Nicomachus can be matched to the information that emerges from the fragments of the Middle Comedy. There were Pythagoreans scattered in various parts of continental Greece who belonged to small groups, or were even isolated individuals.²⁹ As a response to their loss of influence in politics and the marginalization of their active role in society, they adopted 'individualism', erecting a strong defense of the βίος they deemed to be authentically Pythagorean, established by Pythagoras himself.³⁰ As a result, they attracted either the mockery of the majority of the citizens or the admiration of intellectuals close to

pitagóricos en la comedia media: parodia filosófica y comedia de tipos," *Habis* 26 (1995): 67–82.

²⁸ Iamblichus, *The Life of Pythagoras*, 253.

²⁹ The presence of Pythagoreans in mainland Greece and, in particular, in Athens could also be inferred from Aristophanes's comedies, namely the *Clouds*, which mocks some tendencies close to Pythagoreanism. For the main allusions to the Pythagoreans in others ancient comedies, see Antonio Mellero Bellido, *Atenas y el Pitagorismo. Investigación en las fuentes de la comedia* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Científico, 1972), 49–70.

³⁰ In the sources, some characters are named either in pairs or in groups of a few individuals: this can confirm the need for individualism and the will of the last Pythagoreans to seclude themselves from public activities. See, for example, Amiclas and Prorus (Diodorus Siculus 10.4.1), Clinias and Prorus (Iamblichus, *The Life of Pythagoras*, 239), Damon and Phytias (Diodorus Siculus 10.4.3; Iamblichus, *The Life of Pythagoras*, 234), Myllias and Timycha (Iamblichus, *The Life of Pythagoras*, 189–94), and Xenophilus, Echechrates, Polymnastus, and Diocles remembered by Aristoxenus.

the movement.³¹ The profession of a particular behavior, in open contrast with traditional customs, was the final ‘anchor’ to keep the identity of the last and dispersed Pythagoreans alive. In a certain way, the final phase of the history of Pythagoreanism is linked to the characteristics of the first, when there was only the center of Croton under Pythagoras’s direction: the awareness of being an exception within the Greek world, and, therefore, the will to distinguish oneself from common ways of life.³²

³¹ The last Pythagoreans were probably itinerant philosophers, another element that prevented them from settling in a city and adopting its laws and customs: see Kurt von Fritz, “Mathematiker und Akusmatiker bei den Pythagoreern,” *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische. Phil.-Hist. Klasse*, 11 (1960): 3–26, esp. 13–26.

³² The individuals listed above marked the beginning of the “extinction” of the Pythagorean movement as both a set of doctrines and a way of life, starting from the third century BC: none of the last Pythagoreans were, in fact, able to exert an authoritative aura following Archytas, Lysis, and Philolaus’s disappearance. For this see Leonid Zhmud, *Pythagoras and the Early Pythagoreans*, trans. Kevin Windle and Rosh Ireland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 105–34. I wish I could continue this reconstruction of the history of Pythagoreanism by investigating the challenge posed by Plato. Dialogues such as the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus* could hide, among the many purposes, the wish to counter the validity of either the philosophical doctrines or the ways of life defended by the last Pythagoreans of Southern Italy and of continental Greece: the aim could have been to show them the superiority of Platonism and, therefore, to convert the Pythagoreans. In the future, I hope to analyze the connection between Plato and the Pythagoreans more deeply; this represents another Pythagorean struggle, not against uninitiated people nor against other exponents of the movement, but against a strong intellectual figure.

