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BECOMING DIVINE BY IMITATING PYTHAGORAS ?¹

In the Christian collection of pagan prophecies known as the *Tübingen Theosophy*², an oracle is presented as Apollo's answer to a consultant who asked « if it was possible for him to come near to God by attending to his way of life (εἰ δι'ἐπιμελείας βίου δύναται γενέσθαι θεοῦ ἐγγύς) »³. « You should beware of seeking a privilege (γέρας) that would make you

1. Originally delivered (in a much shorter form) on April 17, 2004, to the Second Biennial Graduate Student Conference *Becoming divine : concepts of immortality in the ancient world*, held at the Harvard Classics Department, this paper has been considerably improved since (or so I hope !), thanks to the rich discussion that followed its presentation, with the participation, among others, of Jan Bremmer, Albert Henrichs, Christopher Jones and Gregory Nagy, as well as thanks to the advice and criticism of Polymnia Athanassiadi, Nicole Belayche, Jaap-Jan Flinterman and Christopher Jones, who saved me from various mistakes, and of my friends and colleagues Christina Kokkinia and Pénélope Skarsouli : to all of them, I am profoundly grateful. My special thanks go to Jan Bremmer, Jaap-Jan Flinterman, Christopher Jones and Dimitris Kyratas, who were kind enough to communicate to me copies of their most recent articles before publication. Last but not least, I would like to thank Michael Chase, Sylvana Chrysakopoulou, Arnold Hermann and Liam Mc Carney for their help with correcting and polishing my English at various stages of the redaction, and often under difficult, if not extreme, circumstances...

Abbreviations:

Alex. = Lucian, *Alexander or the false prophet*.

D.L. = Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of philosophers*.

Ep. = [Apollonius], *Letters*.

VApol. = Philostratus, *In honour of Apollonius of Tyana (Life of Apollonius)*.

FGrHist (contin.) = see *infra*, bibliography, *sub* Radicke 1999.

2. Dated somewhere between the last decade of the 5th and the first five years of the 6th century by its last editor, P.F. Beatrice.

3. *Tübingen Theosophy*, I, 40 ed. Beatrice = § 44 ed. Erbse.

an equal to the gods (ισόθεον)! Such a thing is beyond your reach (οὐ σοι ἐφικτόν) », was the god's answer. However, the recorded oracular response — which probably originated in the sanctuaries of Claros or Didyma in Asia Minor during the 2nd or 3rd century A.D.⁴ — recognized that some extraordinary men such as Hermes (Trismegistus), Moses and Apollonius of Tyana were actually granted this privilege.

Divine honours and « wannabe gods »: godlikeness and assimilation to God, heroization and apotheosis

The situation reflected in the above-mentioned compilation can be used to illustrate how widespread and how clearly expressed was the need to come close to divinity, to become godlike, akin to god or equal to god, a « divine man » or even a deity — increasingly from the Hellenistic times onwards, and especially in Late Antiquity. This could seem a pretentious and excessive ambition, if not a *hubris*, in the context of ancient Greek religion and morality. However, precisely in that same context the tendency to obscure the line of demarcation between god and man was very strong. Both because of the anthropomorphism of the gods and of the religious/« mystical » or philosophical promise of human immortality (after death), the proximity of the mortal to the divine realm appeared so close, that godlikeness and assimilation to God was the explicit goal pursued by most of the philosophical schools or traditions⁵.

But to try to acquire immortality, or to aspire at divinity, is one thing, and to be recognized by a collectivity (a circumscribed circle of disciples, followers or adepts, a city, or even a whole empire) as endowed with a superhuman status is quite another. The fulfillment of the ambition to divinity was actually quite exceptional, and took place *after death*, through the attribution of such *extreme honours* as heroization and/or divinization (or deification): it is *post mortem*, or at best towards the end of his life, that the θεῖος ἄνθρωπος was counted among the immortals and became the object of a cult⁶.

4. Cf. Busine 2002.

5. On godlikeness and assimilation to God in the ancient philosophical tradition, see most recently Koch 2005, *passim*, esp. pp. 21–25 (« *Homoiōsis theōi*: une échelle escamotable »), with earlier bibliography. Given the argument developed in the following pages, it is important to stress here the Pythagorean contribution to this debate; cf. Joly 1964.

6. On heroization and apotheosis in general, see most recently Buraselis *et al.* 2004. On Pythagoras' own heroic cult, see Boyancé 1972², pp. 233–241. According to the same scholar (*ibid.*, pp. 242–247), the Pythagorean tradition made also an original contribution to the transformation of « l'idée du héros ».

The two fundamental criteria for posthumous retrospective/retroactive recognition of the divine status of such exceptional beings (be they « friends of god », « divine men », « heroes », good « *daimones* », « sons of god » or « semi-gods »⁷) were:

a) the *admiration* for (or fear of!) *their individual superhuman gifts* (prophetic or poetic inspiration; extraordinary wisdom; phenomenal physical and/or mental strength; healing powers; privileged communication with the divine realm of the κρείττονες; control over the natural elements; miracle-working), which distinguished them from ordinary mortals, and, in the case of the religious mediators among them, enabled them to operate more or less independently of the institutionalized cults⁸;

b) the *gratitude* felt by their contemporaries, or even by later generations, for the fact that *they used their charismatic qualifications* not so much for the sake of self-glorification, or of material profits of any kind (as was the case with the boastful ἀλαζόνες or the magicians [γόητες] respectively), as *for the benefit of the civic community, if not of humanity at large*, by founding, defending, ruling, benefitting, educating the city, by giving it laws, but above all by prophesying, healing and miracle-working⁹.

It was not unusual, though, that these charismatic rulers, wise men and religious mediators claimed a special relationship with the divine, a divine

7. See the articles « Gottesfreund », « Gottessohn », « Gottmensch » and « Heros » of the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (written by K. Treu, C. Colpe, H.D. Betz and W. Speyer respectively). On the « divine men » in particular, see the brilliant brief synthesis of Flinterman 1996, discussing earlier bibliography, and for a (somewhat hyper) critical assessment of the issue, see Du Toit 1997.

8. For the « holy men »'s independence from the established cults, cf. Flinterman 1996, p. 93. For their place within the landscape of the « religious specialists » (or mediators), see Macris 2003, esp. pp. 249 *sqq.* and 267 *sqq.*, who operates with the Weberian categories of « charisma » and « charismatic ».

9. Heroization and apotheosis mainly concern founders (οἰκισταί), defenders and benefactors of the city; rulers (kings, emperors, tyrants); lawgivers; wonder-workers, healers, prophets/diviners, magicians etc. who protected the city from plagues, cataclysms, etc. or predicted terrible calamities; great educators of the young (poets, sages, philosophers); olympic victors (one of the glories of the city in antiquity!). — On the categories of « divinizable » men, see the very illuminating fr. 146 of Empedocles (*ap.* Clement, *Stromata*, V, 150, 1), according to which « at the end [exceptional souls?] come among men on earth as prophets, minstrels, physicians, and leaders (μάντις, ὑμνοπόλοι, ἱητροί, πρόμοι), and from these *they arise as gods*, highest in honour (ἐνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῇσι φέριστοι) » (transl. M.R. Wright). We should underline the « Apollonian » character of the four « professions » mentioned by Empedocles. In a similar context, Pindar (fr. 133) adds athletes and wise men. — That the hero cult in particular raised as an expression of gratitude for special services towards the cities was emphasized by Habicht 1970².

origin, or even a divine identity *already during their terrestrial lives*. In this case their main concern was not so much to put in practice scrupulously the appropriate way of life that leads to immortality and divinization, as to provide as many proofs as possible of their intermediary, half-human half-divine status¹⁰, if not of their (absolute) divinity, by demonstrating various astonishing superhuman gifts and powers.

Disapproved and stigmatized as magicians and charlatans (γόητες) by the conservative defenders of traditional piety and of the institutionalized cults or religions, as well as by the convinced and uncompromising rationalists¹¹, these odd, disconcerting figures not only inspired the devotion of many, who considered them as « divine men », but also became the subject of encomiastic, propagandistic biographies, comparable to Christian hagiographies¹².

Imitation and the Pythagoras model

Now at least two of the « divine men » of the Imperial period (undoubtedly the best known of all) are clearly presented in our literary

10. On the indefinable intermediary status of the « divine men », see e.g. Aristotle, fr. 156 Gigon (*ap. Iamblichus, On the Pythagorean way of life*, § 31): one of the most secret teachings of the Pythagoreans was that Pythagoras belonged to a third « class » of beings, which are neither gods nor men, but something in between. Cf. more generally Macris 2004, t. II, p. 267.

11. Cf. e.g. the negative evaluations of and polemics against « charismatic » figures like Pythagoras, Empedocles, Jesus, Apollonius of Tyana or Alexander of Abonuteichos. On Pythagoras, see e.g. D.L. VIII, 21 and 41, with Macris 2003, p. 276. On Empedocles, see D.L. VIII, 66-67 and 71-72, with Laks 2003, pp. 21-29, esp. p. 26 sqq. On the « *Pythagorei et magi* » of the Republican Rome, see *infra*, pp. 310-312. On Jesus, see Gallagher 1982. On Apollonius, see Speyer 1989, pp. 176-192; Hahn 2003; Hägg 2004. On Alexander, see Lucian, *Alexander or the false prophet*, *passim*. It should be stressed here that in most cases the ancient debates on the ontological status of the above-mentioned figures, as well as on their recourse to magical arts and treacherous means, antedate the pagan-Christian conflict, or are independent of it. They are primarily internal to the pagan (or, in the case of Jesus, Jewish) tradition, reflecting various possible polarities and oppositions within it: incredulous rationalists *versus* uncritical (or, worse, superstitious) devotees and believers; conservative traditionalists *versus* innovative modernists; περσιδευμένοι aristocrats *versus* uneducated folk, etc. (Of course reality is much less clear-cut and much more complicated than it is indicated in these rather schematic couples...) An interesting parallel is established by Kyrtatas 2005 between the practices of the quasi-contemporary diviners/prophets Montanus (on the Christian side) and Alexander of Abonuteichos (on the pagan side), as well as between the reactions raised against them among their coreligionists, namely the Christian church and the Epicureanizing pagan Lucian respectively (see esp. Kyrtatas 2005, p. 31 sqq.).

12. See Goulet 2001 and van Uytanghe 2001.

sources as conscious imitators of Pythagoras. Flavius Philostratus, an Athenian 3rd century representative of the Second Sophistic, says of the itinerant sage and miracle-worker Apollonius of Tyana¹³ (active in the 1st century A.D.) that he pursued the Pythagorean ideal « by courting wisdom in *more* divine fashion than Pythagoras (θειότερον ἢ ὁ Πυθαγόρας) » (VApol. 1, 2). Admittedly, this was a quite expected rhetorical *hyperbole* in the context of a laudatory biography, but in ancient Greek culture the agonistic zeal of the adept towards his ideal model which, optimally, has to be superseded by him, is an essential part of the imitation process. Incidentally, ζηλοῦν is the verb used by « Apollonius » himself in one of « his » letters (Ep. 50) in order to describe his relation to the model offered to him by the sage of Samos. Likewise, Lucian of Samosata¹⁴ in the 2nd century A.D. tells us that his contemporary Alexander of Abonuteichos, a prophet who founded the cult of the serpent Glycon, the so-called New Asclepius, on the southern coast of the Black Sea (mod. Ineboli, Turkey), « claimed to be like Pythagoras » (Πυθαγόρα ὁμοίως εἶναι ἡξίου) (Alex. 4), if not superior to him (Alex. 40; cf. *infra*).

These statements are of particular interest for those who study the « holy man » tradition, since they underline the importance of the Pythagorean heritage, and more precisely, of the *exemplum* provided by Pythagoras himself, in its (re)shaping.

In what follows I would like to show that, due to the antiquity of Pythagoras, to the reputation and popularity that ensured a continuous flow of literature devoted to his words and deeds, and to the authority with which he was credited by the Platonic tradition, the charismatic archetype of this « master of wisdom » of the Archaic age¹⁵ exerted a particularly strong influence, first on the self-perception and self-definition of those « divine men » who considered themselves Pythagoreans, then on their socio-cultural reception by people who were ready to recognize « new Pythagorases » in them, and finally on their literary representation(s) along the lines of a more or less « holistic » Pythagorean pattern.

Before going through the available literary documentation in order to examine more thoroughly how this came about, let us have a look at the *exemplum* itself, as it is reflected not only in the preserved *Lives* of

13. Tyana (mod. Kemerhisar, Turkey) is situated in south-western Cappadocia, some 110 km NW of Adana, and not far from Mazaka/Caesarea.

14. Samosata, situated in ancient Commagene, corresponds to modern Samsat, Turkey.

15. For an argumented interpretation of Pythagoras as a « charismatic master of wisdom », see Macris 2003.

Pythagoras (2), but also in the numerous isolated testimonies relating to him (1 a) as well as to his pupils and followers, the Pythagoreans (1 b)¹⁶.

(1 a) The scraps of information provided by the testimonies on Pythagoras give us access to oral traditions on and literary representations of the archetypal sage of Samos, which are only to a limited degree, if at all, embedded in a rhetorically constructed biographical discourse. This does not make them less precious, as they often preserve ancient and original material which enables us to recover early (or, simply, lost) versions or elements of the *exemplum*.

(1 b) Records and traditions on various Pythagoreans reflect the impact of Pythagoras' model on his followers, sympathizers and imitators, on all those who succeeded in re-actualizing his *exemplum*, not by literary means, but through their own life.

(2) As for biographies proper, they are certainly the most powerful means for inculcating the archetype. Their obvious goal is to offer the reader a paradigmatic way of life to imitate. In order to do so, the ancient writers summoned up all their rhetorical skills of persuasion, and had recourse to the strategies of stylization and idealization. Their aim was to stir up in the reader's soul a strong desire to imitate the *exemplum* they exposed, and this enthusiastic zeal (ζήλος πρὸς μίμησιν) was not devoid of an agonistic rivalry and of a competition *vis-à-vis* the ancient incarnate model. The protreptic aim predominates in the Hellenistic and Imperial times, when it was the individual's initial choice of a way of life (αἵρεσις βίου) and his conversion (μεταστροφή) that determined his representations of the world and his philosophical « affiliation ».

The material at our disposal invites us to recognize in the *exemplum Pythagorae* two sides, and, accordingly, two levels of application: a) an « ascetic » side and b) a « charismatic » one.

a. The « ascetic » side and its avatars

The first is illustrated by the famous « Pythagorean way of life »¹⁷. Introduced by Pythagoras himself, this ascetic lifestyle was so consistently and so enthusiastically practiced by his followers and epigones, that it provoked Plato's admiration in the *Republic* (600 a-b) — in the

16. Contrary to what happened with the Socratic *exemplum* (on which see e.g. Döring 1979), and quite unexpectedly, the *exemplum Pythagorae* and its avatars have never constituted the object of a special study. I am currently engaged in a post-doctoral research project with the aim of elucidating this question. On the « exemplarity » issue in general, see Brown 1983 and Alexandre 1996 (both focusing on Christian evidence).

17. For what follows, see more extensively Macris 2006, pp. 79-80.

sole *locus Platonicus* in which Pythagoras' name is mentioned! —, and it constituted the subject of specific treatises by Aristoxenus and Lycon in the early Hellenistic period, as well as by Iamblichus in Late Antiquity. In its original form, this peculiar βίος was regulated by a set of very specific dietary taboos, ritual prescriptions and purifications, often borrowed from traditional cults. These were mixed together with rational rules and ethical commandments, expressed in a proverbial form¹⁸. The purpose of this conglomerate of orally transmitted sayings, precepts and maxims, as well as of the extremely self-conscious life deriving from them, was to enable those who adopted it to attain a permanent state of purity through the practice of an exceptionally scrupulous piety, which sacralized every aspect of the everyday life. Although it is not explicitly stated in the sources, it can be safely assumed that through the disciplinary, purified life and the memory training they practiced, the Pythagoreans expected to acquire the capacity of recalling their previous lives and to ensure for themselves a better fate in future reincarnations, or even an ascent to heaven in the afterlife¹⁹.

Various factors contributed to a deep modification of this paradigmatic way of life through the centuries²⁰. One can mention, among other things, a) the inner evolution of the Pythagorean tradition towards a more scientific-mathematic profile; b) its embracing by the Pythagoreanizing Early Academy²¹; then c) its re-interpretation and re-actualization in the light of Peripatetic ethics in the works of Aristoxenus of Tarentum²²; and finally d) the influence exerted upon it by the subsequent philosophical syncretism from the Hellenistic period onwards. Now the emphasis shifted from ritualism to ethics, and the latter went hand-in-hand with the Pythagorean *curriculum* of sciences, in which were included not only the « quadri-vial » arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music, but also medicine and the art of divination. And still, the goal of purification from passions and of practicing essentially Platonic moral virtues such as wisdom, justice, temperance and courage, as well as more distinctively Pythagorean ones such as piety and friendship²³, was essentially the same, namely a blessed

18. See Delatte 1915, pp. 271-312; Burkert 1972, pp. 166-192; Parker 1983, pp. 281-307 (« Purity and salvation »); Riedweg 2002, pp. 89-108; cf. Macris 2002, p. 92, n. 62; *Id.* 2006, pp. 84-89.

19. See Riedweg 2002, pp. 86-89 and 92-93; Macris 2006, pp. 89-91.

20. Cf. Macris 2006, pp. 95-99.

21. See Burkert 1972, pp. 15-96, esp. pp. 53 *sqq.* and 63 *sqq.*

22. See Macris 2006, pp. 97-98 with references.

23. This hexad of virtues structures the second part of Iamblichus' strongly Neoplatonizing *Pythagorean way of life* (§§ 134-240; cf. Macris 2004, t. I, pp. 51-76), but parts or

existence among the immortals in the afterlife.

This is clear in a late Hellenistic Pythagorean text like the *Golden Verses*, which ends in a climactic eschatological promise. Its author claims that by mastering the precepts given and the doctrines intimated in the poem, as well as in the *Καθαρμοί* and in the *Λύσις ψυχῆς* — two other texts indicated there (vv. 67-68), and having as their goal the purification and deliverance of the soul respectively —, ultimately lead to deification. Characteristically enough, the last two verses of the poem solemnly declare: « If you leave the body behind and go to the free aither, / then you will be immortal — an undying god, no longer mortal (ἔσσεαι ἀθάνατος θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός) »²⁴.

b. The « charismatic » side

Coming back to the *exemplum* and focusing on its second side, we realize that the « biographemes »²⁵ of Pythagoras' life that constitute a properly charismatic archetype fulfill a twofold goal.

On the one hand, drawing heavily on oral tradition and on the legends which had arisen due to the propaganda of the Pythagorean sect itself, they record in a cumulative way as much evidence as possible for the Master's *charisma*, in two complementary, and partly overlapping ways. First, by emphasizing his extraordinary mental strength, his ability to recall the previous lives of his soul, and above all his superhuman powers and his alleged achievements in miracle-working²⁶. Second, by listing his activities as mediator between mortals and gods, benefactor of the civic community (in his capacity as educator, lawgiver, prophet or healer), and saviour²⁷.

On the other hand, the aforementioned « biographemes » insist on Pythagoras' proximity to the divine realm, on the « revealed » character of his wisdom (acquired through Orphic initiations and/or by sitting at the Delphic Pythia's feet, or transmitted directly by the gods themselves), and on his privileged relationship with the god Apollo (as it is shown, among other things, by the etymology of Pythagoras' name, by his oracular, enigmatic sayings, his divinatory and healing capacities, his profound

versions of it can also be found in earlier Pythagorean(izing) sources; see Thom 1995, pp. 103-116 (piety); 119-125 (friendship); 126-140 (the « cardinal » virtues).

24. *Golden verses*, 70-71, with Thom 1995, pp. 223-229; cf. Macris 2006, p. 93.

25. I propose this neologism (created by analogy to other structuralist terms like the « morphemes » of linguistics or the « mythemes » of religious anthropology) in order to designate the simplest elements which structure a (series of) biographical account(s).

26. See Macris 2003, pp. 255-265.

27. See Macris 2004, t. II, pp. 271-274 and 276-289.

acquaintance with music, his ability to hear the « harmony of the spheres », and his previous incarnation in the person of Euphorbus (an Apollonian character in the *Iliad*). Some of the « biographemes » even go so far as to propose — in an authoritative but not unambiguous way — a multitude of more or less converging views on Pythagoras' elusive ontological status (intermediary between man and god, heroic, « daimonic », or divine [Olympian]), supporting them by sayings (ἁκούσματα) or legendary episodes that reveal his essentially Apollonian nature — be it a soul sent down by Apollo, a son of the god, or the god himself, Hyperborean, Pythian or Paean²⁸.

It is in Iamblichus' treatise *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* (late 3rd — beginning of the 4th century A.D.) that we can find a systematic presentation of the *exemplum* in its fully-fledged form. It is true that in this particular case the *exemplum* remains adapted to the spiritual needs of this Neoplatonic theurgist who set up his own philosophical school in the Syrian Apamea²⁹. However, the numerous references to lost works that had dealt with Pythagoras clearly indicate that many other writers before Iamblichus had undertaken to collect the various legendary episodes of the sage's saga, or even to combine them in order to propose a comprehensive biographical account³⁰.

The Lives of Pythagoras as a literary model

The charismatic model that emerged out of this abundant material was available to the biographers of « divine men ». They could adapt, transpose, update or even invent stories, using Pythagoras' legend as their source of inspiration. The most obvious illustration of this procedure is Philostratus' *vie romancée* of Apollonius, as was amply demonstrated by Isidore Lévy³¹. But apart from Philostratus, not only the pagan Lucian, in his satirical pamphlet against Alexander of Abonuteichos, but also Philo Iudaeus, in his *Life of Moses*, and even the bishop Athanasius, in one of the first Christian hagiographies (namely the *Life of Anthony* the hermit), felt free to use the *Lives* of Pythagoras as their literary model. The structural

28. See Macris 2003, pp. 261-262; *Id.* 2004, t. II, pp. 114-116 and 267-276. On the « daimonic » status of Pythagoras in particular, examined in the context of ancient Pythagorean doctrines about the δαίμων, see Detienne 1963, *passim*, with W. Burkert's review in *Gnomon*, 36, 1964, pp. 563-567.

29. For Iamblichus' Pythagoreanizing program, see Macris forthcoming.

30. See Lévy 1926 and 1927; Burkert 1972, pp. 97-109.

31. Lévy 1926, pp. 130-137.

and even textual parallels are quite striking in this respect³².

Inversely, even semi-legendary figures of the Archaic period such as Aristaeus of Proconnesus, Abaris the Hyperborean, Epimenides of Crete, and Zalmoxis the Thracian, some of which certainly antedate Pythagoras, were retrospectively submitted to a Pythagoreanization: the later tradition, which probably arose out of the propaganda of the Pythagorean sect, attributed to these strange figures legends that strongly recall episodes of the Pythagoras' saga, and did not hesitate to make of them the Samian master's pupils³³.

Rehabilitation and « hagiographical discourse »: Philostratus' over-pythagoreanizing laudatio of Apollonius

Philostratus' over-pythagoreanizing *laudatio* of Apollonius³⁴, though, *pace* Lévy, is not reducible to a simple *pastiche* made out of transpositions of *topoi* drawn from the *Lives* of Pythagoras. In this multi-layered product of the Second Sophistic, in which Apollonius is presented at once as a politically active sophist/philosopher³⁵, a defender of Hellenism, and a metaphorical traveller³⁶, the recourse of the author to the archetype of Pythagoras served as an interpretative key that enabled the reader to have a better understanding (*i.e.* what was considered to be *the only correct* understanding) of the extraordinary activities of a provincial « holy man » of the near past who was on the way of becoming an imperial « saint » (*cf. infra*). By stressing Apollonius' Pythagorean way of life and philosophical credentials³⁷ — even if the Pythagorean *credo* put in his mouth on various

32. For Lucian, see Lévy 1926, pp. 138-141; for Philo, Lévy 1927, pp. 137-153; for Athanasius, Reitzenstein 1914-15, pp. 12-39, and Lévy 1926, pp. 141-146.

33. See Burkert 1972, p. 147 *sqq.*

34. The laudatory character of the *VApol.* is duly stressed by Robiano 2001 a (*cf.* Swain 1999, p. 159, with n. 1). Differently Jones 2005, t. 1, p. 3, n. 1, who thinks that the preposition « ἐς » in the title (*Τὰ ἐς Τυαντέα Ἀπολλώνιον*; *cf.* I, 3, 2) does not imply an encomiastic slant.

35. Flinterman 1995 and 2004 has argued convincingly that Philostratus' presentation of Apollonius' contacts with cities and monarchs draws on idealized conceptions of the philosopher's role rather than on sophistic attitudes.

36. *Cf.* Hägg 2004, pp. 393-398, who gives a *résumé* of the diverging (but not incompatible) interpretations proposed by E. Koskenniemi, S. Swain 1999 and J. Elsner.

37. Pythagorean way of life (in its rigorous ascetic version): strict vegetarianism and rejection of animal sacrifice; long hair (*cf.* Robiano 1994); abstinence from wine; refusal of bathing facilities and hot water; silence and secrecy; complete sexual abstinence and celibacy; attainment of purity — > privileged communication with the divine realm and prognostic abilities. Adherence to Pythagorean tenets: (mainly) transmigration and immortality of the soul. For a detailed discussion, see Flinterman 2006 forthcoming.



occasions³⁸ strikes us as rudimentary and superficial³⁹ —, by casting him completely in the mould of a Pythagorean sage, and by presenting him as a latter-day Pythagoras, Philostratus is striving to « domesticate » and rehabilitate an ascetic and a healer with a reputation of a γόης and miracle-worker — an independent, and potentially threatening figure — into a respectable philosopher, an incarnation of the classical ideals, a religious reformer of cults and moral, who acted only in an « antiquarian » way, within the established framework, and for the interest of the social and cultural authorities of the Roman Empire⁴⁰.

This process of social and cultural assimilation goes hand-in-hand with a rationalizing tendency, which plays down systematically the (apparently dominant, and perhaps closer to reality) magical aspect of Apollonius' wonder-working activity, defending him against the charge of γοητεία⁴¹. But what is important, is that this wonder-working activity as such is never denied: it is simply attributed to Apollonius' wisdom and proximity to the divine (*VApol.* I, 2). As for his capacity to foretell the future, we are told that it derived from what the gods revealed, and that it never went against the decrees of the Fates (*ibid.*, V, 12; *cf.* VIII, 7, 2, 9). Quite understandably, in his effort to compose an official « hagiography » of the new « saint » whose cult was strongly and efficiently promoted by his imperial patrons (*cf. infra*), Philostratus was obliged not only to use his rhetorical skills in order to re-tell in a more artful and literary way as many wondrous stories as possible about Apollonius without calling into question their historical reality, but also to magnify him by every laudatory means he had at his disposal. Under these circumstances, with Philostratus, the recourse to Pythagoras' model became definitely a part of the stylizing and idealizing narrative strategies of a new kind of « hagiographical discourse », which is the hallmark of the literary sources in Late Antiquity⁴².

38. See *e.g.* *VApol.* I, 32; VI, 11; VIII, 7, 4-6.

39. Jones 2005, p. 9 rightly emphasizes that « Apollonius' philosophy is merely sketched in a few superficial strokes » and that his « conversations are conducted on a very amateurish level ».

40. This is the main thesis of the chapter on Apollonius in Francis 1995, pp. 83-129. On Apollonius' relationship with temples, and on his attempts at reforming various cults, see now Fowden 2005, p. 149 *sqq.*

41. On the traditions illustrating Apollonius' magic, see Dzielska 1986, pp. 85-127. For a historical contextualization of the charge of γοητεία, see Francis 1995, pp. 90-97. For Philostratus' attempts to clear Apollonius of this charge, see Flinterman 1995, pp. 60-66.

42. See van Uytanghe 1993.

In the footsteps of Pythagoras

This is not to say that the Pythagorean identity of Apollonius was absent from the earlier sources to which Philostratus had access. On the contrary, the echoes of local (oral) traditions and pre-Philostratean sources in the *VApol.*, as well as the independent testimony of the treatise *On sacrifices* and of the *Letters* circulating under Apollonius' name, unanimously and univocally present the latter as a Pythagorean (*cf. infra*). The same seems to be the case with Lucian's Alexander. Certainly in his *False prophet*, which is, to some extent, a parody of a series of *topoi* of the Pythagoras legend⁴³, the satirist can be suspected of having slightly retouched and altered the overall picture for the amusement of informed *dilettanti*. But after all he had met Alexander personally⁴⁴, and his visit to him seems to have enabled Lucian to give an eyewitness report of the activities of Alexander's brand new oracular institution⁴⁵. The Pythagorean profile of its prophet was a central aspect of this institution.

So in the cases of Apollonius and Alexander we can say that, despite the fact that for neither of them can we distill a reliable historical account from the hodgepodge surrounding their legendary reputation, in this respect they unambiguously recall the model of Pythagoras, even before the literary reworking and reshaping of the material by Philostratus and Lucian.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to decide, in both Apollonius' and Alexander's case, whether, and to what extent, we are dealing with a conscious imitation of Pythagoras' *exemplum* by individuals who enthusiastically claimed a Pythagorean identity for themselves, or rather with an abusive recourse to it in an attempt at legitimizing and polishing, or making noble and respectable, activities that could have appeared as hubristic, or as belonging to the realm of magic. On the other hand, we may simply be in the presence of a socio-cultural phenomenon, namely the reception and interpretation of these individuals along Pythagorean lines

43. For other Lucianic parodies of Pythagoras, see Marcovich 1976 and Papanikolaou 1993; for other (neo)Pythagorean characters in Lucian's works, see also *infra*, p. 311, with n. 56.

44. For Lucian's visit to Abonuteichos, see Flinterman 1997, who discusses the traditional dating to 164/5 and proposes a dating to the period between the late summer of 161 and the end of 162.

45. As in *The death of Peregrinus Proteus*, the autopsy of the narrator seems to guarantee the accuracy of the report, and to authenticate and justify the exposure of Alexander's fraud as well as his overall satirical presentation. It is precisely because of this literary function of the autopsy that Clay 1992, pp. 3445-3448, suspects it to be a fictional element in the narrative, a Lucianic fraud.

by people who were ready to recognize in the person of the « divine man » a *Pythagoras redivivus*, or a « new Pythagoras ».

The case of Empedocles

It is remarkable though that already in the 5th century B.C., a « divine man » and philosopher of the caliber of Empedocles (*ca* 494 – *ca* 434 B.C.) apparently embodies many of the characteristics attributed to Pythagoras, whom he utterly praises in one of his poems (without pronouncing his name) for his profound wisdom and his admirable mental strength (fr. 31 B 129 Diels-Kranz)⁴⁶. Empedocles seems to have developed his own version of the Pythagorean belief in reincarnation by proposing the theory of the incarnate « *daimones* » and its corollary, namely radical vegetarianism. Moreover, he is the author of a long poem, the aim of which was to reform the life of his fellow citizens of Acragas by a set of *Purifications* which are basically Orphico-Pythagorean in inspiration⁴⁷. Finally, according to Alcidas (4th century B.C.), he owed the dignity of his manners and bearing (σεμνότης τοῦ τε βίου καὶ τοῦ σχήματος) to his Pythagorean apprenticeship (D.L. VIII, 56).

In the case of Empedocles, the practice of the Pythagorean way of life was combined with claims to superhuman powers which can be interpreted as an *imitatio Pythagorae* of some kind. This is obvious in his mastery of the secrets of Nature, which is implied in the promise made to his disciple Pausanias. According to this promise, Empedocles was able to teach Pausanias « all the drugs that are a defence to ward off ills and old age », as well as to transmit to him the power to arrest the violence of the winds and to call them back in requital, to stop or make rain, and even to bring back from Hades a dead man's vital strength (fr. 31 B 111 Diels-Kranz). Like Pythagoras, Empedocles was followed and revered by thousands of men and women, « some desirous of oracles, others suffering from all kinds of diseases, desiring to hear a message of healing ». Due to his godlike appearance and to the efficacy of his word, he was honoured as an immortal god (θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός) by his fellow citizens, « crowned with fillets and flowery garlands » (fr. 31 B 112 Diels-Kranz).

The claim to divinity and the attainment of a divine status was strongly suggested by himself: by his overall *gravitas* and royal look (D.L. VIII, 73), by the powers he pretended to possess (fr. 31 B 111 Diels-Kranz), and (if we are to believe later traditions) by his thaumaturgic activity (D.L.

46. See Macris 2001, pp. 271-274; *Id.* 2003, pp. 255-257, with n. 61.

47. *Cf.* Macris 2006, p. 91, with n. 62.

VIII, 59-62; 67b-70), not to mention his alleged attempt at immortalization by plunging into the fiery craters of the Aetna volcano and disappearing (Hippobotus *ap.* D.L. VIII, 69; *cf.* VIII, 70)⁴⁸. Many later sources provide evidence of his becoming a god: the manner of his death was unknown, and his tomb was not found (D.L. VIII, 71 and 72 — an element transmitted by Timaeus of Tauromenium, who downplays it); the city of Acragas made a statue in his honour (Hippobotus *ap.* D.L. VIII, 72); his disciple Pausanias set up a monument to his master and friend as to a god, in the form of a statue or shrine (Timaeus *ap.* D.L. VIII, 71); finally, people worshipped him (προσκυβεῖν) as a god, prayed, and sacrificed to him (προσεύχεσθαι, θύειν). This happened after he had put an end to a pestilence (or, according to another version, after he had healed a woman), and was also justified by his mysterious disappearance and calling by an exceedingly loud voice, which was accompanied by light in the heavens and a glitter of lamps (Diodorus of Ephesus, Hermippus, and Heraclides of Pontus *ap.* D.L. VIII, 70, 69, and 68 respectively).

The question of magic, and the Roman Pythagorei et magi

In a previous section we made the hypothesis that the Pythagorean label could have been used as a noble mask for the magicians of the Imperial times. However, we should keep in mind that the combination of personal charisma and learned occultism can also be found much earlier in the Pythagorean tradition, for example in the admittedly obscure figure of the paradoxographer Bolus of Mendes⁴⁹, or in the philosopher Thrasyllus, the Roman emperor Tiberius' official astrologer⁵⁰. Most significantly, the label « Pythagorean » has not always been a mark of honour, a *titre de gloire*: Nigidius Figulus and Anaxilaos of Larissa, both active in the 1st century B.C. Rome, were accused of being « *Pythagorei et magi* »⁵¹. To this it could be objected that the revival of Pythagoreanism from the 1st century B.C. onwards probably played a significant role in the upward social mobility and intellectual respectability of miracle-workers⁵². But we should take note that almost the same accusation was formulated against

48. See Kingsley 1995, pp. 250-316; *cf.* Mauduit 1998.

49. On Bolus, see Kingsley 1995, *passim*, esp. pp. 325-328 and 335-341; Dickie 2001, pp. 117-123.

50. *Cf.* Dickie 2001, pp. 195-196.

51. On Nigidius, see Della Casa 1962, with Thesleff 1965 b; Liuzzi 1983; Musial 2001. On the Roman « *Pythagorei et magi* » in general, see Kingsley 1995, pp. 317-334; Dickie 2001, pp. 168-175.

52. For the formulation, *cf.* Flinterman 1996, pp. 88 and 90.

Apuleius of Madaura in the 2nd century A.D.⁵³. Although in his case the accusation coupled magic with *philosophy in general*, his surviving works show that he actually professed a kind of Platonism highlighted with sensibly Pythagorean overtones⁵⁴. Something similar is reflected in a letter of Apollonius of Tyana, in which the sage's contemporary Euphrates, a Stoic philosopher, uses the term « Pythagoreans » to designate the magicians (*cf.* *Epp.* 16 & 17)⁵⁵. In the same century, the otherwise unknown Pythagorean Arignotus was portrayed by Lucian as a magician and a man who had learned his occult skills from a famous Egyptian priest-magician called Pancrates, who is referred to independently in the magical papyri⁵⁶. Pythagoras and Empedocles themselves were later considered to be μάγοι⁵⁷, both in the noble and in the depreciatory sense of the term (*cf. infra*), as it is shown by their presence in the lists of Pliny the Elder and Philostratus (*VApol.* I, 2), as well as by the attribution of magical treatises to them⁵⁸. Thus the fluctuating and at times discontinuous Pythagorean tradition displays as a constant a noticeable tendency to explore the secret powers of Nature in order to master them. This should be taken into account whenever one tries to establish the minimal conditions which would make claims to superhuman powers seem both possible and credible.

I hope that this brief overview has made clear that the conscious imitation of Pythagoras and its corollary, namely the self-perception and self-definition of an individual as a genuine Pythagorean, can be in no way *a priori* excluded in the case of « divine men » such as Apollonius and Alexander.

Let us now have a closer look at these two figures. In order to give an overall picture of their « divine » and Pythagorean character, one is obliged

53. See the chap. 24-26 of his *Apology*, with Abt 1908, pp. 30-60, and Graf 1996, pp. 79-105 (esp. p. 100 *sqq.*).

54. On Apuleius' Pythagoreanizing Platonism, see Sandy 1997, pp. 22-26, 27-36, and 176-232, esp. pp. 186-187, where the author shows convincingly that « the African Socrates defending philosophy in a court room in Sabrata on some occasions saw himself as Pythagoras ».

55. *Cf.* already Cicero, *In Vatinius*, VI, 14, with Abt 1908, p. 254, n. 13.

56. See Lucian, *Philopseudes*, 29-36, with Gascó 1986 and 1991; Kingsley 1995, pp. 332-333, with n. 56 (whom I paraphrase); Dickie 2001, pp. 204-205. On Pachrates/Pancrates, see *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, t. IV, 2446 (ed. K. Preisendanz), with Dickie 2001, pp. 212-213.

57. This is also the view of Kingsley 1995, *passim*, esp. pp. 217-391, who has also investigated the role they played even later in alchemy (*ibid.*, pp. 56-68 and 375-379).

58. See Abt 1908, p. 254; Thesleff 1965 a, pp. 174-177 and 243-245 (later *Prognostica*).

to confine oneself to the contemporary (and systematically hostile) satire of Lucian on the one hand, and to the scraps of local (oral) traditions and pre-Philostratan literary sources preserved in Philostratus or elsewhere on the other⁵⁹. In both cases we are brought back to the 2nd century A.D.

How to become divine : tracking the divinization process

a. Apollonius : from provincial healer and miracle-worker to imperial saint

As far as Apollonius is concerned, it seems that his legend arose immediately after his death (if not already during his lifetime), thanks to his pupils, followers and first biographers. If we are to believe Philostratus, local traditions that originated in his native Tyana made of him a son of Zeus (*VApol.* I, 6) and reported that his birth was announced to his mother by an Egyptian divinity, who revealed himself as Proteus (*VApol.* I, 4). The same author emphatically asserts that in spite of his wide travels he has never and nowhere come up with a tomb or cenotaph (ψευδοτάφιον) of Apollonius in the whole Roman Empire (*VApol.* VIII, 31). The healing activity of the latter in the sanctuary of Asclepius at Aegeae in Cilicia (mod. Ayas, Turkey) at the beginning of his career is attested by a certain Maximus, an otherwise unknown 2nd-century author from Aegeae⁶⁰, and echoed in an inscription from Mopsuestia⁶¹ dating from the 3rd or 4th century and now exposed in the Adana Museum, in Turkey⁶². In the epigram contained in this inscription Apollonius is connected with Apollo thanks

59. The pre-Philostratan material is arranged into categories and discussed at length by Bowie 1978, pp. 1671-1685; Dzielska 1986; Flinterman 1995, pp. 67-88.

60. *FGrHist (contin.)* 1066, with Graf 1984-85; Flinterman 1995, pp. 68-69; Radicke 1999, pp. 168-171.

61. See Dagron 1987.

62. As the inscription, mutilated on its left side and in need of restoration, is very important for the argument advanced here, I consider it my duty not to confine myself to a mere reference to the *SEG* (XXVIII, No 1251 & XXXI, No 1320) or to the *FGrHist (contin.)* (1064 T 6, with Radicke 1999, pp. 153-154), or even to the convenient reproductions of the diverging conjectures assembled in Forrat 1986, pp. 215-219, Dagron 1987 and Berges & Nollé 2000, pp. 420-422 (test. 112), but rather to offer the reader a κατά τὸ δυνατόν full (but certainly not exhaustive) list of the publications concerning this fascinating document, in a strictly chronological order: Bowie 1978, pp. 1687-1688; Dagron & Marcillet-Jaubert 1978; Jones 1980; W. Peek, in *Philologus*, 125, 1981, pp. 297-298; N.J. Richardson & P. Burian, in *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 22, 1981, pp. 283-285; R. Merkelbach, in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 41, 1981, p. 270, and *ibid.*, 45, 1982, pp. 265-266; M. Marcovich, *ibid.*, 45, 1982, pp. 263-265; J. Ebert, *ibid.*, 50, 1983, pp. 285-286; Dzielska 1986, pp. 64-73; D. Potter, in *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 2, 1989, pp. 309-310; Robiano 2001 b.

to his theophoric name (Ἀπ[ό]λλωνος ἐπώνυμος), then presented as a kind of saviour « sent by Heaven in order to drive out the pains of the mortals » (οὐρανὸς αὐτὸν [πέμψεν]⁶³ ὅπως θνητῶν ἐξελάσει πόνους), and even « extinguish/erase » their « faults or sins » (ἀνθρώπων ἔσβεσεν ἀμπλακίας)⁶⁴. It is in Ephesus, where the Tyanean was later worshipped as Heracles Apotropaeus or Alexicacus⁶⁵, that legends have originated not only about his prediction and combating of a plague (*VApol.* IV, 4 and 10), but also about his understanding of the language of birds⁶⁶ and above all about his vision of the assassination of Domitian in Rome⁶⁷. Apollonius has not only received official civic honours for his beneficial influence as a philosopher upon the young in a testimonial letter⁶⁸ — this was after all quite common and banal in antiquity —, but after his death he was even commemorated with a sanctuary in Tyana (*VApol.* I, 5; VIII, 29 and 31), which was later turned into a sumptuous ἡρώον by Caracalla⁶⁹. In

63. πέμψεν Dagron & Marcillet-Jaubert, Peek, Marcovich, Ebert (strongly supporting it with a parallel from *Anthol. Pal.* XVI, 295, vv. 7-8: [θεῖον Ὀμηρον]... ἄπ' αἰθέρος... ἐ [sic] Μοῦσαι/πέμψαν, ἴν' ἡμετέροις δῶρα ποθητὰ φέροι), Dzielska, Radicke, Berges & Nollé, Robiano (supporting it with a parallel from Lucian, *Alex.* 40; cf. next note), Jones 2004; — ἦκεν W. Luppe in Ebert, p. 285, n. 4; — γείναθ' Richardson & Burian; — γίναθ' (cf. ἐξελάσει), θρέψεν or φύσεν Ebert (alternatively, p. 285, n. 4); — τέχθη Merkelbach 1981; — δέξαθ' Bowie, Jones 1980, Merkelbach 1982 (invoking also the authority of W. Burkert), Forrat (p. 217), Potter (referring also to G. Bowersock); — ἔλλαχ' Merkelbach 1982 (alternatively). We cannot but regret that the stone is defective precisely for this decisive point!

64. Robiano 2001 b has drawn attention to the illuminating parallel offered by the oracular response given by Glycon (*Alex.* 5). There it is said that Alexander's soul was sent by Zeus in order to help humanity: καὶ μὲν ἔπεμψε πατὴρ ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐπαρωγόν. — Note that according to Iamblichus Pythagoras's soul was sent (καταπεπέμφθαι) to humanity in order to offer (χαρίζεται) the mortals the gift of philosophy: see *On the Pythagorean way of life*, §§ 8 and 30, with Macris 2003, pp. 286-287; *Id.* 2004, t. II, pp. 89-97 and 271-274.

65. Sossianus Hierocles, *Φιλαλήθης λόγος*, apud Lactantius, *Divine institutions*, V, 3, 14 = *FGrHist (contin.)* 1064 T 4. Cf. Philostratus, *VApol.* IV, 10. (May we recognize a distorted, humorous hint on that in Lucian's invocation of Heracles Forfender [ἀλεξίκακε] and Zeus Averter of Mischief [ἀποτρόπαε], when he is about to speak of the dangerous powers of Alexander's soul and mind [*Alex.* 4]?)

66. Porphyry, *On abstinence*, III, 3, 6 = *FGrHist (contin.)* 1064 T 3.

67. Cassius Dio, LXVII, 18, 1 = *FGrHist (contin.)* 1064 T 2.

68. [Apollonius], *Ep.* 53, following the convincing interpretation of Jones 1982. For the authenticity of this letter, see also Graf 1984-85, p. 70.

69. Cassius Dio, LXXVII, 18, 4 = *FGrHist (contin.)* 1064 T 5 = test. 105 Berges & Nollé. Perhaps this happened in 215, when the emperor and his mother Julia Domna passed jointly through Tyana on their way to the East. In *VApol.* VIII, 31 (= test. 105 Berges & Nollé) Philostratus speaks more generally of ιερά (in the plural) founded βασιλείοις

this cultic complex portraits of him were conserved mirroring his immortal nature (*VApol.* VIII, 29). According to the admittedly late and somewhat biased testimony of the *Historia Augusta*, a similar portrait found a place in Alexander Severus' private « chapel » (*lararium*), together with effigies of Alexander the Great⁷⁰, the deified emperors, and other *animas sanctiores*, including Orpheus, Abraham, and Jesus Christ⁷¹. The repeatedly and variously stated personal devotion of the Severan dynasty to Apollonius — generated by the latter's religious and philosophical profile, which fitted perfectly their Syrian patriotism as well as their private religious sensibilities and pagan consciousness — did much to promote the cult of this new « divine man ». Julia Domna, the widow of Septimius Severus, is perhaps at the origin of this devotion. It is her (or her « circle »⁷²) that urged the court sophist Philostratus to produce an official « hagiography » of the sage Apollonius, supplying him with hitherto unknown materials in the form of Damis' « scrap-book » of *memoirs* (*VApol.* I, 2-3), and we can suppose that it is under his mother's influence that Caracalla became a devotee of Apollonius.

However this may be, the demonstrative pronoun οὗτος that can safely be restored in the beginning of the aforementioned epigram from Mopsuestia certainly refers to a statue of Apollonius that the viewer reading the inscription could simultaneously see above it. So the architectural

τέλειον. The formulation may show that there were more than one monuments dedicated to Apollonius: a small sanctuary situated somewhere in the countryside of Tyana, near the meadow in which he had been born, and a larger shrine within the city; cf. Berges & Nollé 2000, pp. 77-80, 368 and 415-416.

70. Because he is mentioned separately (*Historia Augusta, Life of Alexander Severus*, 31, 4-5), Alexander the Great is often omitted from modern discussions of the passage on the *lararium* mentioned in the following footnote.

71. *Historia Augusta, Life of Alexander Severus*, 29, 2 (= *FGrHist (contin.)* 1064 T 10), with Bertrand-Dagenbach 1997 (for earlier bibliography, see *ibid.*, p. 95, n. 1). Summarizing previous critics, Bertrand-Dagenbach focuses her attention on the presence of Abraham and Jesus in the imperial *lararium*, and consequently presents the *Life of Alexander Severus* as « une fiction surgie dans les milieux sénatoriaux romains de la fin du IV^e s. [qui] appellerait le christianisme devenu religion d'État à la tolérance envers les autres cultes encore en vigueur dans l'aristocratie sénatoriale ». But in my view this does not suffice to exclude the possibility (or, rather, utter probability) that the late writer tentatively expands an original pagan kernel found in earlier sources, especially if one takes into account the personal interest of Caracalla's mother Julia Domna in obtaining an official « hagiography » of Apollonius by the court sophist Philostratus. For the Neoplatonic influences which are discernible in the *Life of Severus*, see I. Hadot 2006, pp. 238-246.

72. On the circle of sophists and philosophers gathered under the patronage of the empress Julia Domna, and its eventual Pythagoreanizing tendencies, see Hemelrijk 1999, pp. 122-126 (with references reported on pp. 303-306) and Robiano 2000.

fragment that bears the encomiastic verses was the architrave or lintel of some sort of *aedicula*: it supported a statue in a shrine where there was some sort of heroic cult of Apollonius⁷³.

The story told by the *Historia Augusta* about Aurelian's vision of Apollonius shows that the pagan aristocrats considered that the Tyanean sage was not simply a « true friend of gods » (*amicum vere deorum*), but also « himself inhabited by the divine » (*ipsum... pro numine frequentandum*). For that reason, they thought that nothing on earth was « more holy, more venerable, more honourable, and more divine than him » (*sanctius, venerabilius, antiquius diviniusque*). Moreover, it is obvious that Apollonius' appearance was familiar to Aurelian (270-275 A.D.) because his picture (*imago*) was already in many temples, and that the emperor was ready to obey the « holy man »'s commands by promising him a picture, statues, and a temple (*et imaginem et statuas et templum*)⁷⁴. The contorniate medallions minted in Rome show the same reverent attitude towards Apollonius⁷⁵, which is often related to the circle of Nicomachus Flavianus, a leading representative of the 4th century so-called « pagan reaction » in Rome.

To sum up: in the period going from the death of Apollonius to the 4th century A.D., we observe an increasing tendency among pagans to honour Apollonius as a divine being, a tendency that was further stimulated by various initiatives of the Severan dynasty, and later reinforced by the « pagan reaction » against Christianity.

Now it is remarkable that in two of the letters attributed to him — of controversial dating and authenticity⁷⁶ — « Apollonius » wonders that only his native city fails to acknowledge him, while the rest of mankind consider him equal to the gods (ισόθεον) and some even regard him as a god (τινῶν δὲ καὶ θεὸν ἴηγουμένων) already during his lifetime (*Ep.* 44).

73. See already Dagron & Marcillet-Jaubert 1978, pp. 404-405; Bowie 1978, p. 1688; Jones 1980, pp. 190-191. To my knowledge, subsequent scholarship (cf. *supra*, n. 62) has wholeheartedly accepted this sound suggestion without exceptions.

74. *Historia Augusta, Vita Aureliani*, 24, 2-8 = *FGrHist (contin.)* 1064 T 11, with Brandt 1995.

75. See Mittag 1999, pp. 159-162, with pl. 4; cf. pp. 170-171. — Apollonius had also a place of honour in the philosophical portrait gallery excavated in late antique Aphrodisias; see Smith 1990.

76. See the discussion by Penella 1979, pp. 23-29 and Flinterman 1995, pp. 70-76. The collection of *Letters* that circulated under Apollonius' name is a « heterogeneous jumble » containing « some... glaring fakes » and others that « may well be genuine » (Jones 1982, p. 144). In his edition, R. Penella tried to distinguish among them different thematic groups, but each item of the corpus has to be examined separately and for its own sake. Cf. e.g. *Ep.* 53 with Jones 1982 (*supra*, p. 313, with n. 68).

Writing to the Stoic Euphrates, who overtly despised him, the Tyanean strongly if in veiled terms intimates that, as an imitator of Pythagoras, he considered himself as also belonging to the class of *daimones* (ἐν γένει δαιμόνων, *Ep.* 50)⁷⁷. The same strategy is followed in *Epp.* 16 and 17, where « Apollonius » converts the designation « *magus* », apparently applied to him in its derogatory sense by his rival Euphrates, into a compliment by going beyond its (re-activated) original, positive, Persian sense of pious and just « worshipper of the gods » (θεραπευτῆς τῶν θεῶν)⁷⁸. For « Apollonius », μάγος equals « godly man » (θεῖος), « man of divine nature » (ὁ τὴν φύσιν θεῖος) — a designation that he seems to wholeheartedly accept for himself. A similar charge against him because of his healing activities (*Ep.* 8.4) gives him the opportunity to compare himself with Asclepius, reminding his readers elsewhere (*Ep.* 23) that according to Pythagoras medicine is the most godly enterprise. In another letter (*Ep.* 48) « Apollonius » goes so far as to pretend that even the gods themselves had often spoken of him as of a godly man (περὶ ἐμοῦ καὶ θεοῖς εἴρηται ὡς περὶ θεοῦ ἀνδρός), not only privately to specific individuals but publicly as well, and he feigns to refrain from saying anything more, or from speaking more highly of himself, because he felt that it would be of bad taste, if not offensive to do so (ἐπαχθεὶς λέγειν τι περὶ αὐτοῦ πλεῖον ἢ μείζον).

b. Alexander, the divine prophet of the New Asclepius

The situation is a little different with Alexander⁷⁹. His omnipresence in Glycon's sanctuary notwithstanding, in his case prophesying and healing are not reducible to a « divine man »'s activity, because they are integral parts of a whole religious institution⁸⁰. Of course the mystifying propaganda of the sanctuary intentionally presented them as the miraculous deeds of the New Asclepius, not of his prophet — and the same is true of the « sons of Glycon » that many Paphlagonian women boasted (ἡῦχον) to have by Alexander (*Alex.* 42), and which the cult personnel ascribed to divine intervention⁸¹. However, the confusing identification of the two was always in the air.

77. Cf. Penella 1979, p. 116.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 101; add Porphyry, *On abstinence*, IV, 16, 1: the Persian μάγοι are οἱ περὶ τὸ θεῖον σοφοὶ καὶ τούτου θεράποντες.

79. On Alexander of Abonuteichos see most recently Victor 1997, Sfameni Gasparro 2002 and Chaniotis 2002, with abundant earlier bibliography.

80. Cf. Lane Fox 1986, pp. 241-250.

81. Two of these « sons of Glycon » are epigraphically attested; see *SEG* XXX, No 1388 with Robert 1980, pp. 405-414, and *SEG* XVIII, No 519, with Jones 1998.

What is certain is that Alexander « hedged himself around with any available forms of sanctity »⁸². First of all, he claimed to a divine genealogy, that is, to more than the mythical ancestries claimed by traditional priests⁸³. As a son of the Homeric healer Podaleirius, and therefore Asclepius' grandson, he ranged himself in the prestigious category of the « sons of gods ». This was duly underlined in an oracle (*Alex.* 11) which draw attention not only to Alexander's sharing of the blood of the Healer (Ποδालειρίου αἷμα λελογχώς), but also to his descent from the mythical hero Perseus (Περσείδης) on his mother's side, to his proximity to Apollo (Φοῖβω φίλος) and to his overall divinity (δῖος). During the 3-day-long celebration of Glycon's mysteries, an entire day was dedicated to Alexander, celebrating the sacred wedding of his mother to Podaleirius, and then Alexander's own union with Selene, and the subsequent birth of their daughter (*Alex.* 39) — note that marriage to a goddess may confer a sort of deity⁸⁴.

Secondly, the oracles delivered by the new religious institution of Abonuteichos, as well as the mysteries celebrated in it, provided Alexander with multiple divine credentials by linking him, explicitly or implicitly, not only to Asclepius, but also to Apollo and Zeus. All of these are united, *en bouquet*, in the verse alluded to in the previous paragraph, but the link to Apollo is also obvious in an oracle given by Glycon « in person » (αὐτόφωτος) (an oracle later used as a phylactery and « seen everywhere written over doorways as a charm against the plague »), in which « Phoebus, the god unshorn » (ἀκερσεκόμης) is invoked in order to « keep off the plague's nebulous onset » (λοιμοῦ νεφέλην ἀπερύκει) (*Alex.* 36)⁸⁵. When during the mysteries of Glycon the exclamation of joy containing the typically Apollonian ritual cry « ἰή » (cf. ἰή παίων or παίων) is rendered to the god's descendants Glycon and Alexander (cf. ἰή Γλύκων, ἰή Ἀλέξανδρε) (*Alex.* 39), the specifically Apollonian overtones are certainly perceived by the audience⁸⁶. The more so, as the devotees of

82. Nock 1928, p. 161.

83. Cf. Chaniotis 2002, pp. 79 *sqq.*

84. Lucian plays with this quite common religious belief when he says of the influential senator Rutilianus, one of Alexander's elite victims, who married the « false prophet »'s and Selene's daughter, that he « propitiated his mother-in-law Selene (= the moon) with whole hecatombs, imagining that he himself had become one of the Celestials » (τῶν ἐπουρανίων εἷς) (*Alex.* 35).

85. The verse is epigraphically attested; see the inscription from Antioch published and commented by Pedrizet 1903; cf. Mastrocinque 1999, pp. 348-349.

86. Cf. Chaniotis 2002, p. 79.

the new cult were familiar with Alexander's otherwise uncomprehensible utterances in Hebrew or in Phoenician, in which the only recognizable element was the recurrence of Apollo's and Asclepius' names (*Alex.* 13). As for Zeus, an oracle of Glycon unequivocally asserted that he was more than the source of Alexander's prophetic gifts, making of him the god who sent him to mankind: « His [*scil.* Alexander's soul], with prophecy gifted, from Zeus' mind taketh its issue (δῖης φρενός ἐστιν ἀπορρώξ). / Sent by the Father (ἔπεμψε πατήρ) to help good men in the stress of the conflict; Then it to Zeus will return, by Zeus' own thunderbolt smitten (πάλιν ἐς Διὸς εἶσι Διὸς βληθείσα κεραυνῶ) » (*Alex.* 40)⁸⁷.

Thirdly and most importantly, Alexander received honours himself during his lifetime: according to Lucian's ironical statement (*Alex.* 24), the sacrifices and ex-votos (θυσίαι καὶ ἀναθήματα) offered to Glycon's « prophet and disciple » were twice as great as the honours paid to the god himself. Again, after his death he appears to have been honoured as divine. In any event, if oracles were still given in Abonuteichos, they were given as coming from Alexander the prophet of Glycon (Lucian states clearly that no other prophet succeeded to Alexander after his death [*Alex.* 60])⁸⁸. While the supposed evidence for Alexander's heroic cult at Parion may be dismissed as irrelevant⁸⁹, « there is a dedication at Blace-Uskub in Illyria, *Ioui Iunoni et draccon[i] et draccenae et Alexandro*, which probably refers to him and couples him in honour with the sacred snake and its otherwise unknown consort »⁹⁰. This epigraphically attested cult of Alexander in Moesia Superior, not away from Stobi⁹¹, arose perhaps thanks to the personal devotion of the governor Rutilianus⁹².

The display of the Pythagorean heritage

What about the Pythagoreanism of these « divine men »? As we have already seen at the beginning of this paper, they are both presented by their respective biographers as imitators of Pythagoras. The vocabulary they

87. Transl. A.M. Harmon, London/New York, 1925, t. IV of Loeb's edition of Lucian's Works.

88. See Nock 1928, p. 160; Robert 1980, p. 420.

89. See Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis*, 26, with Nock 1928, p. 160 and n. 3. It is more probable that the images of Alexander mentioned by the Christian apologist as well as the public sacrifices and festivities in his honour ὡς ἐπιτρόφῃ θεῷ concern the Homeric Paris/Alexander, and not the prophet from Abonuteichos.

90. Nock 1928, p. 160, with n. 4; see now Ameling 1985.

91. *CIL* III, 8238.

92. Cf. Bordenache Battaglia 1988, p. 283. On Rutilianus, cf. *supra*, n. 84.

use, as well as Lucian's protests, reveal the agonistic attitude of the « holy men », who not only did have Pythagoras as their model, but also tried zealously to surpass him in extraordinary deeds.

*a. Alexander*⁹³

This can hardly be corroborated by independent evidence in the case of Alexander. So we are left with Lucian's detailed and well informed but, alas, rhetorically constructed, deliberately polemical, and, subsequently, largely distorting and biased account. However, we have no special reasons to doubt that Lucian does tell the truth when he portrays Alexander as a Pythagorean⁹⁴. After all, the satirist is basically critical of the intended assimilation of this contemporary γόνις with Pythagoras, that much respected sage of old⁹⁵. According to Lucian, Alexander compared himself overtly to Pythagoras in one of his letters (*Alex.* 4), and in an oracular response given to two « learned idiots » (μωρόσοφοι) he suggested in a quite obscure way that Pythagoras' soul was actually reincarnated in him (*Alex.* 40). In his followers' and worshippers' eyes, this was confirmed in the course of the torchlight ceremonies of Glycon's — and his own — mysteries, where Alexander exhibited a golden thigh (*Alex.* 40) (and we know that the « *ostentatio* » of the golden thigh was one of the « highlights »

93. For Alexander's Pythagoreanism, see already Cumont 1922.

94. This is true, even if, following one of Flinterman's remarks in a private correspondence, I concede that « this does not [necessarily] mean that [all] the details of this aspect of [Alexander's] portrayal can be accepted without hesitation and can be adduced to corroborate the supposition that [the latter] was a Pythagorean » (additions in square brackets mine).

95. In *Alex.* 4 Lucian skilfully engages in a rhetorical game regarding Alexander's own comparison with Pythagoras. In a first move, the author overstates the prophet's superiority over his model by asserting that, if the Samian sage (who was traditionally and commonly considered as no mean thaumaturge) had been the contemporary of the man from Abonuteichos, he would have certainly seemed a child beside him, because of the latter's numerous and most successful tricks. The argument is reversed in a second move, where Lucian (who, as a rationalist, and, perhaps, Epicurean, has never been a « fan » of Pythagoras; cf. *supra*, n. 43) makes it clear that he had no intention to bring this « wise man of more than human intelligence » into connection with Alexander by likening their doings. « On the contrary, if all that is worst and most opprobrious in what is said of Pythagoras to discredit him (*which I for my part cannot believe to be true*) should nevertheless be brought together for comparison, the whole of it would be but an infinitesimal part of Alexander's knavery » (transl. A.M. Harmon [cf. *supra*, n. 87], my italics). Superfluous to say that once one — contrary to Lucian — accepts the « charismatic »/thaumaturgic aspect of that much respected sage of old, and starts trying to do similar things, one is automatically classified in the defamatory category of the γόνιτες.

of Pythagoras' saga⁹⁶). We hear nothing of Alexander's practice of the Pythagorean way of life or of his abstaining from meat, but the long hair he sported (*Alex.* 3)⁹⁷ need not be in his case only the hallmark of his prophetic and Apollonian status, because it unmistakably recalls Pythagoras, the κομήτης *par excellence*⁹⁸. Moreover, Alexander professed the distinctively Pythagorean doctrine of reincarnation, a doctrine that might have had some connection with the initiation into the mysteries that he set out in Abonuteichos, and, like Pythagoras, was even capable of giving to his consultants accounts of their previous incarnations, or predictions of their future ones (*Alex.* 34 and 43). He even recommended Pythagoras as a teacher for the son of his patron Rutilianus (*Alex.* 33).

b. Apollonius

Alexander's and Apollonius' Pythagoreanism seem to be mutually confirmed by the fact that one of the teachers of the former was an anonymous « magician » (γόης) — professedly a physician — who was at the same time a fellow citizen and regular associate or follower (πάνυ συγγενόμενος) of the latter (*Alex.* 5). We have to pay particular attention to this piece of information, because it shows how the transmission of both « magical »/ritual lore and Pythagorean teachings could ensure a continuity of some kind on the local level⁹⁹. Moreover, it can be stated with some confidence that in the case of Apollonius much of his dietary regimen, vestimentary practices and other ascetic features stem from Pythagoreanism, which seems to have been a major influence in the stylization of the near Eastern « holy man »'s lifestyle. This can be amply

96. See Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean way of life*, §§ 90-93, 140-141 and 147, with Lévy 1926, pp. 13-19, 27 and 35; *Id.*, 1927, pp. 46-49; Burkert 1972, pp. 159-160; Kingsley 1995, pp. 291-292.

97. That Glycon's prophet was a κομήτης is somehow confirmed also by the cultic images of the new snake-god that can easily be distinguished from those of other sacred snakes thanks to Glycon's long hair. For the iconography of Glycon, see Robert 1980 and 1981; Bordenache Battaglia 1988; Miron 1996, pp. 162-168, 170 *sqq.*, and 179-185.

98. On Pythagoras' long hair and his designation as κομήτης, see Macris 2004, I, II, pp. 116-123. On « the long hair of the charismatics », see Zanker 1995, pp. 256-266; on the importance of the hair for « the late antique philosopher "look" », *ibid.*, pp. 307-320.

99. Although the term διατριβή (= school) is used by Lucian ironically, when he exclaims: « You see what sort of school the man comes from! », we have no special reason to doubt that Alexander's master *in magicis* (enchantments, miraculous incantations, charms for love affairs, « sendings » for the enemies, disclosures of buried treasures, successions to estates) actually knew and used Apollonius' « whole bag of tricks » (τὴν πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ τραγῳδίαν).

illustrated, of course, by the sage's full blown portrait in Philostratus¹⁰⁰ — i.e. in an author who « in his other writings shows no great enthusiasm for neo-Pythagoreans »¹⁰¹. But there are several grounds for thinking that Apollonius had already been cast in the mould of a Pythagorean philosopher some time after his death, during the 2nd century¹⁰², and it is highly probable that he saw himself in this light.

If in the case of Moeragenes' *Memoirs of Apollonius* the latter's positive portrayal as a μάγος¹⁰³ and philosopher probably constitutes an indication of his Pythagorean profile¹⁰⁴, in a number of *Letters* ascribed to him « Apollonius » expressedly writes and defends himself as a follower and imitator (ζηλῶν) of Pythagoras (*Ep.* 50; *cf.* 52). The Pythagorean character of some of the letters circulating under the name of Apollonius as well as their antiquity (early 2nd century) is perhaps confirmed by Philostratus' firm statement that a collection of them was obtained by the emperor Hadrian (117-138 A.D.) along with a(n anonymous?) book entitled *Δόξαι Πυθαγόρου* (*VApol.* VIII, 20)¹⁰⁵. The story of Apollonius' descent into the mantic cavern of Trophonius at Lebadeia — a place with notably Pythagorean connections¹⁰⁶ — and re-emergence with that book (*VApol.* VIII, 19) — a volume containing most probably (neo?) Pythagorean maxims and *sententiae* presented as Pythagoras' teachings and doctrines¹⁰⁷ — comes from local tradition¹⁰⁸. Besides, the treatise *On sacrifices* ascribed to the Tyanean, a fragment of which is cited by Eusebius

100. See Flinterman 2006 forthcoming.

101. This is a crucial point, correctly stressed by Bowie 1978, p. 1672.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 1671.

103. In the positive sense of the term; *cf. supra*, p. 316.

104. See *FGrHist (contin)* 1067 (esp. T 3), with Bowie 1978, pp. 1673-1679; Raynor 1984; Radicke 1999, pp. 176-179.

105. Bowie 1978, p. 1672-1673.

106. See Bonnechere 2003, pp. 277-282.

107. Perhaps of the kind of the ones contained in Neopythagorean *gnomologia* (on which see Chadwick 1959; Macris 2006, p. 99 with references). (The title *Δόξαι Πυθαγόρου* reminds one of Epicurus' *Κύρια δόξαι* quoted by Diogenes Laertius). Bonnechere 2003, p. 70 recognizes here a specimen of the literary genre of the ἐρωταποκρίσεις, « consistant en un jeu de questions-réponses dont le résultat écrit n'est autre que la révélation de la vérité par le dieu ».

108. See Bowie 1978, p. 1672; *cf.* Bonnechere 2003, pp. 70, 278 and *passim* (*cf.* Index, s.v. « Apollonios de Tyane »). The author remarks (p. 278): « Quand Philstrate affirmait avoir recueilli à Lébadée même des renseignements sur ce fameux livre, que les Lébadécens pensaient être conservé à Antium, on ne peut jauger les informations qu'il avouait lui-même ne pas avoir vérifiées, mais elles semblent tout sauf nouvelles ».

and alluded to by Porphyry, implied neo-Pythagorean doctrines¹⁰⁹, and this could also be the case with his praise of memory in a lost work (*VApol.* I, 14). (A decisive argument in favour of Apollonius' Pythagoreanism could have been his authorship of a *Life of Pythagoras*, later used by Porphyry and Iamblichus¹¹⁰, but the issue is uncertain¹¹¹, and so it does not seem wise to make of this element one of the pillars supporting the Tyanean's Pythagorean identity.) Finally, the account of Apollonius' choice of and training in Pythagoreanism in his early years is not Philostratus' invention, but it stems from Maximus of Aegeae (*cf. supra*), who reproduced local traditions. All these « cumulatively support an acceptable tradition of Apollonius as a Pythagorean »¹¹².

It could be that he only labeled himself with the philosopher's name, and that he learnt « how to become divine » from other sources, as Eusebius suggests in his polemical treatise¹¹³. Lucian too does not accept the genuine character of Alexander's Pythagoreanism (*Alex.* 4). But is it really possible for us to do this kind of guesswork, or rather detective work, in order to ascertain whether those « divine men »'s *imitatio Pythagorae* was a genuine act of conviction, or simply an alibi function for ordinary men whom others might view only as third rate magicians and confidence tricksters?

109. See *FGrHist (contin.)* 1064 F 3 a-b (= Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, IV, 12, 1 – 13, 1 + Porphyry, *On abstinence*, II, 34), with Dzielska 1986, p. 136 *sqq.* and Flinterman 1995, pp. 76-77.

110. *Cf. FGrHist (contin.)* 1064 F 1-2.

111. For a complete *status quaestionis*, see Flinterman 1995, pp. 77-79, who remains aporetic; *cf.* also Dzielska 1986, pp. 130-134. In a hasty, incomplete, and quite unsatisfactory development, Radicke 1999, pp. 150-151, regards the work as spurious, and ventures some speculations on its character and origin. Macris 2002, pp. 90-91, with n. 59, tentatively proposes provisory acceptance of Apollonius' authorship. Staab 2002, pp. 228-237, recognizes in the Iamblichean passage attributed to « Apollonius » some representative of the post-Hellenistic historiography who was simply a homonymous of the Tyanean (perhaps Apollonius Molon, Porphyry's master [*ibid.*, p. 236, with n. 599]).

112. Bowie 1978, p. 1692.

113. Eusebius, *Against Hierocles*, § 11, esp. lines 35 *sqq.*

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