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The Creation of Authority in Pseudo-Pythagorean Texts and their Reception in Late Ancient Philosophy

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Angela Ulacco, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg / KU Leuven Research Fund

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1. Introduction

What we know about ancient Pythagoreanism is not restricted to the authentic works written by Pythagoras or the early Pythagoreans. In fact, according to several sources, Pythagoras only transmitted his teachings to his disciples orally.¹ It was not until the second and third generations of Pythagoreans, which included Philolaus of Croton or Archytas of

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Tarentum, that we find a well-attested written tradition.² Indeed, after the extinction of the ancient Pythagorean associations in the fourth century BC, we only find (apparently) isolated, more or less influential personalities, who either defined themselves or later came to be defined as Pythagoreans. The most impressive production of Pythagorean writings that were composed by or transmitted under the name of Pythagoras or early Pythagoreans come from the Imperial age, although it is highly unlikely that Pythagorean communities or a specific Pythagorean identity survived up to this time.³ As Zeller pointed out,⁴ however, the production of Pythagorean texts along with Pythagoras' authority seem to increase the further we move away from the first generations of Pythagoreans. The pseudepigraphic character of several Pythagorean texts from the Hellenistic and Imperial ages was proven in the twentieth century. In antiquity, a considerable part of the pseudo-Pythagorean literature contributed to the rise of a Pythagorean 'manner'⁵ of understanding and explaining the world, which is considerably different from the original, ancient Pythagorean philosophy, at least according to the sources we do have.

We do not know exactly why the pseudepigraphic production of Pythagorean texts came about. We can assume, though, that the increasing production of Pythagorean writings corresponded to a renewed interest in Pythagoras and Pythagorean teaching, which can be traced approximately to the early Imperial age.⁶ The absence of original Pythagorean writings – at least on particular themes that would have been crucial at the time that the forgeries were produced – would have encouraged the production of apocryphal texts. Also the famous commitment to secrecy concerning Pythagoras' doctrine, which the adepts of the school were supposed to respect, would have created excellent conditions for forgers. It would have been possible for them to claim that the sudden appearance of Pythagorean writings was due to the revelation of ancient texts that had previously been kept secret by Pythagoras' direct disciples. The first quotations from Pythagorean apocryphal literature

² For a discussion on genuine fragments and, on Philolaus and Archytas generally speaking, see Huffmann 1993 and Huffmann 2005.

³ Although, according to some scholars, not impossible: see Dörrie 1963, coll. 268-277 and more recently Macris 2006, p. 79. For the opposite opinion, see Burkert 1961, p. 232-233 and Centrone 2000a, p. 437-438.

⁴ Zeller 1869, 235-236.

⁵ See Simplicius, *In Cat.*, 8.6.29: κατὰ τὸ Πυθαγόρειον ἔθος; for an analogous statement see Proclus, *In Tim.*, I.1.5-16.

⁶ Cf. Centrone 1990, p. 41-44.

known to us today come from the first centuries of the Imperial age.⁷ It is difficult to give a reliable and precise date for these texts. Moreover, the pseudo-Pythagorean literature is extremely variegated. It includes collections of precepts, letters, and poems along with doxographical accounts and philosophical treatises. This variety is most likely due to the fact that different forgers had different aims and that they probably wrote in different periods. Ultimately, any forgery bears the stamp of the spirit of the time in which it was composed: this is apparent in their literary form or in their internal and encrypted references.⁸ Pythagorean literature, then, is not the result of a single tradition but ‘a combination of several traditions, emerging from different contexts, responding to different problems and promoting different theories, which are not always and not necessarily compatible’.⁹

In this paper, I would like to concentrate on a coherent and rather homogeneous group of philosophical apocryphal texts: the Doric pseudo-Pythagorean treatises. I will investigate the methods and theoretical implications of the Doric Pseudo-Pythagorean texts in particular by analysing a set of issues in, what is probably the most famous pseudo-Pythagorean treatise, Timaeus Locrus’ *On the Nature of the World and the Soul*,¹⁰ a text based on Plato’s *Timaeus*. I contend that the aim of ps.-Timaeus was most likely to ‘reveal’ the ancient Pythagorean model of Plato’s dialogue. After that, I will consider some aspects of the positive reception of ps.-Timaeus’ text among Neoplatonic commentators along with their general approach regarding the Doric pseudo-Pythagorean texts.

It is my view that the composition of Doric pseudo-Pythagorean texts originated from a need to offer a specific interpretation of the Platonic dialogues. Moreover, I will suggest that the pseudo-Pythagorean texts created a new ‘Pythagorean’ authority. For the first time (as far as we know), they provided authoritative, textual resources for both Plato and Aristotle on ancient Pythagoreanism. By doing so, they provided confirmation of the idea that it is possible to integrate Aristotle’s philosophy into Plato’s. In this vein, the Doric pseudo-Pythagoreans also confer authority to their philosophical interpretation of Plato (and

⁷ The first quotation of ps.-Timaeus Locrus’ *On the nature of the world and the soul* is in Nicomachus of Gerasa (c. 60- c. 120 BCE), *Ench. Armon.*, Mus. Script. Gr. Jan 260,12; for other testimonies see Centrone 2000a, p. 450.

⁸ Burkert 1972a, p. 26.

⁹ Bonazzi 2013a, p. 385.

¹⁰ Περὶ φύσιος κόσμω καὶ ψυχῆς is the title quoted by Iamblichus (cf. Iamb. in *Nicom. arithm. introd.* 105, 12 Pistelli) and accepted in Marg’s critical edition, whereas the manuscripts use the form Περὶ ψυχῆς κόσμω καὶ φύσιος. Cf. Marg 1972, p. 76-78; Centrone 1982, p. 293 n.1.

Aristotle). This approach was met favourably by Neoplatonic commentators, in particular those who sought to harmonize Plato's and Aristotle's theories. Compared to the pseudo-Pythagorean texts, the Neoplatonic approach was based on a more systematic and thoroughly exegetical work on Aristotle's and Plato's texts.

2. *The Doric pseudo-Pythagorean Texts: Aims, Methods, and Strategies.*

A number of the pseudo-Pythagorean texts are written in an artificial Doric Greek. The intention behind this was to imitate the ancient dialect used in Magna Graecia at the time that the first Pythagoreans were active.¹¹

Using this language, however, was not the only strategy that the pseudo-Pythagoreans adopted to convince their audience of the authority of the texts.

In most cases, the texts were not attributed to Pythagoras himself but to several ancient Pythagoreans like Philolaus, Ocellus, Brotinus, Timaeus Locrus and, most prominently, Archytas of Tarentum. The aim here was most likely to suggest that there was a unique Pythagorean tradition of truth that was kept alive over a series of generations.

Among the texts transmitted through the manuscript tradition, we find ps.-Timaeus Locrus' *On the Nature of the World and of the Soul*, which consists of a paraphrase of Plato's

¹¹ See Baltes 1972, p.12-19. A detailed discussion about the use of archaising Doric in epic and prose can be found in Thesleff 1961, p. 77-96. According to Thesleff, some pseudo-Pythagorean texts were composed in Magna Graecia as early as the 4th century BC, when Doric Greek was supposed to have been used in literature. Nowadays, however, scholars generally agree that the 'doricisation' or 'hyper-doricism' of the pseudo-Pythagorean texts was a form of literary imitation that does not imply the existence of pre-existing Doric literature. See Cassio 2000, who explains the introduction of Doric and, in general, of hyper-dialecticism as a reaction to the diffusion of the *koine*, which started in the 4th century BC. According to Cassio, the philologists of the Imperial age saw the risk of a decline of the original linguistic forms and attempted to underline the presence of the dialect by means of hyper-dialectic forms instead of the ordinary forms. Cassio states that the ancients were able to recognize the artificial forms of the dialect but did not react against them. On the contrary, the Doric pseudo-Pythagorean texts were acclaimed not only for their moral content but also for their magnificent λέξις ('style'): see e.g. Dionysius Halicar. *de imit.* p.210,11, Us./Raderm., Cassio 2000, p. 160-161. The use of the Doric dialect may alternately have been a literary strategy to imitate an ancient literary model, in line with the classicist tendencies that shaped the beginning of the Imperial age (for which see Dihle 1989, p. 62-65; 73). If this is correct, it remains very difficult to determine the literary model that the pseudo-Pythagoreans were supposedly imitating.

Timaeus, as well as ps.-Archytas' *On the Whole System [scil. of Categories]*, which is based on Aristotle's *Categories* and ps.-Ocellus' *On the Nature of the Universe*. Some of the writings have only been preserved in fragments transmitted by Stobaeus and Simplicius.¹² In addition to the language, the Doric Pseudo-Pythagoreans share an emphatic style, achieved among other things by means of poetic language, despite their being prose texts. But what is more important is that these texts exhibit a common philosophical doctrine. It is very difficult to identify uniquely Pythagorean tenets. More conspicuous is the concerted attempt to integrate elements from Aristotle's works – especially from the *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *On the Heavens* and *Categories* – with Platonic and ancient Academic doctrines. Moreover, the authors often adopted Hellenistic – specifically Stoic – terminology. In these cases, the authors do not restrict themselves to adopting technical terms from Hellenistic philosophy. They also integrate the doctrinal aspects implied by these adopted terms in their own philosophical perspective. This operation results in a homogeneous and, to some extent, syncretistic worldview, where each element of reality – physical, cosmological, psychological and ethical – is traced back to the interaction between two principles: a principle of determination and a principle of indefiniteness. The subjects discussed are presented in a scholastic way, often by way of systematisations and classifications.¹³ Despite their artificial language and their being clearly inspired by Plato and Aristotle, the ancients never questioned their authenticity.¹⁴

Late ancient philosophers, like Proclus and Simplicius, who wrote commentaries on Plato's and Aristotle's works, frequently refer to the allegedly 'Pythagorean' Ur-Text of the *Timaeus*, supposedly written by Timaeus Locrus. They also cite Ocellus Lucanus and Archytas, whom they considered to be original sources for Plato and Aristotle in the domains of logic, physics, and theology. This idea can be traced back to Iamblichus, who considers the pseudo-Pythagorean texts the epitome of the ancient Pythagorean mastery of all domains of study and values them for their language and archaic style.¹⁵ That is why Iamblichus introduced these texts, invested with high authority, into the Neoplatonic

¹² For a complete list of pseudo-Pythagorean texts, see Thesleff 1961, p. 8-24.

¹³ Centrone 2014, p. 319-320.

¹⁴ See n. 12. For the Neoplatonic approach toward these pseudepigraphic texts, see Müller 1969; Moraux 1974. An exception is Themistius (Boethius *in Cat.* I p. 162 A Migne, test. 4 in Szlezák 1972, p. 30), who states that the Archytas who wrote the treatise *On the Whole System* was not the Archytas who lived during Plato's time, but actually a Peripatetic philosopher. Themistius' aim was probably to react against Iamblichus' 'pythagorizing' way of commenting on Aristotle, see Chiaradonna 2012, p. 180.

¹⁵ Iambl., *Vita Pythagorica*, 157.

program of studies.¹⁶ H. Thesleff's edition of Pseudo-Pythagorean texts in 1965 has initiated a series of studies¹⁷ that mostly deal with philological and doxographical issues. As a result, there is now a growing consensus on an approximate date for the Pseudo-Pythagorean corpus, namely the period between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE. This date is based on certain affinities between the pseudo-Pythagoreans and other philosophical tendencies of the first Imperial age, as can be witnessed particularly in the work of the Platonists Eudorus and Philo of Alexandria, whose interest in Pythagoreanism is well-documented.¹⁸

The pseudo-Pythagorean texts raise a number of interesting questions: for instance, who talks behind the mask of the alleged authors, what audience are they talking to and why?¹⁹ What did these authors want to achieve by presenting themselves as ancient Pythagoreans? The idea that they were simply looking to profit from a well-respected name or that they had a general cultural interest, that in most cases may be at the origins of the production of literary forgeries,²⁰ does not suffice to elucidate the rise of such a specific and rich philosophical literature. One thing that cannot be called into question is the fact that the authors of these texts were motivated by the Pythagorean leanings of Plato himself and, even more so, by Early Academics.²¹ The latter projected onto Ancient Pythagoreanism doctrines which they had developed themselves; in particular, the doctrine of two principles, the One and the indefinite Dyad.²² In this way, they conferred a brand of

¹⁶ Cf. Macris 2000 and 2009; more recently Taormina 2012.

¹⁷ Baltes 1972; Szlezák 1972; Centrone 1990.

¹⁸ See Simpl. *In Phys.*, 181.7-19. Cf. Dörrie 1976, Bonazzi 2005 and 2013b.

¹⁹ Cf. Burkert 1972b, who defines these texts as a puzzle ('Rätsel') to solve, p. 25.

²⁰ See Speyer 1971, esp. p. 33-43.

²¹ Centrone, 2000b, esp. p.158-168. B. Centrone thinks that the pseudo-Pythagorean attitude, like the general renaissance of Pythagoreanism in the 1st century BC (so-called Neopythagoreanism), can be traced back to a Platonic and Academic 'orthodoxy', which further ingrained the tendency among Plato's first successors to attribute the origins of the academic theory of principles to the Pythagoreans. Centrone questions the validity of the label 'Neopythagoreanism' because of the impossibility of distinguishing Platonic from Neopythagorean theories in Imperial philosophy. Recently G. Staab (who actually does not deal with the Pseudo-Pythagorean treatises) argues for acknowledging a more distinctive role to the 'neo-Pythagoreans' within imperial Platonism: "[...] der Pythagoreismus [kann] als 'Konfession' innerhalb des kaiserzeitlichen Platonismus bezeichnet werden", see Staab 2009, p. 57.

²² See Porphyry's verdict in *Vita Phyt.* 53, p. 61.13-62.1 Nauck.

authority upon their own doctrines and elicited a sense of continuity between Platonism and Pythagoreanism. As W. Burkert notoriously demonstrated, most of our testimonies on Pythagoreanism later than the Ancient Academy are, in fact, based on Platonic doctrines.²³ Why, then, go back to the Ancient Academy at the beginning of the Imperial Age?

It has already been pointed out that the extinction of the institutional Academy in 88-86 BC played an important role in the 'birth' of a dogmatic Platonism.²⁴ As Cicero testifies,²⁵ the appeal to the *veteres* ('Ancients') at the beginning of the Imperial age became instrumental to rewriting a genealogy, in order to provide justification for a specific, dogmatic interpretation of Plato's dialogues and, therefore, to establish a philosophical identity. In particular, the appeal to the Academy of Speusippus and Xenocrates is the hallmark of a dogmatic interpretation of Plato.

Should we recognize a similar endeavour in the pseudo-Pythagorean texts? And, if yes, why should the appeal to the ancient Academy not suffice for Platonic philosophers who were in

²³ See Burkert 1972a, esp. p. 15-28. According to Burkert, Aristotle was the only reliable witness to ancient Pythagoreanism, being the only author who clearly separated it from Platonism, cf. e.g. Arist. *Metaph.* A 6, 987a29-988a17. Zhmud 2012 (ch.12) elaborates a completely different position. Denying that the Ancient Academy developed their own philosophy in line with the early Pythagoreans, Zhmud stresses the role played by Aristotle in the creation of a link between early Pythagoreans and the Ancient Academy. He suggests that in the passages where Aristotle distinguishes Plato's philosophy from Pythagoreanism, he actually creates a link between the two, a connection that the Early Platonists (probably also the pseudo-Pythagoreans) recognized and developed.

²⁴ Cf. Hadot 1987. Antiochus of Ascalon (130-68 BC) played an important role, cf. J. Gucker 1978 and Donini 1986. For the philosophy of Antiochus cf. Sedley 2012. Antiochus was the first Platonic philosopher after the extinction of the Academy to be interested in the Ancient Academy for the purpose of proposing a dogmatic reading of Plato against the skeptical outlook of the Hellenistic Academy. He also tried to use Aristotle in order to systematize Plato's dialogues, by including him among the 'Ancients'. See Bonazzi 2012. For the introduction of the designation 'Platonic' instead of 'Academic' (which became the designation of the skeptical interpretation of Plato) see Bonazzi 2002.

²⁵ Cicero, *Ac. Prior.* II, 14.76; XLIII, 132.

search of a dogmatic philosophical identity? Why go back to the Pythagoreans? There is still one even more intriguing question: why was Plato's authority not enough?²⁶

Taking into account our preliminary remarks, the most plausible answer would be that the Doricising pseudo-Pythagoreans had the aim of enforcing a dogmatic interpretation of Plato's doctrines and to support it with authority from Pythagoreanism. The archaic patina adorning those texts was intended to support the view that most Platonic doctrines had already been conceived (in an archaic style) by the Ancient Pythagoreans. I think however, that something more could be added. The aim of the pseudo-Pythagoreans was probably very close to the approach adopted by the Platonists of the Post-Hellenistic age: they suggest not just that Plato's philosophy was authoritative²⁷ but argue, rather, that the source of Plato's philosophy is a source of truth to the very extent that it has an ancient pedigree.²⁸

Just the hypothesis of a 'return' to the Ancient Academy and to a dogmatic interpretation of Plato's dialogues, fails however to explain the factual existence of Doric pseudo-Pythagorean literature. While this theory may say a great deal about the likely origin of these texts, it does not account for the unique role that these texts played at the beginning of the Imperial age. Nor does it explain what the reception of these texts actually accomplished. Moreover, it does not address the philosophical interest of these texts, if there are any, nor does it address the specifics of the influence that they had on Platonism. In order to answer these questions, I want to address one further issue: What were the theoretical issues involved in those texts? The Doric Pseudo-Pythagorean texts are, indeed, of great historical and philosophical interest. An in-depth study of the doctrinal issues involved will shed light on the aims, methods and the reason for their successful reception in the late ancient Philosophers. As we shall see, these authors do not limit themselves to a mere repetition of what the Early Academics did. They quite interestingly combine features of Academic with Aristotelian philosophy, thereby opening compelling new philosophical perspectives. Indeed, they created a new genealogy from Pythagoras to Plato by means of

²⁶ More precisely, the Platonists wanted to establish the epistemic authority of Plato in each domain: this amounts to claiming that Plato had answers to every problem as well as the idea that the dogmatic answer, contrary to a sceptical or a relativistic answer, was the right one. For an analysis of the concept of 'epistemic authority' in ancient philosophy see Opsomer & Ulacco forthc.

²⁷ Cf. Sedley 1997.

²⁸ Cf. Boys-Stones 2001, esp. p. 99-122 and Van Nuffelen 2011, esp. p. 1-24.

writings which did not exist up to that time. Finally, they actually included Aristotle in this genealogy.²⁹

In this contribution, I want to suggest that while the pseudo-Pythagorean texts were most likely originally produced in order to corroborate the authority of Plato – that is, the dogmatic interpretation of Plato’s dialogues – they, in fact, achieved a great deal more. On the basis of an exegetical approach to Plato, they constructed what was in fact a new source of authority. By creating a corpus, a canon of original Pythagorean texts – which was probably meant to be taken for the archaic model not only for Plato, but also for Aristotle –, these authors justified a very specific interpretation of Plato. In other words, they established the possibility for integrating Aristotle’s thought into Plato’s by finding a common origin in a tradition of truth that began with Pythagoras. This possibility was not immediately realized but would become crucial in Neoplatonic philosophy. Thus, the Doric *Pseudepigrapha* are related to the history of the interpretation of Plato and Aristotle and they bridge a gap, not so much in the history of Pythagoreanism but, rather, in that of Platonism.³⁰

3. *The Ur-text of Plato’s Timaeus: Timaeus Locrus’ On the Nature of the World and of the Soul*

The treatise entitled *On the Nature of the World and the Soul* is attributed to a figure known in Antiquity as Timaeus of Locri, the eponymous (and probably fictional) character of Plato’s *Timaeus*. Plato never makes it explicit that Timaeus was a Pythagorean.³¹ According to Cicero’s testimony, Plato studied with Timaeus,³² while according to some Hellenistic sources, Plato composed his *Timaeus* on the basis of a Pythagorean book purchased at a high price from Philolaus.³³ Therefore it would have been obvious for an ancient readership to

²⁹ Cf. Donini 2013. Donini suggests that the pseudo-Pythagorean texts and Eudorus contribute to the creation of the genealogy ‘Pythagoras–Plato–Aristotle’ (which Plutarch reports and uses).

³⁰ As suggested in a recent paper by M. Bonazzi, see Bonazzi 2013a, 385-386.

³¹ See Nails 2002, p.293, who provides a most exhaustive account of ‘Timaeus of Locri Epizephyrrii’, managing to tell the reader everything there is to know about the person in less than 20 lines.

³² Cicero also states that Plato travelled to Italy and met a number of other Pythagoreans learning their doctrines, cf. *Fin.* 5.85; *Resp.* 1.16. See also *Tusc.* 1.17. See Brisson 1993 and Brisson 2002.

³³ There were several versions of the history of plagiarism. Plato is said to have purchased three Pythagorean books from Philolaus through Dion Syracusanus (Iambl. *Vita Pythagorica* 199). A similar story is quoted by Diogenes Laertius (III 9, VIII 84). In Diogenes, there is also a different version: Plato is alleged to have purchased a book written by Philolaus himself (See Hermippus in

assume that Timaeus Locrus' text was exactly that book and that is probably what the set-up of the text is meant to suggest. The text paraphrases Plato's *Timaeus* from 27c to 92c, containing the account of the ordering of the body of the world, of the world soul, the elemental bodies, the human body and the human soul. The author summarizes the text and sometimes modifies the order of Plato's argumentation, offering (whether consciously or not) an original interpretation of Platonic theories. Although it cannot be considered a commentary strictly speaking and does not presents itself as such, the treatise can certainly be taken as the result of an early exegetical activity on Plato's *Timaeus* and it achieves exactly what a commentary is supposed to achieve, namely that the readers understand the original text in a particular fashion.

Nowadays, scholars generally agree that TL's treatise³⁴ is an apocryphal work composed most likely between the first century BC and the first century AD. According to Baltes, who provides an extensive commentary on this work, there are many affinities between TL and the Platonism of the first century BC. Although it is not possible to confirm this hypothesis with any certainty, Baltes gives significant parallels to Eudorus of Alexandria, most of them in the domains of psychology and ethics.³⁵ TL's text differs from the other pseudo-Pythagoreans in that it is the only Pseudo-Pythagorean treatise that, although it is not presented as such, is in fact an interpretative summary of a Platonic dialogue. The other apocryphal texts are not a direct interpretation of some specific work, except for the treatise *On the whole system* by ps.-Archytas,³⁶ which is based on Aristotle's *Categories*.

Diogenes Laertius VIII 85; cf. Timon fr.54, Gell. III 17,4). Cf. Burkert 1972a, p. 208; Marg 1972, p. 88-90; Baltes 1972, p. 3; Centrone 1982, p.293-294.

³⁴ Henceforth I use the abbreviation TL for the author (the forger) of the text *On the Nature of the World and the Soul*.

³⁵ According to Baltes, an important clue for determining the affinity between TL and Eudorus is, for instance, the number on the basis of which the soul is mathematically divided, namely 384, e.g. the same number adopted by Crantor and Eudorus in their explanation of the mathematical division of the world-soul. Cf. TL 208,16-209,8. Eudorus and TL moreover incline to a metaphoric or didactic interpretation of the generation of the world in Plato's *Timaeus*, as does TL 206,11-12. For even more parallels between TL and Eudorus, see Bonazzi 2013a, p.387-388; 391-392 and 2013b, p. 164-171.

³⁶ In Thesleff's 1965 edition, the title used for the treatise is Περὶ τῶν καθόλου λόγων. The tract is completely transmitted in a manuscript discovered by J. Nolle (c.Ambros.23 = B, see Nolle 1914, p.VII) in a *koinè* version bearing the title Περὶ τοῦ καθόλου λόγου ἥτοι δέκα κατηγοριῶν. Excerpts from a Doric version are quoted in later sources, most notably by Simplicius in his

Building on a hypothesis by R. Harder,³⁷ M. Baltes suggests that TL's text could be the result of a complex history of composition and contains at least two strata: the first and oldest being an epitome of Plato's *Timaeus* written in the second century BC. According to Baltes, this oldest layer of the text is basically a summary of Plato's dialogue which reduces the latter's complexity. Already at this stage, the epitomator who was responsible for this oldest stratum may have reinterpreted the text on the basis of an Aristotelian conceptual apparatus. The second stratum could be the work of a teacher in a Platonic school from the first century BC or the first century AD and would have been responsible for additions and alterations, inspired by post-Aristotelian developments.³⁸ He could very well have been the person who pseudepigraphically attributed the text to Timaeus of Locri and, moreover, would be the person responsible for the Doric translation. Alternatively, Baltes suggests the possibility that the pseudepigraphical attribution is, in fact, due to a third person. This hypothesis has important repercussions for the relation between TL's text and Plato's dialogue. It is much less important, however, for the rational reconstruction of the doctrines contained in the text, which is the approach I want to adopt here. It should be stressed that M. Baltes' reconstruction of the textual history is a hypothesis and one that is not based on strong textual evidence,³⁹ but mainly on contextual elements, grounded in a more global view of the development of Hellenistic philosophy. Plausible as this may sound to like-minded historians of philosophy, if we look at the text as it is, devoid of any clearly distinguishable strata or obvious breaks,⁴⁰ we need not worry about this issue in the present context. I intend to simply study the text as such, examining the author's strategies and methods in order to compare it with Plato's *Timaeus* and use it as evidence for Hellenistic and Early Imperial interpretations of the latter. The selection of passages from Plato's *Timaeus* that TL summarises offers significant clues as to implied theoretical points of view and, generally, as to how this Platonic dialogue was interpreted at the beginning of the

Commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*. See Thesleff 1961, p. 9 and 1965, p. 21. In his 1972 edition, Szlezák reconstructs the text by using the version of the Codex Ambrosianus and the excerpts from Simplicius, cf. Szlezák, p. 1-7; 13-19.

³⁷ According to R. Harder, two stratifications can be found in TL's treatise: a stratum due to the forger (F), who probably worked in the first century BC, and an intermediate stratum (Q), which could be an epitome from the Hellenistic age, cf. Harder 1936.

³⁸ Baltes, 1972, p. 9-10; 20-26.

³⁹ The only textual evidence is that the arithmological section is not found in all manuscripts. This could be an indication that it is a later addition and, therefore, that there are at least two strata of TL's text. See Marg 1972, p. 60-75.

⁴⁰ With the possible exception of the arithmological section. See n. 39.

Imperial Age; that is, of course, assuming that it can be reliably dated to that period. I, for one, find this date to be highly plausible, given what is known about the pseudo-Pythagorean corpus, generally speaking, and the Pythagoreanising tendencies in Platonism. Even if the text contains non-Platonic elements which pre-date that period, these were, at least, still thought to be pertinent at the time of its final redaction.⁴¹

I shall now present a specific issue in TL's text: TL's hylomorphic interpretation of Plato's theory of elemental bodies,⁴² an aspect that has gone completely neglected by most scholars. It is a crucial part of the text for understanding which strategies the pseudo-Pythagoreans adopted and what aims they intended to pursue.⁴³ Moreover, the hylomorphic interpretation of Plato's theory of elemental bodies, more than any other aspect of the Doric treatises, enjoyed a successful reception in late ancient philosophy.

According to Plato's so-called geometrical atomism, the four elements – fire, earth, water and air – derive from basic triangles that combine into triangular and quadrangular surfaces. These are, in turn, combined into stereometric figures which form the elements.⁴⁴ TL basically agrees with this theory, yet not without specifying (adopting an Aristotelian terminology) that elemental bodies are composed of matter and form.⁴⁵ Thus, he combines a mathematical explanation with a physical one. Now, it is well known that one of the major criticisms that Aristotle addressed to the Platonic theory of elemental bodies is that a

⁴¹ The first quotations of TL's text are in Nicomachus of Gerasa (*Ench. Harmon.*, in *Musici Scriptores Graeci*, ed. Jan 260) and in Taurus *apud* Philoponum (*De aet. mundi*, ed. Rabe 145). The *terminus ante quem* is, therefore, assumed to be the second century AD. For the *terminus post quem* scholars do not agree upon a date. According to H. Thesleff, TL's text was composed at least in the third century BC (Thesleff 1961, p. 59-65). G. Ryle, whose hypothesis was met with great scepticism, tried to demonstrate the Aristotelian authorship of TL's treatise (Ryle 1965). For a comprehensive account of the various hypotheses regarding the date and corresponding arguments, see Centrone 1982, p. 295 n. 3 and p. 296-299 n. 4.

⁴² I discuss the theoretical implication of this aspect in a more systematic way together with J. Opsomer in Ulacco & Opsomer 2014. Here, I will summarize some general results of this article, while highlighting the strategies and methods adopted by TL.

⁴³ Assuming that TL and the other pseudo-Pythagorean texts come from the same milieu and have similar aims.

⁴⁴ Cf. Ulacco & Opsomer 2014, p. 156-158.

⁴⁵ 215, 13-15. I quote from the edition by W. Marg, 1972, who adopts the numbering of Thesleff 1965.

mathematical approach cannot really explain the constitution of physical bodies.⁴⁶ According to Aristotle, elemental bodies actually derive from primary qualities: hot and cold, dry and wet.

What, then, is TL's aim? Are TL's statements simply a crude and eclectic mix of heterogeneous ideas? Is TL defending Plato's theory against Aristotle's criticism or could he have actually been consciously combining two opposite models?

In order to answer these questions, we need to look more closely at what TL means when he uses the terms 'form' and 'matter', as he does at the beginning of the text.

The text begins in a rather archaic way, probably to suggest that the text is the transcription of Timaeus Locrus' ancient teaching.

Τίμαιος ὁ Λοκρὸς τάδε ἔφα·⁴⁷

Δύο αἰτίας εἶμεν τῶν συμπάντων, νόον μὲν τῶν κατὰ λόγον γιγνομένων, ἀνάγκαν δὲ τῶν βίᾳ καττὰς δυνάμεις τῶν σωμάτων. τουτέων δὲ τὸ μὲν τᾶς τὰγαθῶ φύσιος εἶμεν θεὸν τε ὀνομαίνεσθαι ἀρχάν τε τῶν ἀρίστων· τὰ δ' ἐπόμενά τε καὶ συναίτια ὄντα ἐς ἀνάγκαν ἀνάγεσθαι. τὰ δὲ ζύμπαντα τρία· ἰδέαν, ὕλαν, αἰσθητὸν τὸ οἷον ἔγγονον τουτέων.

⁴⁶ See for instance Aristotle's argument that bodies cannot come to be from planes, cf. DC 3.8, 306a23—6. He also objected that the theory presupposes the existence of free-floating triangles, held to be impossible because two-dimensional figures cannot exist separately in nature, cf. DC 306a20—23.

⁴⁷ The locution with the praeteritum 'he said the following' is a seal customarily put at the beginning of a work in ancient literature. For references see Baltes 1972, p. 29-30. Usually we find συνέγραφε ('wrote'), while TL uses ἔφα ('said'). What makes TL's beginning a peculiar case is also the fact that he introduces his own teaching. Baltes gives references to Alcmeon of Croton, who uses an analogous opening, where it is clear that his disciples are reporting his theory (cf. 24B1). Unusual is also the article 'ὁ' Λοκρὸς, something like 'the famous of Locri'. Baltes wonders whether TL's treatise is actually an account of a disciple, who is reporting the master's teaching. Yet he rejects this hypothesis maintaining that what we actually have here is a forger's misunderstanding of an ancient formula. The sealing of the text could also have been a later addition, possibly made at the time of the second stratum of the text, if indeed we accept this hypothesis regarding the composition of the text; cf. n. 38 and 39. For the prooemium as requirement to advertise the authorship of the text see Runia 1997.

(Timaeus Locrus said the following. There are two causes of all things: Intellect of what comes into being according to reason; Necessity of what comes into being under constraint in accordance with the powers of bodies. Of these causes, one is of the nature of the good and it is called god and the principle of the best things; the other, however, which are secondary and contributory causes, fall under necessity. All things are three (in kind): idea, matter and the sensible, which is the offspring of them).⁴⁸

The opening of TL's treatise does not correspond to the opening of the physical account in Plato's *Timaeus*. The dialogic structure and the 'likely' character of the account of nature,⁴⁹ which determine Plato's approach, are completely disregarded by TL. Instead, the pseudo-Pythagorean opens his work in a dogmatic way, presenting what he probably considers the philosophical core of Plato's *Timaeus*: a twofold system, in which the first principles are intellect and necessity. In fact, this idea is taken from the second part of the *Timaeus* (from 47e3 onwards), where Plato/Timaeus comes to consider the generation of the world under the perspective of Necessity, after having reported it from the perspective of Reason or Intellect. It is certainly a core idea of this Platonic dialogue that the world is a mixture of reason and necessity and TL summarises Plato's argument by positing a fundamental opposition between reason and necessity from the very beginning. He then introduces a further classification of three entities that, together, constitute the totality of things: idea, matter and their offspring. TL then describes what idea and matter are:

καὶ τὰν μὲν εἶμεν αἰεὶ, ἀγέννατόν τε καὶ ἀκίνατον, ἀμέριστόν τε καὶ τᾷς ταυτῷ φύσιος, νοατάν τε καὶ παράδειγμα τῶν γεννωμένων, ὁκόσα ἐν μεταβολᾷ ἐντι- τοιοῦτον γάρ τι τὰν ἰδέαν λέγεσθαί τε καὶ νοῆσθαι. τὰν δ' ὕλαν ἐκμαγεῖον καὶ ματέρα τιθάναν τε καὶ γεννατικὰν εἶμεν τᾷς τρίτας οὐσίας· δεξαμένην γὰρ τὰ ὁμοιώματα ἐς αὐτὰν καὶ οἷον ἐναπομαξαμένην ἀποτελεῖν τάδε τὰ γεννάματα. ταύταν δὲ τὰν ὕλαν αἰδίου μὲν ἔφα, οὐ μὲν ἀκίνατον, ἄμορφον δὲ κατ' αὐταύταν καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον, δεχομένην δὲ πᾶσαν μορφάν· τὰν δὲ περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστὰν εἶμεν καὶ τᾷς θατέρω φύσιος. ποταγορεύοντι δὲ τὰν ὕλαν τόπον καὶ χώραν. δύο ὧν αἶδε ἀρχαί ἐντι, ἅν τὸ μὲν εἶδος λόγον ἔχει ἄρρενός τε καὶ πατρός, ἃ δ' ὕλα θήλεός τε καὶ ματέρος. τρίτα δὲ εἶναι τὰ ἐκ τουτέων ἔγγονα.

(The idea is eternal, ungenerated, and immovable, indivisible and of the nature of the same, intelligible and the model of generated things, which are in a state of change. The idea can

⁴⁸ 205,4-10. Translations are from Tobin with some modifications, cf. Tobin 1985.

⁴⁹ Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 29d2, where the character Timaeus describes his account of nature as being 'resembling' or 'likely' (τὸν εἰκότα μῦθον).

indeed be spoken and thought. Matter, however, is the recipient, mother, nurse and generative of the third substance. It receives the likenesses in itself, stamps itself with them and produces those things that are generated. He says this matter is everlasting, not immovable; in itself shapeless and patternless, but receiving every shape. The substance that is divisible about bodies is likewise of the nature of the different. They call matter place and space. These two then are principles of which form has the function of the male and the father; matter of the female and the mother. The offspring of both occupy the third place.)⁵⁰

TL summarizes, in the guise of a catalogue, all the aspects of intelligible things that we can find in Plato's dialogues, not only with respect to the Forms but also with respect to the soul. TL's strategy may very well have been to show that Timaeus Locrus had already conceived and expressed, in a very condensed way, the most important features of the intelligible and, in general, everything that belongs to the principle of reason/Intellect. It is possible to say that TL's thought marked a step, we do not know how early, of a theory that would become common in Imperial Platonism (which, however, would not be accepted by all Platonists and which existed in many different versions), i.e. the assimilation of the Forms with the Intellect (the Forms as thoughts of god).⁵¹ What is probably more surprising is the use of the term 'matter'. In Plato's *Timaeus*, the entity which receives every pattern is described as the receptacle (χώρα, δεξαμενή, τιθήνη). Interestingly, TL substitutes the Aristotelian term 'matter' for Plato's receptacle. The precedent for this identification is in *Physics* IV,2, 209b11-12 where Aristotle states that Plato's third principle, space or the receptacle, should be understood as matter. This identification was a common theory among the Imperial Platonists⁵² but its direct application to the *Timaeus* implies a radical shift. TL's matter and idea/form are ontological constituents of bodies, that is, of material substances. Idea and matter are also described, together with their offspring, as substances. This description is reminiscent of the Aristotelian distinction, in *Metaphysics* Z, between three candidates for substancehood: matter, form and compound.⁵³ In TL's text, idea and matter are conceived of as the hylomorphic constituent of the things, which are therefore compounds of matter and form. I will not go into the enormous theoretical consequences of such an identification here.⁵⁴ It suffices to note that the result of TL's combination of Platonic and Aristotelian issues appears to be more than just a simple

⁵⁰ 205,10-206,7. See Ulacco & Opsomer 2014, p. 161-168 for a detailed interpretation of this passage.

⁵¹ Cf. Baltes 1972, p.35-36.

⁵² Cf. Brisson 1994, p. 221-222; Lee 2001, p. 132-136.

⁵³ Arist., *Met.* VII, 3, 1028b33-1029b12.

⁵⁴ See Ulacco & Opsomer 2014, esp. 161-168; 203-206.

juxtaposition. Plato, for instance, never suggests that Idea/Form and matter are ontological constituents of bodies, which is exactly what TL does.⁵⁵ This is, indeed, an Aristotelian way of understanding sensible objects in nature. Aristotle, however, would never have accepted the identification of his notion of ‘form’ with the Platonic Idea/Intelligible.

TL’s rendering of the entities listed in the *Timaeus*, however, does fit very well with the general accounts of the principles that we find throughout the Pseudo-Pythagorean corpus. Matter and form belong to the twofold series (συστοιχία) of principles; they are the physical manifestations of the principles, as we can see in the Ps.-Archytas’s *On principles*.⁵⁶

Ἀνάγκη [καὶ] δύο ἀρχὰς εἶμεν τῶν ὄντων, μίαν μὲν τὰν συστοιχίαν ἔχουσαν τῶν τεταγμένων καὶ ὀριστῶν, ἑτέραν δὲ τὰν συστοιχίαν ἔχουσαν τῶν ἀτάκτων καὶ ἀορίστων.

(There are necessarily two principles of beings; the one containing the series of beings organised and limited; the other, of unordered and unlimited things).⁵⁷

καὶ τὰ τέχνη καὶ τὰ φύσει γινόμενα δύο τούτων πρᾶτων μετείληφε, τᾷς τε μορφῶς καὶ τᾷς οὐσίας. καὶ ἡ μὲν μορφὴ ἐστὶν αἰτία τοῦ τόδε τι εἶμεν· ἡ δὲ οὐσία τὸ ὑποκείμενον, παραδεχόμενον τὰν μορφῶν.

(The things that owe their existence to art, and also those which owe it to nature, must above all participate in these two, shape and substance; the shape is the cause of essence, the substance however is the substratum which receives the shape.)⁵⁸

⁵⁵ The only passage in which Plato uses ὕλη in a sense that comes even remotely close to Aristotle’s matter is *Phlb.* 54c1-4.

⁵⁶ Cf. Bonazzi 2005, esp. p. 142-160 and 2013b, esp. p. 386-387 and 390-397, who clearly shows that pseudo-Archytas’ theory bears a close resemblance to Eudorus’. The latter attributes a similar theory to the Ancient Pythagoreans and the Academics, perceived as Pythagoras’ disciples (cf. Mazzarelli test. 3-5). Eudorus’ account of the Pythagorean doctrine may derive, as Bonazzi convincingly remarks, from Aristotle’s account of the Pythagoreans in *Metaphysics* A. This also constitutes evidence for an early reception of the Aristotelian scholastic *Corpus*, on which cf. Chiaradonna 2011. See also note n. 59 of this paper. Bonazzi stresses the role of the Stoic theories in ps.-Archytas. Although this is an important aspect for a correct understanding of this thinker, I shall not consider it in the present paper.

⁵⁷ 19,5-7 Thesleff.

⁵⁸ 19,17-20 Thesleff. An alternative translation for μορφῶ would be ‘form’, yet I here use ‘shape’ in order to distinguish it from my translation of εἶδος as ‘form’ (215,13-15, see above). The expression

It is also interesting to note that TL applies the same hylomorphic structure to the word-soul as well as to elemental bodies. The world soul is said to be a mixture of indivisible form and divisible matter; terms which, at the beginning of the text, are posited as equivalent to form and matter. The world-soul is, thus, described as a hylomorphic compound of matter and form, in which the matter more than likely has to be understood as something different from the matter out of which sensible things are constituted.⁵⁹

Regarding elemental bodies, TL adopts Plato's geometric atomism but he systematically reduces the Platonic account of the composition of the elements out of triangles. Interestingly though, he introduces this account with the following remarks:

ἀρχαὶ μὲν ὧν τῶν γεννωμένων ὡς μὲν ὑποκείμενον ἡ ὕλη, ὡς δὲ λόγος μορφᾶς τὸ εἶδος· ἀπογεννώματα δὲ τούτων ἐντὶ τὰ σώματα, γὰρ τε καὶ ὕδωρ ἀήρ τε καὶ πῦρ.

(The principles of generated things are matter as the substratum and form (εἶδος) as the formula of the shape. The progeny of these are the bodies: earth, water, fire, air.)⁶⁰

This is the clearest statement of TL's hylomorphic account of elemental bodies which has no parallels in Plato's *Timaeus* or in Aristotle's theory of the elemental bodies. I shall not delve into any more details of TL's account here.⁶¹ For our purposes, we already have enough material to reach some interesting conclusions.

In order to provide an answer to our first question, 'What is TL's aim?', we should probably say that TL expresses a form of Platonism, to which certain Aristotelian positions are not entirely antithetical. However, he still does not seem to defend Plato 'against' Aristotle's criticism. Besides, TL does not follow a clear strategy of harmonisation as other Platonists

λόγος μορφᾶς should accordingly be understood as 'formula', 'principle' or 'basis' of the shape. It is clear, however, that ps.-Archytas takes μορφῶ as referring to the essential form which determines and structures the substance/matter. In the case of the four elements, this essential form *consists* in the configuration of matter in a certain shape. The meaning of substance (οὐσία) as first matter has probably a stoic origin, cf. e.g. SVF I 24, 6-7; 28-29.

⁵⁹ 208,13-17: Τὰν δὲ τῷ κόσμῳ ψυχὰν μεσόθεν ἐξάψας ἐπάγαγεν, ἔξω περι καλύψας αὐτὸν ὅλον αὐτᾶ, κρᾶμα αὐτὰν κερασάμενος ἔκ τε τᾶς ἀμερίστῳ μορφᾶς καὶ τᾶς μεριστᾶς οὐσίας, ὡς ἐν κρᾶμα ἐκ δύο τούτων εἶμεν. On the problem of the cosmic soul in TL and other pseudo-Pythagorean treatises cf. Ulacco forthc.

⁶⁰ 215,13-15.

⁶¹ For that see Baltes 1972, p. 112 ; Ulacco & Opsomer 2014, p. 170-188.

did and for which they could have found clues in TL's work. Such a harmonisation would have required a deep knowledge of Aristotle's esoteric treatises, something that appears to be absent from TL's text.⁶² The author purports a type of Platonism which combines two models for the interpretation of reality, a geometrical one and a physical one; TL's aim here is clearly to show that every kind of reality depends on a higher, two-fold classification of principles. Although it is not clear which assumptions TL is committed to, it is plausible that he combines a more transcendent and metaphysical approach with a physical and empirical perspective. In this way, he may have answered Aristotle's criticism – just not in a systematic manner. By showing the source of Plato's *Timaeus*, and therefore of Plato's doctrines as well, he shows that he is not vulnerable to such criticism. In fact, TL anticipates and thus 'pre-empts', consciously or not, Aristotle's eventual criticism.⁶³

If we compare TL's approach with another pseudo-Pythagorean text, ps.-Archytas' *On the Whole System*, we can see another strategy at work. If the aim of TL's work was to reveal the Ur-text of Plato's *Timaeus*, ps.-Archytas' aim could very well have been to reveal the Ur-text of Aristotle's *Categories*. By showing that an Aristotelian treatise, the *Categories*, also has an ancient Pythagorean model, ps.-Archytas may have wanted to prove that Aristotle's theory of categories is part of a Platonic theory. One example suffices to give an idea of the similarities between TL's and ps.-Archytas' approach. When speaking of the general 'expressions' or

⁶² Cf. Chiaradonna 2009 and in particular Chiaradonna 2011, which discusses the reception of the Aristotelian corpus between 100 BC and 250 AD. Chiaradonna argues that the first Peripatetic and Platonic interpreters knew only some of the esoteric Aristotelian treatises. Only in the 2nd century AD did philosophers develop a systematic reading of the esoteric works, which culminated in the work Alexander of Aphrodisias. The exegetical work of Alexander laid the foundations for the Neoplatonic systematic integration of Aristotle with Plato.

⁶³ It is of course difficult to establish to what extent TL was aware of the anachronism of using Aristotelian terminology. It could also have been that TL just used the terminology that was most familiar with in order to explain and paraphrase Plato's *Timaeus*. There is, however, at least one case that proves that TL knew an Aristotelian text passage and that he tried to 'reformulate' it and make it consistent with his theoretical assumptions. Compare TL 219.16–17: τὸ μὲν ὦν θερμὸν λεπτομερές τε καὶ διαστατικὸν τῶν σωμάτων δοκεῖ εἶμεν, τὸ δὲ ψυχρὸν παχυμερέστερόν τε τῶν πόρων καὶ συμπιλωτικόν ἐστι, with Aristotle, DC 3.8, 307b12–14: Φασὶ γὰρ εἶναι ψυχρὸν τὸ μεγαλομερές διὰ τὸ συνθλίβειν καὶ μὴ διέναι διὰ τῶν πόρων. Δῆλον τοίνυν ὅτι καὶ τὸ θερμὸν ἂν εἴη τὸ διόν· τοιοῦτον δ' αἰεὶ τὸ λεπτομερές. The wording here is much closer to Aristotle than it is to the *Timaeus*. This passage is discussed in Ulacco & Opsomer 2014, p.199-203.

‘genera’ of beings, ps.-Archytas states that the category of ‘substance’ belongs to intelligible things, as well as to sensible things.⁶⁴ He thereby deviates from Aristotle in the *Categories*, by defining substance as a ‘Platonic’ intelligible, thus establishing a link between the sensible and intelligible realms. I do not think that ps.-Archytas is criticizing Aristotle’s theory of categories here. What is more likely, rather, is that he wants to show how a theory of categories is implied in Plato’s theory of Forms and that the Aristotelian theory of categories equally applies to the intelligible realm.

Finally, it should be noted that the two texts that are proposed as models of Platonic and Aristotelian works – Plato’s *Timaeus* and Aristotle’s *Categories* – are certainly not chosen by coincidence. As scholars have remarked, at the beginning of the 1st century BC, these two texts were considered the most important texts of the ‘Ancients’ and were held to deserve exegesis. They were perceived as essential for answering the crucial metaphysical, physical and epistemological questions.⁶⁵

4. *The Neoplatonic Reception: An Established Pythagorean Authority*

The Doric pseudo-Pythagorean texts play a very interesting role in late ancient philosophy. Indeed, as far as TL and ps.-Archytas are concerned, Neoplatonic commentators considered those texts to be genuine, even arguing that they were models for Plato and Aristotle. Iamblichus was the first to include pseudo-Pythagorean writings in his works with the idea of advancing ‘pythagoreanisation’ of Platonism; a project which consisted of giving a central role to mathematical speculation in metaphysics, in developing a theory of first principles and in deriving a structural principle of ontology. Iamblichus thereby claimed the authority of ancient Pythagoreanism for Platonism.⁶⁶ Crucial to this project is an epistemological treatise by ps.-Archytas entitled *On the intellect and the Sensation*,⁶⁷ which deals with the problem of truth criterion and distinguishes four different levels of knowledge. Iamblichus

⁶⁴ 30,23-31,5 Th.; Pace Szlezák 1972, esp. p. 16-17 Here, I follow the interpretation of Chiaradonna 2009, esp. p. 99-107. Contrary to Szlezák, Chiaradonna does not find an anticipation of the Plotinian criticism of Aristotle in ps.-Archytas’ texts. Plotinus argues that Aristotle’s theory of categories does not apply to the intelligible realm (cf. *Enn.*, VI 1, 1, 30), while according to ps.-Archytas substance belongs to both realms, the sensible and the intelligible one.

⁶⁵ On the ‘revival’ of Plato’s and Aristotle’s works at the beginning of the 1st century BC cf. Frede 1999 and, specifically on Aristotle’s *Categories*, cf. Sharples 2008.

⁶⁶ See also the analysis of the very concept of principle, for Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, by Roux 2004.

⁶⁷ 36,13-39,25 Th.

uses this text⁶⁸ in order to develop his doctrine of mathematical entities in the soul and thereby provides an ontology of mathematical objects. He argues that mathematics originates at the level of the soul and constitutes the link between the higher forms and the shapes and formal principles in matter. Iamblichus' project is, in fact, to rebuild a Pythagorean identity. To this aim, he collects all of the Pythagorean sources, genuine and pseudepigraphic texts alike (which, of course, he considered to be authentic). He uses TL's treatise to get a firmer grip on Plato's *Timaeus* and to settle interpretive issues related to that work. In the same vein, he uses the authority of ps.-Archytas' *On the Whole System* to arbitrate exegetical debates that had divided readers of Aristotle's *Categories*. As was previously stated, Iamblichus considers the Pseudo-Pythagorean texts the prime example of the ancient Pythagorean mastery over every domain. This claim was to have substantial influence on later Neoplatonic systems.

Below, I relate a few significant examples of the Neoplatonists' attitude to the pseudo-Pythagorean treatises and, more specifically, to TL's hylomorphic theory. In his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, Proclus introduces his exegesis claiming that he is going to present the work of the Pythagorean Timaeus as an introduction to Plato's dialogue, because Plato himself conducted his survey over nature in the 'Pythagorean manner'.⁶⁹ The meaning of this expression, of course, requires some further clarification. Proclus criticises Aristotle's ontological analysis of hylomorphic objects in terms of matter and enmattered form, both considered as causes properly speaking, while Plato considered them as mere *sunaitia* of the physical world, themselves dependent upon transcendent primary causes.⁷⁰ Proclus supports this criticism of Aristotle and the corresponding interpretation of Plato by referring to Timaeus Locrus. Thus Timaeus Locrus is referenced at a crucial point in Proclus' account. Despite his criticism of Aristotle, Proclus integrates the Aristotelian concepts of matter and form (based on *Phys.* I, *Met.* VII). Further on in his work, Proclus often mentions Timaeus (Locrus), but he also speaks of a theory on the primary qualities of the elements, which he ascribes to Ocellus, to whom was attributed, pseudepigraphically, a work entitled *On the Nature of the Whole*. Proclus uses these two pseudepigrapha to construct a new theory of the three basic forces defining the elemental bodies.⁷¹

Simplicius uses TL's *On the Nature of the World and of the Soul* and ps.-Archytas' *On the Whole System* in a more systematic way. Simplicius expressly links alleged Pythagorean authority to his own exegetical practice. In particular, he uses what he considers the archaic

⁶⁸ *De comm. math. sc.* 35 Festa.

⁶⁹ Proclus, *In Tim.*, 1,1.5-16.

⁷⁰ Proclus, *In Tim.*, I,2,29-1,3,2.

⁷¹ Proclus, *In Tim.*, 2,37,33-2,39,19.

model, common to Plato and Aristotle, in order to defend the authority of his own principal exegetical aim: to prove that the main philosophical traditions, and especially Plato and Aristotle, are essentially in agreement. Like Proclus, Simplicius quotes TL (215,13-15) in his commentary on *De caelo* as evidence of his interpretation of the generation of elements.⁷² Unlike Proclus, Simplicius' goal is to harmonize Plato's philosophy with Aristotle's. Thus, he has to find a stratagem to explain away Aristotle's explicit criticism of Plato's theory of the elements. The hylomorphic interpretation of Plato's theory of the elements forms an essential part of his strategy.

In his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, Simplicius, clearly following an Iamblichean exegetical principle, states that ps.-Archytas' texts on categories was the model for Aristotle's *Categories*.⁷³ It is possible to follow one of the several consequences of this approach in the way in which Simplicius tries to explain the differences between ps.-Archytas and Aristotle. Simplicius states that Archytas and Aristotle are both discussing supreme beings, only according to different perspectives. Where Aristotle examines the categories as linguistic and empirical manifestations of the supreme beings, Archytas considers the categories strictly to be referring to the latter. Simplicius applies the same strategy to explain what could otherwise have been seen as a conflict between Plato and Aristotle:

(...) πανταχοῦ δὲ ἐθέλει τῆς φύσεως μὴ ἐξίστασθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ὑπὲρ τὴν φύσιν κατὰ τὴν πρὸς τὴν φύσιν θεωρεῖ σχέσιν, ὥσπερ ὁ θεῖος Πλάτων ἀνάπαλιν κατὰ τὸ Πυθαγόρειον ἔθος καὶ τὰ φυσικὰ ἐπισκέπτεται καθὸ τῶν ὑπὲρ φύσιν μετέχουσιν. οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ μύθοις οὐδὲ συμβολικοῖς αἰνίγμασιν, ὡς τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ τινες, Ἀριστοτέλης ἐχρήσατο, ἀλλ' ἀντὶ παντὸς ἄλλου παραπετάσματος τὴν ἀσάφειαν προετίμησεν.

([Aristotle] always refuses to deviate from nature; on the contrary, he considers even things which are above nature according to their relation to nature, just as, by contrast, the divine Plato, according to Pythagorean usage, examines even natural things insofar as they participate in the things above nature. To be sure, unlike some of his predecessors, Aristotle did not make use of myths or of symbolic riddles, but preferred obscurity.)⁷⁴

According to Simplicius, the 'Pythagorean' approach, which is also Plato's approach, is to examine natural things insofar that they participate in transcendent beings. If Plato (just like Archytas) seems to be in disagreement with Aristotle, this is only because their terminology and methodology are different. Ps.-Archytas' text is witness to a fundamental

⁷² Simplicius, *In De cael.*, 561,10; 564,3; 641,9.

⁷³ For the role of ps.-Archytas' text in Simplicius' commentary on *Categories*, see Gavray 2011.

⁷⁴ Simplicius, *In Cat.*, 6, 27-32, trans. Chase.

agreement, in so far as the Pythagorean was a source for both Plato and for Aristotle. Thus, they belong to the same tradition of truth.

5. Conclusions

It is remarkable that both Simplicius and Proclus use the very same passage from TL in order to substantiate their claim that the Platonic theory of elements should be interpreted in a hylomorphic sense. Proclus and Simplicius did not have any doubt about the authenticity of TL's treatise. They were convinced that this was the original text that inspired the *Timaeus* and which gave it its Pythagorean flavour. They needed this hylomorphic interpretation of geometrical atomism in order to defend the *Timaeus* against a series of arguments that Aristotle levelled at the theory. Aristotle argued, for instance, that bodies cannot come to be from planes.⁷⁵ This objection is rendered void, however, if one claims that triangles are themselves material, three-dimensional bodies. Is it possible, then, that TL intended to disarm these objections? As we have remarked above, it is very difficult to find a deep engagement with Aristotle's arguments in TL. To be sure, TL knows some Aristotelian objections to Plato and possibly tries to disarm them through what he wants to show as anticipation. He suggests the idea of continuity among Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle which was more systematically pursued by Neoplatonic commentators, especially Simplicius, whose principal aim was to harmonise Plato's and Aristotle's theories. In TL, the Neoplatonists found the key for postulating a continuum among various realms – from sublunary to transcendent – where similar causal structures are at work.

As already suggested at the beginning of this paper, the Doric pseudo-Pythagorean texts support a specific interpretation of Plato's dialogues. Moreover, they create a new 'Pythagorean' authority, in so far as:

- 1) they provide a textual and authoritative source for both Plato and Aristotle;
- 2) they validate the possibility of integrating Aristotle's thought into an interpretation of Plato's dialogues, and therefore:
- 3) they confer authority to their philosophical interpretation of Plato (and Aristotle).

As I hope to have demonstrated, one of the principal strategies of the pseudo-Pythagorean authors was to profit from Aristotle's criticism, especially among those critiques wherein Aristotle references both Plato and the Pythagoreans. They do so by producing, what they probably understand as, a common underlying theory; in other words, a theory that Aristotle would have shared. The pseudo-Pythagoreans were not aiming to establish a

⁷⁵ Arist. *DC* 3.8, 306a23-6.

systematic agreement between Plato and Aristotle, unlike the Neoplatonic commentators. They did not directly engage Aristotle's arguments. Still, it is highly likely that they had access to some of Aristotle's esoteric works. They were also aware of at least some important criticisms that Aristotle directed at Plato and the Pythagoreans. What is more, they saw the possibility of reconciling the Academic and Pythagorean doctrines of first principles in Aristotle's own account of the Pythagoreans.

In their approach, however, the Doric pseudo-Pythagorean treatises created a new genealogy (Pythagoras-Plato-Aristotle), which would become fundamental to the Neoplatonic exegetical enterprise. Contrary to the Pseudopythagoreans, some Neoplatonists clearly argued in favour of the thesis that there is a substantial agreement between Plato and Aristotle. And all of them directly engage with problems posed in Aristotle's criticism of Plato.

To conclude, the study of this doctrinal aspect agrees well with the hypothesis, shared by a number of scholars, that this Pseudo-Pythagorean text should be dated to the first century of the Imperial age. The aim of the Pseudo-Pythagorean authors, at least of Timaeus Locrus, fits very well with the revival of dogmatic Platonism in the first century BC, when, as scholars remarked, Platonists tried to propose a systematic interpretation of the Platonic dialogues in response to Hellenistic debates. The methods followed by Pseudo-Pythagoreans authors, their emulation of ancient authorities as well as their imitation of the ancient language, all fit with the general tendencies of imperial literature.

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