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The Lives of Pythagoras: A Proposal for Reading Pythagorean Metempsychosis

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Abstract: According to Dicaearchus, metempsychosis was the best known among Pythagoras' teachings. In this paper, I investigate two features of Pythagorean metempsychosis: its non-retributive character and its epistemological value. I argue that the Pythagoreans did not conceive of reincarnation as a punishment for the wicked and a reward for the virtuous, but rather as a way to gain experience, knowledge and therefore wisdom. This reading enables us to throw light on the puzzling list of Pythagoras' past lives, which includes Aethalides son of Hermes, Euphorbus the warrior, Pyrrhus the fisherman and even Alco the harlot.

Keywords: Pythagoras, Pythagoreanism, transmigration, retribution, knowledge, memory.

I Introduction

Metempsychosis, the belief that at death the soul transmigrates into another body, is described by Dicaearchus as the best known of Pythagoras' teachings (Fr. 33 Wehrli, quoted in Porph. *VP* 19). This paper explores which version of the doctrine Pythagoras is likely to have taught, and what the parameters of such a supposedly central doctrine of early Pythagoreanism are:¹ was Pythagorean transmigration distinctive in any way and, if so, what were its distinctive con-

¹ Cornelli (2013), pp. 86–87. See also Zhmud (2012), p. 221: 'The name of Pythagoras is so closely associated with metempsychosis that many regard this doctrine as almost the most important component of Pythagoreanism.' Barnes (1982), p. 103: 'The doctrine of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, is on any account characteristic of Pythagoreanism; on Dicaearchus' account, to which I assent, it is the chief constituent of that small body of theory which we are justified in ascribing to Pythagoras.' Finally, Burkert (1972), p. 120: 'That Pythagoras taught the doctrine of metempsychosis is generally regarded, and rightly, as the one most certain fact in the history of early Pythagoreanism.'

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tours? This will result in broader considerations as to how, according to the Pythagoreans, we can attain philosophical wisdom.

Specifically, the following issues are at stake. Pythagoras was known for lecturing his disciples about the fate of the soul before birth and after death. Furthermore, he was allegedly able to recall the previous lives of his own soul. According to Heraclides Ponticus (Fr. 89 Wehrli), he was once the son of Hermes Aethalides, the Trojan hero Euphorbus, Hermotimus and the angler Pyrrhus. According to the Peripatetics Dicaearchus (Fr. 36 Wehrli) and Clearchus (Fr. 10 Wehrli), he even lived as a woman, a prostitute named Alco. Pythagoras' past lives as a fisherman and a prostitute are not the lives we would expect a sage of his calibre to live. Why did Pythagoras claim, or why was he believed, to have previously been a courtesan? Should Alco be considered a form of punishment for how Pyrrhus, Euphorbus, and those who came before them led their lives? And if, by contrast, the life of Pythagoras is to be conceived as a reward – what did she do to reincarnate in the body of the wise Pythagoras himself?² Finally, what did Pythagoras gain from his past lives and what were the benefits of remembering them? Is such ability to recall his previous existences what endowed him with the name and authority of a sage?

These questions will lead us to discuss two traits of Pythagorean metempsychosis: its non-retributive character and epistemological value. The first possible answer to the question of why Pythagoras lived the lives he did is that by transmigrating his soul paid the penalty for its past crimes and was finally able to reincarnate into the body of a sage. In the first section of the paper, I thus consider more generally whether Pythagorean metempsychosis is a doctrine of salvation, leading souls to expiate their earthly and bodily wrongdoings in the next life. KRS identifies three key features for the Pythagorean belief in the afterlife: the divine judgement waiting for souls after death, the punishments to be suffered by the wicked and the better fate awarded to the good (Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 1983, p. 238). In contrast, Zhmud questions such a picture of transmigration as either a punishment administered in return for the wrongs committed or a step towards bliss. According to Zhmud, the Pythagoreans believe that souls naturally transmigrate into various bodies without repaying for their past deeds (Zhmud 2012, pp. 232–233). There is, however, an issue underlying the claiming that Pythagorean metempsychosis is not retributive in nature: how should Pythagoras' past life as a warrior and an angler be understood? Is this a merely random sequence? What are the moral implications of believing that behaviour in this life does not matter after death? In the second section of the paper, I compare the Pythagorean with

2 For similar questions, see Zhmud (2012), pp. 232–233.

Empedocles' theory of transmigration to show that there is, in fact, something the Pythagoreans may earn from reincarnation. In light of Tor's recent interpretation of Empedocles' transmigration as a way to gain experience and thus knowledge of the world (Tor 2017, pp. 318–339), I argue that Pythagorean metempsychosis too has epistemological – rather than or besides religious – significance. For by transmigrating into various bodies, and most importantly by remembering past lives, the Pythagoreans may well attain no purification, but they do attain wisdom.

II Retributive vs non-retributive

Metempsychosis is one of the few early attested Pythagorean doctrines. The textual evidence that scholars read as referring, or at least alluding, to Pythagorean metempsychosis is four-fold and comes from Pythagoras' contemporaries and earliest successors: Xenophanes (DK 21 B7), Herodotus (2.123.2–3, 4.95.1–3), Ion of Chios (Fr. 30 Blum.), and Empedocles (DK 31 B129).

The first piece of evidence picturing Pythagoras as the herald of transmigration is Xenophanes Fr. 7. Here we see Pythagoras – or better, an unnamed sage Diogenes identifies as Pythagoras – reprehending a man for beating up a puppy in whose barking he recognises the soul of a departed old friend.

Καί ποτέ μιν στυφελιζομένου σκύλακος παριόντα
 φασὶν γ' ἐποικτῖραι καὶ τόδε φάσθαι ἔπος:
 'παῦσαι μηδὲ ῥάπιζ', ἐπεὶ ἡ φίλου ἀνέρος ἐστὶ
 ψυχὴ, τὴν ἔγνω φθεγξαμένης αἰών.³

Xenophanes' fragment is likely satirical (D.L. 9.18). As the first words ('And once...') suggest, it was a part of a longer list of derisory anecdotes about Pythagoras' life. Xenophanes could be mocking Pythagoras for his eschatological beliefs, i. e. for equating animals with human lives, or for his community of followers, i. e. for being friends with someone who has lowered himself into a canine life and whose voice sounded like a wailing dog.⁴ For a piece of satire to work, however,

³ 'And once, they say, standing near a puppy being beaten, / he took pity and spoke this word: / "Stop, do not beat him; for it is the soul of a friend, a man, / which I recognised when I heard it howling."' (DK 21B7, quoted in D.L. 8.36).

⁴ Given Xenophanes' remarks about men's epistemic limitations, according to which no one will ever know what is clear and certain about the gods and all things (Fr. 34, quoted in *SE Adv. Math.* 7.49, 7.110 and 8.326, and in D.L. 9.72), the fragment may also be ridiculing Pythagoras' epistemic hubris – i. e. his claiming to *know* that his friend now lives as the puppy.

there must be a base fact that is satirised. Therefore, Xenophanes' derisory words may nonetheless contain a kernel of truth in virtue of which the anecdote provokes laughter.

Specifically, Xenophanes hints at two features of Pythagorean metempsychosis: first, reincarnation concerns not only men, but also animals, or at least some of them; secondly, the doctrine of transmigration influences the Pythagoreans' way of acting towards other beings.⁵ Were Xenophanes our only source, animal reincarnation may be a mere comic exaggeration of the belief. Yet, as we shall see below, Herodotus also reports on land, air, and water creatures taking part in Pythagorean transmigration, thus confirming Xenophanes' claim (2.123). Further evidence that animal reincarnation was central to Pythagoreanism comes in the above-mentioned Fr. 33 by Dicaearchus, in which Pythagoras is said to have taught that souls change εἰς ἄλλα γένη ζώων, into other kinds of animals.

As to how the belief in metempsychosis shaped the Pythagorean way of life, the fragment is open to two different readings. On the one hand, Pythagoras may be concerned for the well-being of the puppy insofar as it is a reincarnated man. The Pythagoreans would then adopt the same, or at least a similar, behaviour towards all living beings taking part in transmigration alongside humans. On the other hand, however, Pythagoras recognises the puppy as his friend or comrade. This has led Rowett to argue, quite convincingly, that the Pythagoreans look after animals in so far as they might be reincarnated friends and family, and not simply any human being (2007, pp. 46–51). Either way, the belief in transmigration affects the Pythagorean way of living and treatment of one another.

Metempsychosis might affect the way one lives in two ways. First, one may believe that each of his life is the outcome of past deeds, and the quality of life is proportionate to previous merits or faults; therefore, if one desires a better rebirth, one must better behave. For example, Pythagoras' interlocutor might be granted a better rebirth if he properly treats the dog. I shall call this the retributive view of metempsychosis. Secondly, one's belief in metempsychosis may have effects independent of the consequences one would expect one's actions to have on future lives; knowing what kinds of life one may live – and in some cases even remembering what kinds of life one did live – would affect how one leads one's current life and how one interacts with other ensouled beings. For example, the man Pythagoras addresses should not hurt the puppy, for it hosts the soul of a departed friend, and therefore deserves equal treatment. I shall call this the non-retributive view of metempsychosis.

⁵ See also Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983), p. 220, Barnes (1982), p. 104, and Long (1948), p. 17.

The notion of retribution after death was not unheard-of in ancient Greece. We find it for instance in Homer and Aeschylus.⁶ Further advocates of retributive eschatology are Pindar, who depicts the soul's passing from one body into another as a form of compensation for how men led their lives and for the crimes committed (*Ol.* 2.53–83), Empedocles, and Plato.⁷ Finally, according to Bernabé, the Orphics might have taken a similar stand on this doctrine as well.⁸ All these sources may have influenced, or have been influenced by, Pythagoreanism. Yet Herodotus paints a rather different picture of Pythagorean metempsychosis. In the second book of the *Histories*, he refers to this belief as follows:

Πρῶτοι δὲ καὶ τόνδε τὸν λόγον Αἰγύπτιοι εἰσὶ οἱ εἰπόντες, ὡς ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴ ἀθάνατος ἐστὶ, τοῦ σώματος δὲ καταφθίνοντος ἐς ἄλλο ζῶον αἰεὶ γινόμενον ἐσδύεται, ἐπεὰν δὲ πάντα περιέλθῃ τὰ χερσαῖα καὶ τὰ θαλάσσια καὶ τὰ πετεινά, αὐτὶς ἐς ἀνθρώπου σῶμα γινόμενον ἐσδύνει· τὴν περιήλυσιν δὲ αὐτῇ γίνεσθαι ἐν τρισχιλίοισι ἔτεσι. τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ εἰσὶ οἱ Ἑλλήνων ἐχρήσαντο, οἱ μὲν πρότερον οἱ δὲ ὕστερον, ὡς ἰδίῳ ἑωυτῶν ἔοντι· τῶν ἐγὼ εἰδώς τὰ οὐνόματα οὐ γράφω.⁹

According to Herodotus, the Egyptians believed souls to be immortal and pass from land creatures to marine and winged animals in a 3000-years-long series of reincarnations. This doctrine leaked into Greece and was adopted by certain thinkers whose names, however, he refuses to mention. Nevertheless, the fact that earlier in Book 2 Herodotus has already associated the Egyptian wisdom with

⁶ For examples of individual souls being punished and tormented in the Underworld, see Sisyphus in *Hom. Il.* 6.152 and *Od.* 11.593, and Tantalus in *Od.* 11.568–592. For an Aeschylean picture of the underworld, see *Supp.* 230–231 and *Eum.* 269–275.

⁷ The connection between Pindar and Pythagorean metempsychosis is analysed in Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983), pp. 235–238. On Plato, see Annas (1982). On Empedocles' theory of reincarnation, see below.

⁸ On Orphic metempsychosis as a religion of salvation, see Bernabé, 'La Transmigración entre los Órficos', in Bernabé, Kahle, and Santamaría (2011), pp. 179–210. Bernabé's reading has been recently challenged in Edmonds (2013), pp. 246–295. For an in-depth discussion of the links between Orphism and Pythagoreanism, see Betegh, 'Pythagoreans, Orphism and Greek Religion', in Huffman (2014), pp. 149–166, Bernabé, 'Orphics and Pythagoreans: The Greek Perspective', in Cornelli, McKirahan and Macris (2013), pp. 117–151, and Casadesús Bordoy, 'On the Origin of the Orphic-Pythagorean Notion of the Immortality of the Soul', in Cornelli, McKirahan, and Macris (2013), pp. 153–176.

⁹ 'Moreover, the Egyptians were the first to teach this doctrine – that the human soul is immortal, and, when the body dies, it always clothes itself in another living being coming to birth. Once it has gone through all creatures of land, sea and air, reborn once more, it clothes itself in a human body and completes the cycle in three thousand years. Some among the Greeks, early and late, have used this doctrine as if it were their own. Although I know their names, I do not write them down.' (2.123.2–3).

the Pythagoreans¹⁰ prompts the assumption that he has in mind the Pythagoreans.¹¹ Moreover, since there is no surviving evidence attesting an Egyptian theory of metempsychosis, this extract from the *Histories* would provide an account of Pythagorean transmigration and project it onto Egypt.¹² More precisely, the version here described is that of an un-moralised doctrine of metempsychosis, according to which reincarnation is neither punishment nor reward, but rather a mechanical process each soul undertakes. This appears to be a non-retributive reading.¹³ Herodotus' passage shows no trace of chastisement and castigation of souls, but rather a moral-free string of deaths and rebirths. Souls go from footed, marine, and winged animals to humans, and this is just the designated reincarnation sequence. The process is even said to take place αἰεί, always. The retributive versions of metempsychosis described in Empedocles' Fr. 115 (Plut. *De exilio* 670c, Hipp. *Ref.* 7.29.14–23) and Plato's *Phaedrus* 248E4–249A6 conceive of transmigration as leading towards an eventual release of the soul from the body after

10 'Nothing of wool is brought into temples or buried with them, for it is impious. These customs agree with the so-called Orphic and Bacchic rituals, but are in fact Egyptian and Pythagorean, for it is impious for those initiated into these rites to be buried in woollen garments' (2.81.1–2). The text was transmitted in two versions. The longer version states that these dressing customs 'agree with those that are called Orphic and Bacchic, but are in fact Egyptian and Pythagorean' ('...ὁμολογέει δὲ ταῦτα τοῖσι Ὀρφικοῖσι καλεομένοισι καὶ Βακχικοῖσι, ἐοῦσι δὲ Αἰγυπτίοισι καὶ Πυθαγορείοισι'). The shorter reads: 'these customs agree with those that are called Orphic and Pythagorean' ('...ὁμολογέουσι δὲ ταῦτα τοῖσι Ὀρφικοῖσι καλεομένοισι καὶ Πυθαγορείοισι'). I follow Burkert in interpreting this passage as part of a longer digression on those customs the Greeks share with the Egyptians. For a detailed discussion of the transmission issue and further literature, see Burkert (1972), pp. 127–128, and Linforth (1942), pp. 38–50.

11 Pace Maddalena (1954, p. 346), according to whom Herodotus cannot refer to Pythagoras, for he does explicitly name him later in 4.95.1–3 (see below). Burnet suggests that the reference may be to Empedocles, who unlike Pythagoras was still alive at the time, thus explaining Herodotus' silence (1948, p. 88 n. 5). For the connection between this passage and Pythagoreanism, see Zhmud (2012), p. 223 n. 75, Burkert (1972), p. 126 n 38, and Long (1948), pp. 21–23.

12 See Burkert (1972), p. 126, and Long (1948), p. 5. On Pythagoras borrowing doctrines from other thinkers and making them his own, see also Heraclitus' Fr. 129, quoted in D.L. 8.6.

13 On the non-retributive character of Pythagorean metempsychosis, see Bernabé, 'Transfer of Afterlife Knowledge in Pythagorean Eschatology', in Renger and Stavru (2016), pp. 17–30, Zhmud (2012), pp. 232–233, and Casadesús Bordoy, 'On the Origin of the Orphic-Pythagorean Notion of the Immortality of the Soul', in Cornelli, McKirahan and Macris (2013), pp. 153–176, 'Pitágoras y el Concepto de Transmigración', in Bernabé, Kahle and Santamaría (2011), pp. 215–219, and 'Orfismo y Pitagorismo', in Bernabé and Casadesús Bordoy (2008), pp. 1053–1078.

an earthly life of atonement.¹⁴ The perpetual cycle reported by Herodotus would on the contrary suggest that souls do not reincarnate to make amends.

As mentioned above, Xenophanes' anecdote about Pythagoras refusing to strike a puppy hosting the soul of a friend raises questions as to how metempsychosis shaped the Pythagorean way of living. According to Xenophanes, since the reincarnated soul remains the same soul that used to inhabit a human being or a friend, it should be treated in the same way. This text allows both retributive and non-retributive readings. The fact that Pythagoras prevents his interlocutor from mistreating the puppy does not tell us whether his friend misbehaved in a previous life, thus reincarnating into a dog, or conversely that animal lives are just part of a judgement-free reincarnation process. Nevertheless, the fragment appears to be more in line with the non-retributive account: if the transmigration of souls from one body into another is not presented as the outcome of past faults and merits, the Pythagoreans are more likely led to treat all ensouled beings (relatives or otherwise) in a similar way, regardless of their bodies. Arguably, the same attitude is exemplified in the later anecdotes of Pythagoras educating wild beasts. For instance, he is said to have taught a bear not to harm other animals and an ox not to eat beans (Porph. *VP* 23–24, Iamb. *VP* 60–61), just as he would have taught his pupils.¹⁵ Once again, this suggests that animals were not attributed a lower ethical and intellectual status.¹⁶ The Pythagoreans would not hit an animal just as they would not hit a friend, and they would educate an animal just as they would educate a friend. The body that the soul inhabits does not seem to concern them. Although these anecdotes may still allow for an after-death judgement, they complement the non-retributive reading of Pythagorean metempsychosis proposed in Hdt. 2.123.2–3.

¹⁴ In Empedocles' Fr. 115, the δαίμονες are exiled into mortal life after committing a crime and for 30,000 seasons. Unlike Plato's *Phaedrus*, this alone does not imply that each reincarnation should be a prize or punishment for the previous life. Nonetheless, the exile itself is said to be a form of compensation at the end of which the daimon returns among the blessed.

¹⁵ On the ban against beans, see Ar. Fr. 195 Rose³ (quoted in D.L. 8.34–35), according to which Pythagoras forbade the eating of beans as they resemble genitals or the gates of Hades, and Porph. *VP* 43–44, in which beans are to be avoided as they grow from earth together with human beings.

¹⁶ Another interesting question – although possibly unanswerable given the lack of documentary evidence – is whether different incarnations impose on the soul different ethical and cognitive abilities (Rowett 2007, p. 50). That is, whether Pythagoras educates the bears and oxen, thinking that they are capable of the same ethical and cognitive achievements of which humans are capable, or if he thinks of them as less capable, but still considers it worthwhile to introduce them (or better, their souls) to the Pythagorean way of life – and successfully so, as the anecdote of the bear no longer attacking animals after being lectured by Pythagoras would suggest.

Scholars such as Zhmud, Bernabé, and Casadesús have already argued for the non-retributive character of Pythagorean metempsychosis. It is worth noting, however, that other sources suggest alternate ideas of afterlife. For example, in the fourth book of the *Histories*, Herodotus links Pythagoras to the figure of Zalmoxis:

Ὅς δὲ ἐγὼ πυνθάνομαι τῶν τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον καὶ Πόντον οἰκεόντων Ἑλλήνων, τὸν Σάλμοξιν τοῦτον ἔοντα ἄνθρωπον δουλεῦσαι ἐν Σάμῳ, δουλεῦσαι δὲ Πυθαγόρῃ τῷ Μνησάρχου· ἐνθεῦτεν δὲ αὐτὸν γενόμενον ἐλεύθερον χρήματα κτήσασθαι συχνά, κτησάμενον δὲ ἀπελθεῖν ἐς τὴν ἑωυτοῦ. Ἄτε δὲ κακοβίων τε ἔόντων τῶν Θρηίκων καὶ ὑπαφρονεστέρων, τὸν Σάλμοξιν τοῦτον ἐπιστάμενον δίαίταν τε Ἰάδα καὶ ἥθεα βαθύτερα ἢ κατὰ Θρηίκας, οἷα Ἑλλησί τε ὁμιλήσαντα καὶ Ἑλλήνων οὐ τῷ ἀσθενεστάτῳ σοφιστῇ Πυθαγόρῃ, κατασκευάσασθαι ἀνδρεῶνα, ἐς τὸν πανδοκεύοντα τῶν ἀστῶν τοὺς πρῶτους καὶ εὐωχέοντα ἀναδιδάσκειν ὥς οὔτε αὐτὸς οὔτε οἱ συμπόται αὐτοῦ οὔτε οἱ ἐκ τούτων αἰεὶ γινόμενοι ἀποθανέονται, ἀλλ' ἥξουσι ἐς χώρον τοῦτον ἵνα αἰεὶ περιόντες ἔξουσι τὰ πάντα ἀγαθά.¹⁷

The Thracian Zalmoxis (Pl. *Charm.* 156D1–158C4) is said to have been Pythagoras' slave and to have learnt from him a more advanced way of life, which he in turn taught his people. Among the teachings Zalmoxis handed down to the Thracians, thus bettering their way of living (Porph. *VP* 14), Herodotus specifically mentions the afterlife – which arguably was a part of those doctrines he inherited from his acquaintance with Pythagoras. Therefore, although Herodotus himself casts doubt on this anecdote (4.96.1), and although he makes no explicit mention of reincarnation, the passage nonetheless hints at the Pythagorean belief in a life *post mortem*. Yet here Herodotus alludes to the rewards waiting for the soul beyond death. This does not seem as morally neutral as Hdt. 2.123.2–3, for what Zalmoxis is said to foretell is a *good* afterlife. On the one hand, the good life is promised to all, Zalmoxis, his audience, and their descendants, presumably regardless of their deeds. On the other hand, Zalmoxis is specifically addressing the foremost among the Thracians (τῶν ἀστῶν τοὺς πρῶτους), the most powerful, whose excellence is reflected in their social and political status. This would

¹⁷ 'As I understand from the Greeks who live beside the Hellespont and Pontus, this Zalmoxis was a man who was once a slave in Samos, he was the slave of Pythagoras son of Mnesarchus. Then, once he was freed, he gained great wealth, and having gained great wealth, he returned to his own country. Insofar as the Thracians were a poor and primitive people, this Zalmoxis knew the Ionian way of life and more advanced customs than the Thracians', as he consorted with Greeks, and with the greatest teacher among them, Pythagoras. He arranged a banquet, where he entertained and fed the leaders of the citizens and taught them that neither he nor his guests nor any of their descendants would ever die, but they would go to a place where, living forever, they would have all good things' (4.95.1–3).

allude to the existence of a hierarchy in the afterlife, which somehow echoes hierarchies in this life.¹⁸

A similar issue comes in Ion's Fr. 30:

Ὡς ὁ μὲν ἡγορέη τε κεκασμένος ἡδὲ καὶ αἰδοῖ
καὶ φθίμενος ψυχῇ τερπνὸν ἔχει βίοντον,
εἴπερ Πυθαγόρης ἐτύμως ὁ σοφὸς περὶ πάντων
ἀνθρώπων γνώμας ᾔδεε κάξέμαθεν.¹⁹

Ion writes that, in accordance with what Pythagoras taught regarding the fate of the soul after death, Pherecydes' soul went on living a merry life. The importance of this fragment is threefold. First, it remarks Pythagoras' authority about the afterlife.²⁰ Secondly, it draws a link between Pherecydes and this eschatological belief by contemplating what destiny may have been allotted to him.²¹ Thirdly, it lays emphasis on the soul living happily after death. Like Herodotus' Book 4 and unlike Herodotus' Book 2, this reminds us of the compensatory reading of metempsychosis, that life following death is the proportionate response to the life preceding it – whether this be vengeance for past wrongdoings or recompense for a good conduct, as in Pherecydes' case. Ion describes Pherecydes' happy afterlife as the outcome of his worthy life. This alone does not imply the highly moralised version of transmigration according to which souls are born into the world to expiate past faults and undergo punishments in order to regain their once lost bliss. Moreover, as Zhmud suggests, Ion seems more concerned with emphasising Pythagoras' intellectual achievements and superlative wisdom, rather than pro-

¹⁸ According to Edmonds, the afterlife may be conceived either as a *continuation* of the activities of the previous life or as a *compensation* for past faults (2015, pp. 556–557). Zalmoxis' associates are promised 'all good things' after death: they will continue their feast, thus doing in the underworld what they did in life. Another example of *post mortem* continuation of the hierarchies of life is Minos, who judges lawsuits before and after death (Hom. *Od.* 11.568–571).

¹⁹ 'For being endowed with manly worth and shame, / Once he (Pherecydes) died, his soul has a happy life, / if the wise Pythagoras truly knew / and learnt about every human mind' (Fr. 30 Blum., quoted in D.L. 1.120).

²⁰ On Ion's claim that Pythagoras 'examined the minds of all men', see below.

²¹ In Cic. *Tusc.* 1.16.38, Pherecydes is said to have been the first to introduce metempsychosis in ancient Greece and the one teaching this doctrine to Pythagoras – *pace* Dicaearchus' Fr. 33, according to which such a record is to be attributed to Pythagoras himself. On Pherecydes' acquaintance with Pythagoras, see D.L. 8.2 and Porph. *VP* 1–2 (on the evidence of Neanthes *FGrHist* 84 Fr. 8), in which Pherecydes is listed among Pythagoras' teachers. Moreover, in D.L. 8.40 (on the evidence of Dicaearchus Fr. 35b Wehrli), Porph. *VP* 15 and 55–56 (on the evidence of Dicaearchus Frs. 34–35a Wehrli), and Iamb. *VP* 184 and 252 (on the evidence of Aristoxenus Fr. 18 Wehrli), Pythagoras is said to have buried Pherecydes in Delos.

viding a detailed account of his eschatology (2012, pp. 38–39). Nevertheless, the reference to Pherecydes' excellent qualities does suggest the possibility of a *post mortem* reward.

A further piece of counter-evidence is Hieronymus of Rhodes (Fr. 42 Wehrli, quoted in D.L. 8.21), according to whom during his underworld journey Pythagoras witnessed souls being punished in Hades, including Hesiod gibbering bound to a brazen pillar and Homer hanging from a tree and tormented by snakes, because of what they claimed to know about the gods.²² In response to Bernabé, Casadesús, and Zhmud, we note that our sources hint at different versions of Pythagorean afterlife, among which some are retributive and others are not. This implies that different early Pythagoreans might have taken the belief in a life after death in different directions, understanding, interpreting, and passing it on in different ways.²³ These divergent, and sometimes conflicting, views of afterlife may well coexist, for each has its own purpose, emphasises particular aspects of Pythagorean eschatology, and promotes specific ideas – the continuation of the hierarchies of life as in Zalmoxis' anecdote, the celebration of Pherecydes' wisdom, or a critique of Homer and Hesiod's representation of the gods. What characterises the Pythagorean doctrine of the soul is that, *besides* envisioning the soul's good life after death, the Pythagoreans also developed the distinctively non-retributive system portrayed in Hdt. 2.123.2–3, and *besides* wondering what life comes next, they also considered how to live in the here and now. Finally, one may ask: apart from a good afterlife, what does a Pythagorean gain from transmigrating into various bodies and living various lives?

22 For the criticism of Homeric and Hesiodic religion, see also Xenophanes' Frs. 11–12, quoted in *SE Adv. Math.* 1.289 and 9.193. Further allusions to a Pythagorean compensatory picture of the afterlife come in *Ar. Post. An.* 94^b32–34 ('If things are as the Pythagoreans say, the aim of the thunder is to threaten those in Tartarus and make them afraid'), *Iamb. VP* 85 ('It is good to suffer, but pleasures are bad in every way; for those coming from punishment must be punished') and 179 ('...the judgement rests in Hades'). It is worth noting, however, that the latter is post-Platonic evidence and therefore may be influenced by Plato's retributive version of transmigration.

23 On the existence of different Pythagorean theories of the soul, rather than a unified and firmly defined doctrine, see Barnes (1982), pp. 186–193, Burkert (1972), p.135, and Guthrie (1962), vol. 1, pp. 315–319. In contrast, Huffman argues that all Pythagoreans had a consistent conception of soul, which is identified as the ability to feel pleasure and pain and shared by animals and humans ('The Pythagorean Conception of the Soul from Pythagoras to Philolaus', in Frede and Reis 2009, pp. 21–43).

III *Vitae Pythagorae*

Let us now turn to the more specific issue with which I opened the paper – namely, the journey of Pythagoras' own soul. As mentioned in the introduction, not only did Pythagoras teach his disciples about the afterlife, but he also recalled his own past incarnations. In D.L. 8.4–5, on the evidence of Heraclides Ponticus' Fr. 89, and in Porph. *VP* 45, five lives are mentioned: first came Aethalides, son of Hermes, to whom the god granted the ability to remember through life and death everything he had experienced; second Euphorbus, a Trojan hero dear to Apollo and killed by Menelaus;²⁴ third Hermotimus;²⁵ fourth the Delian fisherman Pyrrhus; and finally, Pythagoras. Yet the earliest evidence for Pythagoras' previous lives comes from the Dicaearchus (Fr. 36 Wehrli) and Clearchus (Fr. 10 Wehrli), whose account is reported in Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights*.

Pythagoram vero ipsum sicuti celebre est Euphorbum primo fuisse dictitasse, ita haec remotiora sunt his, quae Clearchus et Dicaearchus memoriae tradiderunt, fuisse eum postea Pyrandrum, deinde Aethaliden deinde feminam pulcra facie meretricem cui nomen fuerat Alco.²⁶

Dicaearchus and Clearchus add a sixth name to the list: after being an angler and before becoming Pythagoras, his soul resided in the body of a courtesan named Alco. One must wonder, why did Pythagoras live these five lives instead of others, and more curiously, why did he live as an angler and a prostitute?

Thus far, three solutions are proposed. The retributive reading of reincarnation suggests that Pyrrhus and Alco should be understood as punishments inflicted on Euphorbus and that by paying such penalty Euphorbus' soul was able to be reborn as Pythagoras.²⁷ Even though this is a possible interpretation of the fragment, there is not much direct evidence to support it. For sure, the anecdote about Zalmoxis promising a good afterlife to the Thracian leaders, the

²⁴ E. g. Hom. *Il.* 16.9–59, 806–815, 849–50 and 17.51–60.

²⁵ According to Diogenes, Hermotimus was once able to recognise the shield of Euphorbus, i. e. his previous incarnation, as his own. See also Porph. *VP* 26–27, on the evidence of Nicomachus, and Iamb. *VP* 63. On Hermotimus, see Betegh (2012), pp. 105–140.

²⁶ 'Regarding Pythagoras himself, as he famously declared that he was first born as Euphorbus, so what Clearchus and Dicaearchus recorded is less familiar – that afterwards he was Pyrandrus, then Aethalides, and finally a beautiful courtesan named Alco' (4.11.14). As one may notice, Dicaearchus and Clearchus add Alco, omit Hermotimus and list the name Pyrandrus rather than Pyrrhus. The order in which the lives are mentioned also differs from Diogenes' version.

²⁷ For example, Plato explicitly pictures women and animals as a step-down in the eschatological hierarchy (e. g. *Phdr.* 245c3–250c5, *Tim.* 41d5–42d2, 90b3–92c2).

punishments witnessed by Pythagoras' during his underworld journey, and Ion's claim about the happy life of Pherecydes' soul all allude to *post mortem* judgements, penalties and rewards. Nevertheless, they do not explicitly connect such compensation with reincarnation. Although these views of the afterlife are not judgement-free, the fact that souls might be punished in the underworld does not entail that they will expiate their guilt by reincarnating into lower bodies. Similarly, souls may be rewarded in Hades, as Zalmoxis promises, and then be reborn into any kind of body, rather than higher-ranked beings. This in turn solves the issue of the moral implications, or the lack thereof, of non-compensatory transmigration. The fact that this life does not affect the next does not imply that your behaviour does not matter, for you may still undergo punishment in the Underworld before reincarnating. Moreover, as previously noted, Herodotus' account of Pythagorean and Egyptian transmigration clashes with the idea of a sequence of lives leading from an initial fall to a final release through a string of punishments and rewards.

This leads us to the second solution: the non-retributive reading. According to the proposed reading of Hdt 2.123.2–3, Pythagorean reincarnation does not involve compensation. If so, the claim that, after being the son of a god and a Trojan hero and right before entering into the body of the philosopher, Pythagoras' soul was an angler and a prostitute provides further evidence that Pythagorean transmigration was not strictly retributive in character: Alco and Pyrrhus are not Euphorbus' punishments, nor is Pythagoras their reward.²⁸ The series of lives may thus be explained either as a mechanical process, as in Hdt. 1.123.2–3, or as a random one. This is another possible interpretation. However, the sequence described by Herodotus includes land, water and air creatures. Similarly, in Xenophanes' fragment, Pythagoras' friend reincarnates into a dog. In contrast, Pythagoras lists only human lives.²⁹ If animal reincarnation was a part of the Pythagorean doc-

28 'Previous incarnations of Pythagoras do not form themselves into a progressive series' (Zhmd 2012, p. 232).

29 In Heraclides' account, as quoted by D.L. 8.4, Aethalides is granted the gift of remembering all his lives as a human, an animal, or a plant. There are, however, two issues with this statement. First, this would be the only attribution of plant reincarnation to Pythagoreanism. Whilst animal reincarnation is attested by Xenophanes, Herodotus, and Dicaearchus, plants are excluded from the list of ensouled beings by Philolaus (Fr. 13 Huffman). By contrast, Empedocles allows for the possibility of reincarnating into plants (DK 31 B117, quoted in D.L. 8.77). Secondly, even if Pythagoras' did transmigrate into animals and plants, his non-human lives have not been recorded – which again leads us to wonder why. The only surviving evidence of Pythagoras' soul incarnating into a specific animal, namely a peacock, is Enn. *Ann.* 15. However, as Casadesús notes, this late source is more likely to be explained in light of the fact that the peacock sym-

trine of metempsychosis, why does Pythagoras focus on his human lives? Is there anything more to this list than a mechanical or even random process?

A third answer to the puzzle is proposed by Casadesús.³⁰ According to Casadesús, both the fact that Pythagoras only lists human lives and the specific lives he is attributed are signs of his superiority and exceptionality. Namely, Pythagoras' past incarnations connect him and his teachings about souls and afterlife to the divine: Aethalides is the son of Hermes and Euphorbus is devoted to Apollo.³¹ Even the reference to Pyrrhus, an angler coming from the island of Delos, would link Pythagoras to Apollo's birthplace and cult centre. The issue with the latter interpretation, however, is that Pythagoras is said to have lived as a *fisherman* from Delos³² and even as a prostitute – which do not come across as being lives worthy of a divine-like sage. As Casadesús argues, that may be explained by Dicaearchus' critical attitude towards Pythagoreanism.³³ The name of Alco is only mentioned by Dicaearchus and Clearchus. These fragments are both sarcastic in tone and the incongruity between the prostitute and the sage seems intended; like Xenophanes, Dicaearchus and Clearchus may be simply mocking Pythagoras's doctrines. Alco may be intended as a ridicule of the unusual role granted to women in his community,³⁴ while Pyrrhus the angler may point at the unusually strict dietary rules by which his followers abided. Eudoxus reports that because

bolises immortality and the island of Samos, i. e. Pythagoras' birthplace ('On the Origin of the Orphic-Pythagorean Notion of the Immortality of the Soul', in Cornelli, McKirahan, and Macris 2013, p. 168 n. 58 – see also Skutsch 1959). As noted in the next section, Empedocles too attributes to Pythagoras exclusively human lives (DK 31 B129, quoted in D.L. 8.54 *et al.*).

30 'On the Origin of the Orphic-Pythagorean Notion of the Immortality of the Soul', in Cornelli, McKirahan and Macris (2013), pp. 164–170.

31 Burkert wonders about the association of Pythagoras with such a lesser-known Homeric hero as Euphorbus (1972, p. 139). According to Casadesús, the reference is explained by the connection between Euphorbus and Apollo (Hom. *Il.* 16.849). This, in turn, would link Pythagoras with the Apollonian prophetic power of knowing past, present, and future (*Il.* 1.70), which is in line with Diogenes' claim that Aethalides, Euphorbus' past life, was able to retain knowledge though life and death.

32 Burkert, for example, suggests a link between Pyrrhus and the Delian diver capable of understanding Heraclitus' words in D.L. 2.22, 9.12 (1972, p. 138, n. 104).

33 See also Huffman, 'The Peripatetics on the Pythagoreans', in Huffman (2014), pp. 274–295, according to whom Pythagoras is to be compared to a prostitute in his ability to charm and beguile his audience.

34 See Iamblichus' *Catalogue of the Pythagoreans* (VP 267), which mentions up to 17 Pythagorean women and Pythagoras' speech to his female disciples in Croton (VP 54–57). In Iamb. VP 84, to Pythagoras is also attributed more a specific maxim against prostitution: 'You should not beget children with a woman who wears gold (i. e. a prostitute, according to VP 187).' Moreover, in VP 132 Pythagoras is said to have freed the Crotoniates from their concubines. On the social

of his extreme vegetarianism, Pythagoras never even approached butchers and hunters, which suggests that he might have treated anglers similarly (Porph. *VP* 7); Porphyry writes that he once approached a group of fishermen only to encourage them to return the catch of the day into the sea (Porph. *VP* 25). The association of the sage Pythagoras with an angler and especially a prostitute is therefore likely to be a 4th-century-BCE addition to the list of past lives and a jest. However, once again, the mockery may contain a kernel of truth. Even if these incarnations were in fact satirically introduced at a later stage of the tradition, they may nevertheless reflect distinctive features of Pythagorean transmigration, such as the possibility for the soul of Pythagoras to reincarnate into humbler men and women. Therefore, even if we were to question the association of Pythagoras with Alco based on Dicaearchus' derisory words, it is still worth asking ourselves, first, why is Pythagoras only attributed human lives and, secondly, why do these lives account for various, and not necessarily god-worthy, social positions. Is there something more to this list than only mockery? Why is there no record of Pythagoras claiming to have been reincarnated into other species? Apart from a good afterlife – is there anything else a Pythagorean may gain from transmigrating into both 'higher' and 'lower' bodies and living various human lives?

IV Pythagoras the memorious

Thus far, Pythagoras' previous reincarnations have been interpreted as rewards and punishments, as a mechanical sequence of lives, as an allusion to the divine nature of his soul, and as a joke. I shall now propose a new reading based on Empedocles' account of Pythagorean metempsychosis. In Fr. 129, Empedocles praises a wise man, who Porphyry and Iamblichus identify as Pythagoras, for gaining a wondrously vast amount of knowledge, which would ordinarily be achievable in ten³⁵ or twenty human lives.

Ἦν δέ τις ἐν κείνοισιν ἀνὴρ περιώσια εἰδώς,
ὃς δὴ μήκιστον πραπίδων ἐκτήσατο πλοῦτον,
παντοίων τε μάλιστα σοφῶν τ' ἐπιήρανος ἔργων·
ὁππότε γὰρ πάσῃσιν ὀρέξατο πραπίδεσσιν,

conditions of women in the Pythagorean communities, see Rowett, 'The Pythagorean Society and Politics', in Huffman (2014), pp. 122–123, and Pomeroy (2013).

35 On the Pythagorean association of the number 10 with perfection, see *Ar. Met.* A.5 986^a9–13.

ῥεῖ' ὃ γε τῶν ὄντων πάντων λεύσσεσκεν ἕκαστον
καί τε δέκ' ἀνθρώπων καί τ' εἴκοσιν αἰώνεσσιν.³⁶

The breadth of Pythagoras' knowledge has been noted already in Heraclitus' Frs. 40 and 129 (D.L. 8.6). Whilst Heraclitus ironically mentions his much-learning (πολυμαθία), Empedocles describes Pythagoras as mastering all kinds of wisdom, acquiring the utmost understanding and stretching his mind across ten or twenty lifetimes. This fragment can mean two things. In the *Lives*, the praise is taken to refer to Pythagoras' intellectual abilities: Empedocles may be suggesting that Pythagoras knew what takes most men ten or twenty generations to learn, or that he has acquired knowledge of the past (or future) ten or twenty generations. Secondly, the reference to the several lifetimes Pythagoras beheld may hint at the doctrine of metempsychosis: Pythagoras' mind overcame the change of generations and was able to remember its ten or twenty lives.³⁷ Empedocles would therefore go further than a mere eulogy of a sage and allude to the many lives lived by Pythagoras' soul. Noteworthy is that he specifically refers to Pythagoras' ten or twenty *human* lives. Overall, the fragment primarily portrays Pythagoras as an outstanding thinker, and so it is not simply a statement about reincarnation. Although Empedocles' text focuses on Pythagoras' wisdom and far-reaching intelligence, and although it does not explicitly mention metempsychosis, it may well allude to the doctrine as an explanation of Pythagoras' wisdom.³⁸ Further, his memory of past incarnations would be the mark of his admirable wisdom.³⁹ Similarly, in Fr. 117 Empedocles presents himself as a sage in virtue of his ability

36 'Among them there was a man of rare knowledge, / who acquired the greatest wealth of wit, / mastering every kind of especially wise deeds. / For whenever he reached out with all his wits, / he easily beheld each of all the things that are / for ten or even twenty human ages' (DK 31 B129). This fragment is quoted in D.L. 8.54, on the evidence of Timaeus *FGrHist* 566 Fr. 14, Porph. *VP* 30, presumably on the evidence of Nicomachus, and Iamb. *VP* 67. According to Diogenes, another possible recipient of Empedocles' praise is Parmenides. Arguing for the identification with Pythagoras is Long (1948), pp. 17–21.

37 For the translation of αἰών as 'life', see Hom. *Il.* 5.685, 16.453, 19.27, *Od.* 5.160, Hdt. 1.32.5.

38 The connection with transmigration has been suggested by Burkert (1972, p. 213), O'Brien, (1969, p. 335 n. 1), Rohde (1966, p. 406 n. 96 and p. 598), Guthrie (1962, vol. 1, pp. 160–161, and vol. 2, p. 251), Cornford (1952, p. 56), and Long (1948, p. 21). In contrast, Zhmud (2012, pp. 39–41) and Wright (1981, pp. 256–258) argue that Empedocles praises Pythagoras only as a wise man, and not as an authority on the afterlife. However, Zhmud allows for the possibility that Empedocles explained Pythagoras' outstanding knowledge and understanding by his ability to remember his past lives.

39 See also Porph. *VP* 26. On Pythagoras' acquiring a large group of devotees because of his teachings on the afterlife, see Porph. *VP* 18–19, on the evidence of Dicaearchus' Fr. 33.

to remember his previous lives as a boy, a girl, a bush, a bird, and a fish (D.L. 8.77). Therefore, according to this interpretation, one obtains from reincarnation and remembrance of past lives precious experience, knowledge, and therefore wisdom, instead or alongside of after-death punishments and rewards.

The ‘epistemological ramifications’ of Empedocles’ own theory of metempsychosis, as well as his way of portraying Pythagoras as an ‘epistemological hero’, have been recently noted in Tor’s *Mortal and Divine in Early Greek Epistemology* (2017, pp. 318–339). According to Tor, in Empedocles the traditional link between wisdom and old age (e. g. Hom. *Il.* 21.440) reaches a new eschatological level – it is no longer ‘the more you live, the wiser you become’, but ‘the more *lives* you live (and remember), the wiser you are’. Empedocles introduces himself as a daimon wandering on earth and transmigrating into various bodies (DK 31 B115). Moreover, he is able to recount his past vegetal, animal, and human lives, thus being aware of what it is to live as a bush, a fish, and a woman (DK 31 B117). Empedocles has lived long, and he remembers. From all his previous incarnations, he has gained knowledge and understanding, thus carrying a vast and multifaceted experiential baggage from each life into the next. Consequently, he is to be called a sage. The same may hold true for Pythagoras.⁴⁰ The soul of Pythagoras underwent several different lives. From these, he collected memories and, as a result, surpassing wisdom.

Empedocles describes Pythagoras as epistemologically superior, for he is capable of recounting numerous lifetimes.⁴¹ This alone does not entail that the Pythagoreans themselves conceived of metempsychosis as the way to acquire

40 Empedocles’ connection with Pythagoreanism prompts the assumption that their transmigration doctrines may have been mutually influenced and shared similar traits, such as the epistemological orientation. For example, in D.L. 8.54–56 (on the evidence of Timaeus *FGrHist* 566 Fr. 14, Neanthes *FGrHist* 84 Fr. 26, Hermippus and Alcidamas), Empedocles is described as one of Pythagoras’ pupils, banned from the community together with Philolaus for breaking the vow of silence and publishing Pythagoras’ teachings. According to Eus. *PE* 10.14.15, he is the disciple of Pythagoras’ son and successor Telauges, and according to a spurious letter by Telauges to Philolaus (D.L. 8.55), he studied with the Pythagoreans Hippasus and Brotinus.

41 One may wonder whether Pythagoras and Empedocles are able to remember because they are wise, or if they are wise because they remember. According to the former view, sages are the only ones capable of recalling their past lives. According to the latter, memory is what makes one earn the title of sage in the first place. The available evidence points to both readings. On the one hand, Pythagoras’ previous incarnation Aethalides does not gain wisdom by collecting experiences, but rather is gifted with such an ability by the gods. In turn, Pythagoras was known for awarding the memory of past lives to his pupils (Porph. *VP* 45). On the other hand, in Iamb. *VP* 63 the Pythagoreans are taught how to remember their past deeds, which suggests that they could train to obtain knowledge and emulate Pythagoras’ wisdom.

knowledge and epistemic authority. Yet our sources offer two further hints. In the last two lines of Ion's fragment, Pythagoras is said to be an authority on the afterlife, for he knew and examined all human minds (Fr. 30). As with Empedocles' fragment, Pythagoras is described as an intellectual authority inasmuch as he knew about human affairs. In Fr. 129, Pythagoras beholds ten or twenty human lifetimes. Similarly, Ion may allude to the epistemological gain of experiencing other human γνῶμαι. Further evidence comes from the *Lives*. The later tradition also reports on the importance the Pythagoreans attached to memory: for instance, according to Iamblichus, every morning they would try to recall what had happened the previous day, for through memory they would acquire an increased status of knowledge and eventually become wise.⁴² Training to remember the events that occurred before one fell asleep may thus be the first step towards recalling the life one had before dying and being reborn. Noteworthy in this regard is that what the Pythagoreans specifically attempt to remember are past experiences. Overall, like Empedocles, the Pythagoreans would have thought that a man is capable of remembering not only past deeds, but also past lives as an outstanding sage.

Both Pythagoras and Empedocles are sages in virtue of their ability to recall their previous experiences. By reminiscing about their past lives, they gain a comprehensive view of the world based on a wider experiential basis – hence, their elevated status and their authority to guide their followers and pupils. Yet whilst Pythagoras remembers being a human, Empedocles was also once a bush, a bird, and a fish. Perhaps Empedocles, being once also a plant and so forth, has experienced more than Pythagoras, and is therefore wiser. The difference between their past lives, however, more likely reveals the different scope of their transmigration doctrines. Empedocles' inclusion of all sorts of lives, as well as the emphasis on the greater wisdom gained from such a variety of experiences, indicates that he is concerned with all constituents and aspects of the cosmos. In his poem, transmitted under the title *On Nature*, Empedocles aims to account for the origin, development, and workings of all natural phenomena and living beings. Therefore, as Tor argues, he benefits from experiencing earthly lives from various, and not exclusively human, perspectives. Through transmigration, he inhabits a wide range of lifeforms, from plants and animals to men and women. The scope of the enquiry is the entire cosmos.⁴³ Pythagoras' past lives, on the other hand,

⁴² Iamb. *VP* 164–166. In Porph. *VP* 40, this exercise was done at night before going to sleep rather than in the morning.

⁴³ Diogenes lists two titles for Empedocles' works, *Peri Physeōs* (*On Nature*) and *Katharmoi* (*Purifications*, D.L. 8.77). Whether these are to be understood as two poems, either unrelated or

allow him to acquire an in-depth understanding of the realm of human affairs.⁴⁴ This is then reflected in his teachings, which focus on human lives and behaviours.⁴⁵ Noteworthy in this regard is that among Pythagoras' past incarnations, a wide variety of social roles is mentioned, from the warrior to the fisherman, and perhaps even the prostitute. Pythagoras has lived many human lives, and as a result, he can speak from various points of view, lecturing men, women, and all the different social strata forming his community.⁴⁶ The purpose is to explore how humans should live their lives. The enquiry is primarily ethical.

Overall, whilst Empedocles aims at gaining a comprehensive knowledge of the world, Pythagoras focuses on the human dimension. Whilst Empedocles' transmigrations bring him through different *lifeforms*, Pythagoras experiences different *lifestyles*. Empedocles' soul lived in animals and plants because of his cosmological concerns. Pythagoras was a warrior, an angler, and a courtesan because of the practical and human orientation of his teachings. From these reincarnation sequences, we learn that both Empedocles and Pythagoras are wise authorities. Yet, whilst the former knows about the cosmos, the latter knows about how to live. Tor writes that in Empedocles' view of transmigration, 'there is an element of epistemic self-promotion.' Similarly, according to Casadesús, Pythagoras made use of the doctrine of reincarnation to increase his prestige by highlighting the divine nature of his soul. My reading is that Pythagoras' previous lives build his authority not as the son of a god, but rather as an educator and a community leader.

thematically linked, or two parts of one single poem and two aspects of the same work, is debated. Either way, Empedocles writes about both cosmology and ethics. He explores the human dimension by living as a boy and a girl, and the cosmos by being a bush, a bird, and a fish. For the two-poems hypothesis, see Laks and Most (2016), vol. 2. For the one-poem hypothesis, see Trépanier (2003) and Rowett (1987).

⁴⁴ See Ar. *Met.* A.5 986^a31, in which the Pythagoreans who devised the Table of Opposites are said to have applied it to the world of men, τὰ ἀνθρώπινα.

⁴⁵ See Pl. *Rep.* X 600A9-B5 and Ar. Fr. 191 Rose³.

⁴⁶ As opposed to Plato's epistemological hierarchy from *Phdr.* 248C2–249C9, this appears as a rather optimistic epistemological view, according to which all human types, not only the intellectual élite, contribute to Pythagoras' knowledge.

V Conclusion

My initial question was why Pythagoras was reputed to have lived as a warrior, an angler, and perhaps even a courtesan. First, these lives may be a form of compensation. Secondly, according to Zhmud, they constitute a set sequence. Thirdly, according to Casadesús, they connect Pythagoras' soul with divinity. Fourthly, they may ridicule and criticise his belief in reincarnation. My proposed reading is that the list may well be morally neutral, as Zhmud argues. Yet it is valuable, for Pythagoras has learnt from being Euphorbus, Pyrrhus, and Alco, thus becoming a man of extraordinary knowledge, as Empedocles' describes him. Specifically, in comparison with Empedocles, Pythagoras' previous lives increase his authority as the founder of a philosophical way of life and a philosophical community of men and women. As mentioned in the Introduction, this is of wider interest than just in relation to metempsychosis and has broader implications regarding how one attains wisdom: more memories of more different lives make us wiser. What turns Pythagoras into a sage is not simply having had previous lives or being destined to have another after this one, but also being able to remember them. In other words, wisdom resulting from long and diverse memories is the key trait to admire.

Finally, it is worth noting that the argument holds even if one were to question the non-retributive character of Pythagorean metempsychosis, as Hdt. 4.95.1–3 and Ion's Fr. 30 prompt us to do. Even if we suspended our judgment on how and why Pythagoras received the lives he did, even if these were in fact awards or punishments, and even if the Pythagoreans did pass ethical judgements about whether one had the life he or she deserved, Pythagoras would nonetheless learn from his past incarnations. These two aspects coexist, for example, in Empedocles. In Fr. 115, transmigration is described as a punishment for the soul's crimes. Yet, as Tor argues, as a side effect of an otherwise torturous punishment, the soul remembers and learns from those many past lives. The gain is twofold: purification *and* wisdom – not only 'the more lives you live, the more you can atone for', but also 'the more lives you live, the wiser you can be'. Overall, we cannot possibly know how Pythagoras comported himself in his previous lives and whether he was able to be reborn as a higher human being as a result. Nevertheless, he did turn out a man of extraordinary knowledge and far-reaching intelligence, as Empedocles describes.

Abbreviations

Aesch. <i>Eum.</i>	Aeschylus, <i>Eumenides</i>
Aesch. <i>Supp.</i>	Aeschylus, <i>Suppliants</i>
Ar. <i>Met.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i>
Ar. <i>Post. An.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Posterior Analytics</i>
Blum.	von Blumenthal, Albrechts (1939), <i>Ion von Chios: Die Reste seiner Werke</i> . Stuttgart: W. Kolhammer.
Cic. <i>Tusc.</i>	Cicero, <i>Tusculan Disputations</i>
DK	Diels, Hermann and Kranz, Walter (1951–1952), <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> . Berlin: Weidman.
D.L.	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i>
Enn. <i>Ann.</i>	Ennius, <i>Annals</i>
Eus. <i>PE</i>	Eusebius, <i>Preparation for the Gospel</i>
FGrHist	Jacoby, Felix, ed. (1995), <i>Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker</i> . Leiden: Brill.
Hipp. <i>Ref.</i>	Hippolytus, <i>Refutation of All Heresies</i>
Hom. <i>Il.</i>	Homer, <i>Iliad</i>
Hom. <i>Od.</i>	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>
Huffman	Huffman, Carl (1993), <i>Philolaus of Croton: Pythagorean and Presocratic</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Iamb. <i>VP</i>	Iamblichus, <i>On the Pythagorean Way of Life</i>
Pind. <i>Ol.</i>	Pindar, <i>Olympian Odes</i>
Pl. <i>Charm.</i>	Plato, <i>Charmides</i>
Pl. <i>Phdr.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>
Pl. <i>Rep.</i>	Plato, <i>Republic</i>
Pl. <i>Tim.</i>	Plato, <i>Timaeus</i>
Porph. <i>VP</i>	Porphyry, <i>Life of Pythagoras</i>
SE <i>Adv. Math.</i>	Sextus Empiricus, <i>Against the Mathematicians</i>
Rose ³	Rose, Valentini, ed. (1886), <i>Aristotelis qui Ferebatur Librorum Fragmenta</i> . Lipsiae: Teubner.
Verg. <i>Aen.</i>	Vergil, <i>Aeneid</i>
Wehrli	Wehrli, von Fritz, ed. (1974), <i>Die Schule des Aristoteles</i> . Basel: Schwabe.

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