

Sonja Weiss

Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani  
Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

# Medicine for Body or Soul? Philosophical Reconstruction of the Role of Music in Ancient Healing Practices

## Zdravilo za dušo ali telo? Filozofska rekonstrukcija vloge glasbe v antičnih zdravilskih praksah

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### IZVLEČEK

Članek raziskuje vez med dušo in telesom v luči antičnih glasbenih praks in se ukvarja s filozofskim razlikovanjem med telesom in dušo ter z razširjenim verovanjem v njuno sorodnost, ki ima tako medicinska kot tudi religiozna ozadja. Razlikovanje je zlasti vidno iz pričevanj o uporabi glasbe v t. i. pitagorejskem načinu življenja. Ta pričevanja so očitno povezana z antičnim holističnim pristopom, ki dojema telesno dobrobit kot neločljivo od fizičnega ravnovesja.

### ABSTRACT

The article examines the bond between the soul and the body in the light of ancient musical practices and expounds on the divergence between the philosophical distinction between body and soul, and the widespread belief in their affinity, which has a medical, as well as a religious, background. This divergence is particularly evident in the testimonies regarding the use of music in the so-called Pythagorean way of life. These testimonies seem to be related to an ancient holistic approach, which regards bodily well-being as inseparable from psychical balance.

## 1. Music in the So-called Pythagorean Medicine

Many ancient testimonies attribute the research and the use of the healing effect of music to the Pythagoreans. These testimonies never go back to Pythagoras himself. In fact, they do not even reach as far as the old Pythagorean school, since they consist mostly of indirect testimonies by Aristotle's followers (among them Aristoxenus), transmitted to us through Neopythagorean and Neoplatonic writings. It is not the purpose of this article to link the doubtful origins of the musical practices discussed below to the Pythagoreans. My objective is to separate in these practices (vigorously ascribed to Pythagoreans by the ancient sources) the ethical doctrine of music from the healing practices, which undoubtedly reach back to the times of Pythagoras and possibly even further back.

The testimonies about musical practices in Pythagorean schools dwell mostly on the *edifying* effects of music;<sup>1</sup> but the Pythagoreans were supposed to have used its soothing effects in medicine as well. Aristoxenus (4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC) recounts that among sciences, music, medicine, and divination were honored by Pythagoreans (fr. 58 D 1 Diels-Kranz). Although health was preserved mostly by the appropriate regimen of life (*diáita*), this regimen included musical practices which were also used in medicine, and healing was performed through incantations (*epaoidai*). This expression has a common connotation with the word "spell," which is why this kind of healing practice tends to be confused with the use of magic.<sup>2</sup> In later testimonies there is a clear distinction between music and incantations, although both were said to have been used by Pythagoras in his treatment of the sick.<sup>3</sup> Aristoxenus, however, seems to associate the use of incantations with music:

*"Some diseases they cured by incantations. Music, if used in a proper manner, was by Pythagoras supposed to contribute greatly to health."* (DK 58 D 1 = Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* (= VP) 29 [164]; trans. by K. Guthrie)

This text, dating from the 3rd century, gives us the testimony of an author from the 4th century BC, who is in his turn separated from Pythagoras by two centuries. Nevertheless, the fragment mentions various methods of healing which could well have been practiced in the times of Pythagoras and even before him: curing by *diáita*, by poultices and ointments, by cuts and cauterizations and, finally, by music and incantations. The fragment actually begins:

*"Of medicine, the most emphasized part was dietetics, and they were most scrupulous in its exercise. [...] More frequently than their predecessors the Pythagoreans used poultices, disapproving more of medicated ointments, which they chiefly limited to the cure of ulcerations. Most of all they disapproved of cuts and cauterizations."* (DK 58 D 1 = Iamblichus VP 29 [163]; trans. by K. Guthrie)

1 See fr. 37 B 6 Diels-Kranz (= DK) on the effect of singing and dancing on the human soul. There is no lack of testimony (DK 37 A 8, B 4 and B 7 for example), but the tradition of great Pythagorean *mousikoi* (Pythocleides, Lamprocles and particularly Damon) never reaches Pythagoras himself.

2 Ludwig Edelstein, *Ancient Medicine* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1987 (reprint)), 236–238, is careful to point out that there was no magic in healing with music, as the use of magical incantations was decidedly rejected by Greek physicians.

3 See Porphyry, *The Life of Pythagoras* (= VP) 33.

Among these we can distinguish three species of medicine, which appear to have been already known to the old Indo-European civilization, and to have belonged to three respective social classes: priests (incantations), warriors (surgery) and farmers/craftsmen (medical potions).<sup>4</sup> Benveniste points to a classification in Pindar's *Pythian* (= *P.*) 3.52 where "gentle incantations," "soothing potions or remedies" and "surgery" echo even more clearly the tripartite medicine of the Indo-Europeans.

The problem with Aristoxenus as a source is that he appears to be inconsistent. Another fragment conveys a clear distinction between medicine and music:

*"The Pythagoreans used medicine to purify the body and music to purify the soul."*  
(fr. 26 Wehrli)

Now, this testimony clearly shows that music was separate from medicine, and thus contradicts the testimony in the text quoted above. The distinction between music and medicine is grounded on a difference between the purification of the soul and that of the body. But does it mean that this distinction was observed in medical practices, Pythagorean or other? From Pindar, at least, this distinction is absent: the "gentle incantations" (*malakai epaoidai*) from *P.* 3.52 seem to have the same soothing effect as the songs (*oidai*) in the following verses:

*"[...] Songs, the skillful daughters of the Muses, soothe with their touch. And warm water does not wet the limbs so gently as praise that accompanies the lyre."* (*Nemean* 4.2-5; trans. by D. A. Svarlien)

The Ode proclaims mirth (*euphrosýne*) and singing to be the best physician, thus implying that the singing of laudatory songs produces a pleasing sense of relaxation after toils.<sup>5</sup> The word *phrén*, hidden in *euphrosýne*, is integrated in many expressions, and the research of Homeric physiology has shown that they were used to designate not only various states of mind (self-control, for example), but also bodily states.<sup>6</sup> According to Machemer, Pindar's "iatrification" of the word *euphrosýne* lays emphasis on music's healing effects, not only on the *phrén* but, through it, on the limbs as well.<sup>7</sup> The same expression (in its verbal form, *euphrainesthai*) is used in another report on the Pythagorean use of music in medicine, and its recurrence suggests that it may well have been inspired by earlier sources.<sup>8</sup>

4 Luc Brisson, trans., *Jamblique, Vie de Pythagore* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1996), 189 (n. 4 to par. 114), and Émile Benveniste, "La doctrine médicale des Indo-Européens," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 13 (1945): 11-12.

5 For a thorough interpretation of this passage, see Georgia Ann Machemer, "Medicine, Music and Magic: The Healing Grace of Pindar's Fourth Nemean," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 95 (1993): 113-141.

6 See Wesley D. Smith, "Physiology in the Homeric Poems," in *Transactions and Proceedings of The American Philological Association* 97 (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1966), 554-555. The leading role of the *phrén* as the center of sensation was first rejected by Alcmaeon, who distinguished between intellectual functions and sensation, associating the latter with the brain (DK 24 A 5).

7 Machemer, "Medicine, Music and Magic," 120-125.

8 The text is from Iamblichus, but it is believed that the report had been taken from Aristoxenus (see Brisson, *Vie de Pythagore*, 188 (n. 1 to par. 110)). The first line ("Pythagoras was likewise of the opinion that the music, if properly used, greatly contributed to health.") is actually repeated in Chapter 29 [164], which is part of the fragment quoted above (DK 58 D 1).

*“Pythagoras was likewise of the opinion that the music, if properly used, greatly contributed to health. For he wanted to use it in no careless way but as a purification. Indeed, he restricted this word to signify music used in medicine.”*

The text continues by describing certain musical practices which aimed to relax one’s mind: while one person was playing on the lyre, the others, seated in a circle around him, sang paeans,

*“through which they were evidently so **overjoyed** (euphrainesthai), that their manners became elegant and orderly. The music instead of medicines was also used at certain other times.”* (Iamblichus, *VP* 25 [110]; trans. by K. Guthrie.)

Guthrie’s translation implies that music was believed to affect one’s *psyché*, but the text continues by reiterating the use of music instead of *iatreía*. For this particular passage, Brisson’s translation seems preferable because he is careful to preserve the ambiguous meaning of the words *euphrainesthai*, *emmelés* and *énrythmos*.

*“[] les autres chantaient le ensemble des péans, qui, pensaient-ils, provoquaient un **sentiment de bien-être** et induisaient en eux l’harmonie et le rythme.”* (Trans. by L. Brisson)

The testimony clearly offers no distinction between the psychological and possibly somatic effects of the music; rather, they seem to be interlaced. It is true that the text elaborates the point by dwelling on the edifying effects of music on a person’s mind and character<sup>9</sup> – the music was obviously used to soothe various psychic troubles, such as anger and fear – but these effects are nevertheless considered as part of the *iatreía*. Moreover, the expressions *emmelés* and *énrythmos* can be applied to a physical as well as to a psychic condition. They fit the doctrine which, despite the philosophical differentiation between man’s soul and body, was deeply rooted in the belief in their affinity and interdependence, and had found in music a middle

9 Another problem is that the role of the music alone is not clearly defined, since it is evident that it was never used without the accompaniment of words. The importance of the texts they used emerge from the fact that they used to sing/recite selected verses from Homer and Hesiod in order to “correct” their soul (Iamblichus, *VP* 25 [111]). The line between musical and spellbinding practices thus becomes thinner, for there is no distinction between music and words in Iamblichus’ etymology of the word *epoidé* (*VP* 25 [114]). It had been suggested that Pythagoras used to cure illnesses by music alone, playing the *aulos*, but the earliest testimonies for this kind of practice date from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Caelius Aurelianus (*De morb. chron.* 5.1.23) attributes this kind of healing to the brother of the Locrian physician, Philistion. Aulus Gellius in the *Attic Nights* (= *N. A.*) 4.13 quotes Teophrastus’ work, *On Inspiration* (*Peri enthousiasmoí*), where the *tibia* is mentioned as a cure for sciatica (see the quotation on p. 23). The lyre seemed to be preferred to the *aulos*. Speaking of Corybantic rites, Plato mentions the almost hypnotic effect of the *aulos* (*Criti.* 54d and *Sym.* 215e); both passages, according to Eric R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1951), 98 (n. 102), possibly allude to the Corybantic musical diagnosis. Other writers refer to the negative effects of the *aulos* (Galen VII.61s. Kühn) which, according to Aristotle (*Pol.* 1341a 21-24 and 1342a 30-b 1), has more impact on human emotions than on moral character and was, for that reason, discarded. Aristotle seems to be following Plato’s lead: in the *Republic* 399d, “poly-harmonic instruments,” such as *aulos*, are excluded from the ideal *polis* (for the background of Socrates’ reasoning, see Andrew D. Barker, *Psicomusicologia nella Grecia antica*, trans. Angelo Meriani (Napoli: Guida Editori, 2005), 29). Even Aristoxenus allegedly preferred the lyre to the *aulos* (fr. 95 Wehrli; for this debatable testimony, see Warren Anderson, “Musical Developments in the School of Aristotle,” *Royal Music Association Research Chronicle* 16 (1980): 89).

ground between them. I suggest that the apparent ambiguity and inconsistency in the testimonies attributed to Aristoxenus is a result of this doctrine, and I will try to demonstrate it in the next two sections.

## 2. The Concept of Soul as *harmonía*: the Affinity between Body and Soul

For a better understanding of the role of music in medical praxes of Classical Antiquity, it is important to observe the fact that it was in the context of Pythagorean doctrines that philosophy first entered the domain of medicine which, in the time of the Ionian naturalists, was a separate art, or rather a craft. At the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 5th centuries BC, the physician Alcmaeon of Croton allegedly applied the Pythagorean doctrine of opposites to his healing technique and thus became the father of the concept of *isonomía*.<sup>10</sup> The status of medicine as a craft unsupported by theoretical research dates back to Homeric times, and it was the influence of philosophy that, according to Edelstein,<sup>11</sup> caused the need for scientific knowledge to develop in the field of medicine. This, however, does not explain the interest that philosophy held for medicine which, by general opinion, had by that time lost its battle against philosophy, or rather had voluntarily submitted itself to it.<sup>12</sup>

Philosophy and medicine in the 5th century BC held one thing in common: their interest in man. The rivalry between ancient medicine and philosophy was injected with renewed vigor when philosophy had first tried to define what it is to be human.<sup>13</sup> This was an important step from the cosmological doctrines of the Ionian naturalists, toward an interest in man's nature, which lies at the core of any healing practice. The conviction that a human being cannot be identified with his body alone is already distinct in the Homeric conception of the *psyché* which, however, is greatly dependent on the characteristics of the human body.<sup>14</sup> The influence of Orphic and Pythagorean doctrines had fostered the idea of the ailing soul, not in the sense of psychic illness but as an existential anguish of the soul that finds itself caught in the body. The idea of the soul imprisoned in the body had set into motion the process of the separation of the soul from the body, not only in the philosophical but in the moral sense, as well.<sup>15</sup> The

10 DK 24 B 4. On how the Pythagoreans associated philosophy with medicine, see Harold W. Miller, "Philosophy and Medicine in Ancient Greece," *The Classical Journal* 40/5 (1949): 309–318. Alcmaeon's being Pythagorean is uncertain, which is why there are serious doubts about the Pythagorean origins of his concept of *isonomía* (see Gregory Vlastos, "Isonomia," *The American Journal of Philology* 74/4 (1953): 344–347). However, according to Aristotle, both Pythagoreans and Alcmaeon believed the contraries to be first principles of things (DK 24 A 3).

11 Edelstein, *Ancient Medicine*, 351–352.

12 Edelstein, *Ancient Medicine*, 357. According to William Henry S. Jones, introduction to *Ancient Medicine, Hippocrates I.* (Cambridge; Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948), 8, medicine "gradually degenerated from rational treatment to wild speculation and even quackery and superstition."

13 The author of the treatise entitled *On Ancient Medicine*, mentions Empedocles and his "evolution theory" (Chap. 20).

14 Scholars agree that it is difficult to speak of the Homeric *psyché* as soul: see e.g. *Il.* 23.104, where Achilles, meeting Patrocles' *psyché*, is grieved to discover that it is but a reflection of Patrocles, lacking the *phrénés* (which could be understood as "soul" in the modern sense of the word) of his beloved friend. On the concept of soul in the Homeric poems, see Giovanni Reale, *Corpo, anima e salute: il concetto di uomo da Omero a Platone* (Milano: R. Cortina, 1999), 61–89.

15 See Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 152, on the puritanism generated by the conception of soul as captive in the body.

doctrine of transmigration, closely associated with Pythagorean philosophy and first imputed to Pherecydes (DK 7 A 2), has brought on the belief that the human *psyché* is immortal or, at least, that it survives several bodily lives. Thus the gap between the soul and the body had become even wider, even though the doctrine of transmigration, contrary to what may be expected, does not necessarily imply belief in the incorporeal nature of the soul (which will be discussed further below). The conceptual separation from the body lies in the presumed immortality of the soul, and the fact that, once the body is dead, the soul is able to lead a separate and better life away from the body.<sup>16</sup>

Despite this differentiation, or perhaps because of it, the ancients began to wonder in what way the soul coexists with the body, whose survival evidently depends on this symbiosis. One theory is offered by the doctrine of the soul as the *harmonía* of the body. This doctrine has been attributed to Pythagoreans since antiquity. The first thorough discussion of this doctrine is found in Plato's *Phaedo* (85e-86d), where Simmias compares the soul as *harmonía* to the tuning of a lyre. As Gottschalk observes, Simmias' term *harmonía* has a double meaning, corresponding to the ambiguity of the concept of soul as *harmonía*, which incorporates the congruous mixture of bodily elements on one side and something incorporeal, divine and immortal (as the Platonic soul should be) on the other.<sup>17</sup> Even if we cannot be positive that the doctrine of the soul as *harmonía* is indeed Pythagorean (and there seem to be many reasons to doubt that<sup>18</sup>), we can safely agree with the assumption that Simmias' theory is founded on the widespread and generally-accepted belief in the mutual dependence between psychic disposition and physical constitution.<sup>19</sup> There is also no doubt as to its medical background,<sup>20</sup> which is evident from Alcmaeon's concept of *isonomía*, identifying health as the harmonious blending (*symmetros krâsis*) of the qualities of the body (DK 24 B 4), and disease as a result of the supremacy (*monarchía*) of any one of these qualities. The concept of harmony can also be found in Hippocratic treatises<sup>21</sup> which, among

16 See Walter Burkert, *Greek religion: archaic and classical*, trans. John Raffan (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 300.

17 Hans B. Gottschalk, "Soul as Harmonia," *Phronesis* 16/2 (1971): 181.

18 It was Macrobius (*The Commentary on "the Dream of Scipio"* 1.14.19 = DK 44 A 23) who credited Pythagoras and Philolaus with the invention of the concept, and this has also been the conviction of Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and the Belief in Immortality Among the Greeks*, trans. William Hillis (London: Routledge, 2000 (reprint)), 400 (n. 52). Carl A. Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton: Pythagorean and Presocratic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 326-32, rejects Macrobius' testimony, but calls upon other fragments to confirm the same belief. Since neither Plato nor Aristotle, being the main two sources for this doctrine, attribute it to the Pythagoreans, scholars tend to be cautious: see William K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 1, The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 307 (n. 3). For modern theories on the subject, see Francesco Pelosi, *Plato on Music, Soul and Body*, trans. Sophie Henderson (New York: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 181 (n. 51), and Gottschalk, "Soul as Harmonia," 192-195, who concludes the survey by arguing that the doctrine, as presented in *Phaedo*, had been created by Plato himself - not as part of what he actually believed, but as an argument to be refuted.

19 Neoplatonists later defended the concept of the soul as *harmonía*, interpreting it as a mere analogy: see Iamblichus, *On the Soul*, in Stobaeus, *Anthology*, 1.49.32.52, who distinguishes the *harmonía* in bodies (*en sómasi enidryménéni*) from mathematical harmony. Neoplatonic Christian writer Philoponus (6<sup>th</sup> century) explains it as a harmony between noetic and hylic world which, though uncongenial, merges into one, due to the interposition of the soul as a mediator between them (*Commentary on Aristotle's 'De Anima' 404a 16*, p. 70.9-14).

20 See Fritz Wehrli, ed., *Die Schule des Aristoteles, Heft I: Dikaiarchos* (Basel: Beno Schwabe & Co, 1944), 45-46, specifically the commentary on Dicaearchus' fr. 11. For the same opinion regarding the Philolaus' conception of the soul as *harmonía*, see Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton*, 329.

21 As in *Regimen* 1.8 = Heraclitus, DK 22 C 1. On the influence of Alcmaeon's medical theory on Hippocratic medicine, see James Longrigg, *Greek Rational Medicine: Philosophy and Medicine from Alcmaeon to the Alexandrians* (London: Routledge, 2013), 52-53.

other things, dwell on the importance of an equilibrated life, and suggest regulations regarding diet and physical exercises (*Regimen* 1.2), which were also common in the Pythagorean daily regime (cf. DK 58 D 1).

The main problem, perceived for the first time by Plato, was that, according to this theory, the soul's existence is tied to that of the body, since the harmony of its parts (and thus the soul) is dissolved when a person dies. This, of course, goes against the Platonic belief in the immortality of the soul. On the other hand, it would appear that the theory of health as a "harmonious blending" of physical qualities did not prevent Alcmaeon's belief that the soul was immortal (DK 24 A 12) and, even for Macrobius, the doctrine of soul as *harmonía* precludes neither immortality nor the incorporeal nature of the soul.<sup>22</sup> Some scholars, however, began to doubt that Pythagoras' successors had believed the soul to be immortal, and it has been suggested that the Pythagorean school of Philolaus' generation had departed from the original Pythagoreanism, which was of a more religious nature.<sup>23</sup> Philolaus may or may not have believed in the immortality of the soul; but it is even less certain that he thought it incorporeal. According to testimonies, he believed the soul to be some kind of life principle;<sup>24</sup> in DK 44 B 13, for example, *psyché* is associated with the faculty of perception, and is separated from intellectual functions.<sup>25</sup>

It would appear that the reason for the incompatibility of the concept of the soul as *harmonía* and its immortal nature lies with Plato himself; for the Pre-Socratic concept of the soul does not postulate that the soul must be incorporeal in order to be immortal.<sup>26</sup> It is true that, with the doctrine of transmigration, the soul became considered as distinct from the body, but this distinction reflected in their separate functions, rather than in the soul's supposedly incorporeal nature.<sup>27</sup>

The scarcity of testimonies from Pythagoras himself leaves us in doubt as to his concept of the soul. Xenophanes' anecdote about one of Pythagoras' friends who was reincarnated as a puppy (DK 21 B 7) shows that the *psyché* was used to designate the part of man that outlives the death of his body. According to Huffman, Pythagoras did not use the term *psyché* to designate the so-called comprehensive soul, which includes

22 *S. Scip.* 1.14.20.

23 John Burnet, *Greek philosophy: Thales to Plato* (London: MacMillan & Co Ltd., 1955), 92, who agrees with Plato that such a nature is incompatible with the soul's immortality. For a different opinion, see Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 310–312. For Pythagoreans, the belief in the immortality of the soul was closely related to their doctrine of transmigration (see Porphyry, *VP* 19). For a possible compromise between the concept of the soul as *harmonia* and the doctrine of transmigration (and consequently immortality) of the soul, see Carl A. Huffman, "The Pythagorean conception of the soul from Pythagoras to Philolaus," in *Body and Soul in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Dorothea Frede and Burkhard Reis (Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 2009), 31.

24 Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 314–315, observes that the concept of the soul as *harmonia* originates from the idea that the soul is a kind of life principle of the soul. He relates this conception to Greek physicians, whose concerns about the body and the daily regime were usually attended by the conviction that, once the bodily balance is destroyed, the soul perishes along with the body. For a similar observation, see Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, trans. Edwin L. Minar, Jr. (Cambridge; Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), 270 and 272, n. 168.

25 Huffman, "The Pythagorean conception of the soul," 23–27, argues that, in Philolaus, the term *psyché* designates the seat of emotions which, together with the faculty of sensation, is located in the heart. At the same time, it is a center of individual personality, influenced by these emotions.

26 Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 272, is, therefore, in the right to warn against the "idealization" of the Pythagorean doctrine of the soul before Plato.

27 Hippasus (or Hippon?) supposedly set the active and living nature of the soul against the passivity of the body, maintaining, at the same time, that the origins of the soul cannot be known (see DK 18 A 10).

all psychic qualities; he argues that the exception of the noetic part of the soul is proof of that, for Pythagoras, the *psyché* was not an incorporeal entity, although it was, as the seat of sensation and emotional character, able to move from one living being to another.<sup>28</sup> This conclusion does not explain the kind of corporality in the soul, nor its extent and, consequently, this “corporeal” nature remains a mystery. The reason behind this puzzle probably lies in modern endeavors to solve it from the Platonic point of view; for no sooner do we try to explain the concept of the material soul among the Pre-Socratics, than we discover that there is no need to define this psychic “matter,” because it did not exist at the time. The soul had not yet been radically separated from the body, nor had the terms “corporeal” and “incorporeal” been clearly defined. It is no wonder that Hippasus (DK 18 A 10) cannot give us the answer as to the soul’s origins.

Aristotle’s criticism of the soul as *harmonía* in his *On the Soul* (407b 27-408a 18) is interesting precisely in view of soul’s association with the body. Although he confutes the theory itself, he takes a moment to consider its implications, and the problems that remain unsolved in face of his arguments:

*“But, on the other hand, if the soul is different from the mixture, why does it disappear at one and the same moment with that relation between the elements which constitutes flesh or the other parts of the animal body? Further, if the soul is not identical with the ratio of mixture, and it is consequently not the case that each of the parts has a soul, what is that which perishes when the soul quits the body?”* (*On the Soul* 408a 24-28; trans. by J. A. Smith)

We can therefore agree with the assertion that Aristotle was aware of the problems raised by the rejection of this doctrine,<sup>29</sup> as well as of the fact that it was the only theory explaining soul’s intimate relation to the body.<sup>30</sup> This consideration is important in light of the later remonstrance addressed to his followers, Dicaearchus and Aristoxenus: according to testimonies they would not admit the existence of the soul,<sup>31</sup> except as a kind of force that regulates the functions of the body and is indivisible from it.<sup>32</sup> It seems that Aristotle, by introducing the soul to living nature, had led his followers to develop a doctrine that identified the soul with its material substrate.<sup>33</sup> However, the following section will discuss the possibility that their lack of belief in the separate existence of the soul in some measure depends on their musical theory, which

28 Huffman, “The Pythagorean conception of the soul,” 40. The most critical is the question of memory, which is indisputably an intellectual faculty for Plato, and seems to be some sort of compensation for immortality, even for the Pythagoreans (see DK 14 A 8 = Diogenes 8.4; on the key role of memory in the Pythagorean way of life, see James Luchte, *Pythagoras and the Doctrine of Transmigration* (London; New York: Continuum, 2009), 123). However, Huffman, “The Pythagorean conception of the soul,” 39, n. 51, observes that there is no reason to believe that memory, before and even after Plato, had been restricted to the intellectual part of the soul.

29 Jules Tricot, trans., *Aristote. De l’âme* (Paris: Vrin, 1977), 43, n. 6.

30 Gottschalk, “Soul as Harmonia,” 188.

31 Dicaearchus, fr. 8e Wehrli: D. quidem et A., [...] nullum omnino animum esse dixerunt.

32 So Dicaearchus, fr. 7 Wehrli. As to Aristoxenus’ concept of the soul as *harmonía* (see fr. 120 Wehrli), he sees the soul rather as a “tuning,” than a blending of compounds (see Anderson, “Musical Developments in the School of Aristotle,” 90); moreover, he compares the soul to *harmonía*, rather than identifying one with the other.

33 See Gottschalk, “Soul as Harmonia,” 182-189: according to Aristotle, the soul is “a substance (*ousía*) in the sense of a form of a natural body” (412a 19).



in its turn reaches back to the ancient healing practices ascribed to the Pythagoreans. It seems that the idea of the soul's close relationship to the body remained rooted in post-Platonic Pythagorean thought, which continued to explore the possibilities of this relationship through music.

### 3. The Cathartic Powers of Music

The term *harmonía* had been associated with music no earlier than at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>34</sup> probably in accordance with the Pythagorean doctrine of the Harmony of Spheres.<sup>35</sup> This doctrine reveals the importance of the role of music in Pythagorean conceptions of the universe, and of man as part of the world order. In order to examine the cathartic effects of music allegedly propounded by the Pythagoreans, we must return to Aristoxenus' Fragment 26, quoted above. It is the earliest fragment that associates musical therapy as purification, with the Pythagoreans. This association led to the belief that the Pythagorean theory of purification is the core of Aristotle's theory of *kátharsis*, developed in Book 8 of his *Politics*. According to some scholars, the Pythagorean concept of *kátharsis* arose from their practice of ritual purification, which had been given a mystical and ethical connotation. With Aristotle, the concept had been taken to a scientific level.<sup>36</sup> Later research, however, leads us to believe that the doctrine of purification is not originally Pythagorean,<sup>37</sup> but rather originates from a more ancient practice,<sup>38</sup> as a result of the strong link between religion and medicine.<sup>39</sup>

Central to our argument is Aristoxenus' distinction between the purification of the soul by music, and that of the body by medicine. This differentiation suggests that medicine had distanced itself from certain unscientific praxes, which had by the end of the 5th century become associated with magic, a practice shunned by the medicine of the time. The author of the *Sacred Disease* (cca. 400 BC) speaks of the charlatans who pretended to cure epilepsy with incantations and purifications (*katharmoi, epaoidai*; Chap. 2) because they were unable to discover its natural cause. Magical practices were incompatible with the attempt to give scientific support to 5th century medicine, and were in Late Antiquity disavowed by law.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, the effects of music on the soul were explored more deeply, as is evident from Aristotle's musical theory.

34 Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 220.

35 See Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 290b 12-291a 26.

36 For the survey of various theories, see Antonietta Provenza, "Aristoxenus and Music Therapy: Fr. 26 Wehrli within the Tradition on Music and Catharsis," in *Aristoxenus of Tarentum: Discussion*, ed. Carl A. Huffman, vol. 17 of *Routledge University Studies in Classical Humanities* (New Brunswick; New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 94.

37 See Leonid Zhmud, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism*, trans. Kevin Windle and Rosh Ireland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 288, referring particularly to the purification of the soul through music.

38 It is still agreed, though, that it was Aristotle who gave it a scientific form (Provenza, "Aristoxenus and Music Therapy," 94-95, n. 14); moreover he distinguished between the purifying and the edifying roles of music (*Pol.* 1341b 37). Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 212, observes that the purification through science was associated with Pythagoreans no sooner than it was with Neoplatonists, particularly Iamblichus.

39 Far from being excluded from medicine, religious sentiments were believed to be necessary in dealing with the natural causes of a disease. Magical practices were considered blasphemous by the author of the *Sacred Disease*, and they proved to have been as unwelcome in religion as they were in medicine (see Vivian Nutton, *Ancient Medicine* (London: Routledge, 2004): 111-114).

40 The Code of Justinian (*Digesta* 50.13.1.3) excluded such practices from *medicinae genera*.

Among the followers of Aristotle, Aristoxenus and Theophrastus were particularly observant of the effects of music on psychic states. They both paid special attention to auditory sensations: Theophrastus considered it the most emotive (*pathetikotáte*) of all forms of sense perception (fr. 91.1.1 Wimmer = Plutarchus, *On Listening to Lectures*, p. 37), and is even convinced that the origins of music lie in the passions of the soul (*páthe*; Plutarchus, *Table Talk* 1.5.2 (= 623a 6-9)), like sorrow and joy, since they are accompanied by a change in the voice. Such is Theophrastus' definition of music:

*"The nature of music is single: a movement of the soul which takes place in order to effect its deliverance [apólysis] from the evils to which passions give rise."* (fr. 89.14.7-9 Wimmer = Porphyry, *Commentary in Ptolemy's Harmonics*, pp. 241-244 (Wallis); trans. by W. Anderson)<sup>41</sup>

This definition clearly points out that music works on the soul through its movement which, according to Anderson, is the crucial factor to our understanding of the way Theophrastus looked upon the relationship between music and the soul.

But Anderson equally argues that the Pythagorean *mousikoí* (Damon, for example) studied the immediate influence of this movement on the body (changes of voice and bodily movement).<sup>42</sup> These arguments throw interesting light on a testimony from Apollonius, according to which Theophrastus deemed that by music, and by playing on the *aulos* in particular, even bodily illnesses, such as sciatica, can be cured (see Aristoxenus, fr. 6 Wehrli).<sup>43</sup> Fortenbaugh warns against assigning such opinions too quickly to Theophrastus, arguing that such immediate effects of music on the body are more likely to fit into the *mirabilia* of Apollonius, rather than into the ideas of a peripatetic scientist. Below, however, we have a text from Aulus Gellius, who gives an explanation of the belief that playing the *aulos* (lat. *tibia*) can cure various diseases of the body; according to Gellius, this belief is founded on an affinity between body and soul, both of which share the same ailments, as well as the same cures for them:

*"I ran across the statement very recently in the book of Theophrastus On Inspiration that many men have believed and put their belief on record, that when gouty pains in the hips are most severe, they are relieved if a flute-player (tibicen) plays soothing measures. That snake-bites are cured by the music of the flute, when played skillfully and melodiously, is also stated in a book of Democritus, entitled On Deadly Infections, in which he shows that the music of the flute (tibia) is medicine for many ills that flesh is heir to. So very close is the connection between the bodies and the minds of men, and therefore between physical and mental ailments and their remedies."* (N. A. 4.13; trans. by J. C. Rolfe)

<sup>41</sup> For a detailed interpretation of this fragment, and its relation to the concept of *katharsis*, see Franz Dirlmeier, "ΚΑΘΑΡΣΙΣ ΠΑΘΗΜΑΤΩΝ," *Hermes* 75/1 (1940): 90-91.

<sup>42</sup> Anderson, "Musical Developments in the School of Aristotle," 92 and 94-95.

<sup>43</sup> For a thorough discussion of this implication of fr. 6, see William W. Fortenbaugh, "Apollonius on Theophrastus on Aristoxenus," in Aristoxenus of Tarentum: Discussion, ed. Carl A. Huffman, vol. 17 of *Routledge University Studies in Classical Humanities* (New Brunswick; New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 163-165.

Gellius' observation of the *affinitas* between body and soul is not expressed as a personal opinion: more likely, he repeats a general belief which seems to have been spread among those who healed by music. Aristoxenus' fr. 26, displays the same analogy between psychic and bodily nature,<sup>44</sup> which reveals the connection between religious doctrines of the Pythagoreans and their scientific endeavors, which included the art of healing, as well as other cathartic practices cultivated by the medical school of Croton.<sup>45</sup>

Sources in Iamblichus and Porphyry, too, give an account of the Pythagorean use of music in healing the body. The paragraph from Iamblichus, comprising the passage quoted above (VP 25 [110]), begins with an explicit reference to *kátharsis* as *he dià tês mousikês iatreía*, i. e. healing through music, and concludes with the report of still other occasions on which "music instead of medicine" (*en iatreías táxei*) was used. This passage conveys the idea of music as a substitute for medicine and not its integral part. If its source is indeed Aristoxenus, as the resemblance with DK 58 D 1 seems to show, it clearly demonstrates his reluctance to dwell on the somatic effect of music, or at least his inability to explain these effects. The words "music instead of medicine" point to a separation of music from medicine, which may be attributed to his own use of music to cure *psychic* disorders.<sup>46</sup> The awkward transition from somatic to psychic effects of music is evident in a passage taken from Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras*, referring to the testimony of Antonius Diogenes (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.): there the healing effects of music are mostly mentioned in reference to psychic disorders. Although certain dances were used to improve the agility and health of the body (VP 32), the effects of the dance seem to be logically related to the movements of the body rather than to the music itself. While this testimony does not reach beyond the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, it contains the same references to the use of ancient paeans and of Homer's and Hesiod's verses as the passage from Iamblichus, of which the source is said to be Aristoxenus.<sup>47</sup> Apart from the possibility of sharing the same older source, Porphyry's (or Diogenes') report is not of much use. Indeed, it gets more and more confusing in the next paragraph, describing the ways in which Pythagoras supposedly used music:

*"If they were sick, he nursed them; if they were **afflicted in mind**, he solaced them, some by incantations and charms, others by music. He had prepared songs **for the diseases of the body**, by singing which he cured the sick."* (VP 33)

The point is that none of the sources used by Iamblichus or Porphyry seems willing to dwell separately on the ailments of the body and disorders of the soul. No testimony explains the way in which music is supposed to influence the body, whereas there is no lack of descriptions of its impact on the soul. The language used to describe musical practices of purification is full of musical terms, as a consequence of the conviction that music restores the soul into its harmonious state. 48 Interestingly, sometimes we

44 Fritz Wehrli, ed., *Die Schule des Aristoteles, Heft II: Aristoxenos*, (Basel: Beno Schwabe & Co, 1945), 54–55.

45 For this connection, see Burnet, *Greek philosophy*, 41.

46 See fr. 6 Wehrli.

47 Brisson, *Vie de Pythagore*, 189 (n. 4 to par. 114), believes that Porphyry and Iamblichus use the same source here. In this case it is possible that Aristoxenus is the source of Diogenes' report.

48 See, for example, VP 15 [64].

come across medical terms (apart from the obvious case of the word *kátharsis*<sup>49</sup>): it is reported that Pythagoras, through music, used to purify the intellective powers of his disciples from “the influxive and effluxive waves of corporeal nature (*diekáthairé te synkeklydasménon tò noetikón*).”<sup>50</sup> The verb *klydázesthai* is very rare and refers to the fluctuation of fluid in pleurisy. This could possibly account for the discrepancies in modern translations of it: in the present case, it is Guthrie’s translation that I find more inspiring, since it obviously alludes to a presence of a corporeal nature in the intellectual part of the *psyché*, while Brisson chooses a more neutral expression (“il purifiait leur esprit agité”).

Taking into consideration the materialistic concept of *psyché*, attributed to ancient Pythagoreanism, the idea of healing bodily illnesses through music becomes more comprehensible. But there is another obvious reason for these authors’ reticence on the effects of music on the body. Since the latter is governed and influenced by the soul, it must benefit from the purifying effects of the music. This, of course, is not a medical belief but a purely philosophical one: it can be traced back to the Platonic conception of the immortal soul governing the mortal body.

#### 4. Medicine for the Soul, Medicine for the Body

I have tried to demonstrate that the evasive reports on healing with music are a result of the philosophical veneer spread over medical practices which would otherwise sink to the level of charlatanism condemned by the Hippocratic medicine. But does that necessarily mean that Pythagoras really had cured the sick by playing the *aulos*, as had been suggested? Here again, Aristoxenus’ fragment on the various types of Pythagorean medicine gives us some idea. He mentions dietetics, poultices and ointments, cuts and cauterizations, and incantations/music. These practices are individualized by their subjects of interest, which clearly indicate that Pythagoreans showed least interest for the part of medicine that focused on the body alone: surgery. On the other hand, they paid ample attention to those practices which, while healing, also influenced the soul; or, if we may add, which healed the body *through* the soul. These practices included not only musical incantations, but also one’s daily regimen: again according to Aristoxenus (DK 58 D 8 = VP 31 [207-208]), the food we eat has greater impact on our souls than we realize: the variety of man’s aliments has its origin in various psychic impulses responding to different structures of food.<sup>51</sup> The term *diáthesis* is used to designate physical, as well as psychic disposition, but the writer is obviously thinking of the latter (indecent behavior of intoxicated persons). We can safely assume that similar effects were attributed to ointments and medical substances, since it is clear that they preferred not to use medicaments, except when they applied them to wounds, which

49 For the medical background of the poetic *kátharsis*, see Hellmut Flashar, “Die Medizinischen Grundlagen der Lehre von der Wirkung der Dichtung in der Griechischen Poetik,” *Hermes* 84/1 (1956): 42-43. The word *apólysis* in the fragment quoted above from Theophrastus (fr. 89 W) also belongs to the medical vocabulary (cf. Hipp., *Coa praes.* 378).

50 VP 15 [65] in Kenneth S. Guthrie, trans., *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library. An Anthology of Ancient Writings Which Relate to Pythagoras and Pythagorean Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1987).

51 On the Pythagorean diet, see Georg Wöhrle, *Studien zur Theorie der antiken Gesundheitslehre* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990): 35-44.

have physical causes. The medicine attributed to Pythagoreans by Aristoxenus was evidently focused on curing the body through the soul, and saw the illness as a primarily psychic disorder, which explains their use of music in medicine.

Observing the role of the music in the Pythagorean tradition, we cannot fail to notice the importance given to its psychological effects. The Pythagoreans are generally credited with the discovery of music as a means of soothing a troubled soul, or educating an undeveloped character.<sup>52</sup> According to testimonies, music was used to cure the body as well, but the intimate connection of body and soul implies that this was being done through the soul. The question is how much the practice of curing the body by music through the soul depends on the Platonic notion of the soul ruling the body, and how much this doctrine has to do with ancient methods of curing, related to shamanistic practices.<sup>53</sup> The theory of music education is quite clearly exposed in Plato.<sup>54</sup> In the *Republic* (376e and 410b–412b), gymnastics is appointed for the education of the body, and music for that of the soul; but later in this passage, it turns out that, fundamentally, they both serve the purposes of the soul, since in excessive devotion, a total neglect of one or the other eventually affects the soul. Only a balanced education brings the required harmony to the soul. The advantages of such education for the body are not mentioned here.<sup>55</sup> However, there is a passage in Plato's *Charmides* (155e–157b) where Socrates champions a completely different approach: young Charmides suffers from a headache, and Socrates offers to cure him by using a certain leaf, accompanied by a charm (*epoidé*). Such is the introduction in the dialogue, discussing temperance (*sophrosyne*), the presence of which in the soul assures a healthy body, as well. Charmides must, therefore, submit his soul to a cure by “charms”<sup>56</sup> and, consequently, his head will be cured, too. The origins of this doctrine, according to Socrates, lie with Thracian physicians, operating under orders of their god and king, Zalmoxis:<sup>57</sup>

52 See e. g. DK 37 A 8, B 9 and B 10.

53 On shamanism in ancient Greece, see Mircea Eliade, *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* (Paris: Payot, 1968 (reprint)), 305–310, and particularly Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 135–150.

54 See e. g. the educational plan for the guardians in the *Republic* 376c–377a and, particularly, in 398b–403c. These passages raise the question of the Pythagorean influence on Plato's musical education theory. The main difference between the Pythagoreans and Plato could have been, as Guthrie, *The Pythagorean Sourcebook*, 35, argues, in the practical approach of the Pythagoreans, which they had in common with the Orphics, while in Plato's case it is mainly a theory based on a more intellectual approach. With Platonism, music has left the world of physical phenomena and become a part of the world of ideas. This is the reason why Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 212, dismisses the concept of purification through science from the early Pythagorean tradition: before Plato, every kind of knowledge included the world of senses, and therefore could not, in the eyes of the Pythagoreans, promote the soul's purification. The same applied to the music.

55 As for healthcare, Plato seems to have tried to restrain the influence of medicine, when stating that doctors know best what is healthy and what is not, but that they cannot tell whether health itself is better than illness (*Lach.* 195c–d). However, there is strong evidence of the influence of Hippocratic treatises on Plato's medical and musical theories which sometimes show striking similarities with the methodological approach of contemporary medical writers; for a thorough analysis, see Barker, *Psicomusicologia nella Grecia antica*, 75–95.

56 By *epoidé* he means the Socratic discourse on temperance rather than music.

57 Herodotus (*Hist.* 4.93) depicts Zalmoxis in a double role, both human and divine. As a god, he is related to the mystery of death and the afterlife. There was a custom among his worshipers who, during thunderstorms, would shoot arrows toward the sky, threatening its divinities—this points to a chthonic divinity, of non-Greek origin, as Zalmoxis' criticism of Greek medicine men shows. But his other name was Gebeleis, who was a Thracian divinity of sky and thunder, but this was later blended with the figure of Zalmoxis, thus becoming a universal deity who rules heaven and earth (Mircea Goga, *La Roumanie: culture et civilization* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2007), 182–184). As a man, Zalmoxis was associated with Pythagoras, either as his slave (see Herodotus *ibid.* and Diogenes, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 8.2) or his disciple (see Porphyry, *VP* 14). Porphyry mentions the divinization of Zalmoxis, who was supposed to be worshipped as Heracles (by Diogenes' account, as Chronos).

*“Zalmoxis, our king, who is a god, says that [...] you should not treat body without soul; and this was the reason why most maladies evaded the physicians of Greece—that they neglected the whole, on which they ought to spend their pains, for if this were out of order it was impossible for the part to be in order. ‘For all that was good and evil,’ he said, ‘in the body and in man altogether was sprung from the soul.’”* (*Charmides* 156d-e; trans. by W. R. M. Lamb)

Here is a holistic (and non-Greek) approach which makes bodily health dependent on the *psyché*. There is a certain similarity to the medical method mentioned in *Phaedrus*:

**Socrates:** “Now do you think one can acquire any appreciable knowledge of the nature of the soul without knowing the nature of the whole man?”

**Phaedrus:** “If Hippocrates the Asclepiad is to be trusted, one cannot know the nature of the body, either, except in that way.” (*Phaedrus* 270c-d)

But as it turns out, Plato is only giving a medical analogy to explain his cognitive approach to the human soul. The medical holism ascribed to Hippocrates is restricted to the body and does not make the latter dependent on the soul. On the other hand, Zalmoxis’ Pythagorean background in the *Charmides* passage attests to the Pythagorean pre-Platonic conception of the soul which, in conformity with pre-Socratic hylozoism, was closely associated with the body. This attitude does not agree well with the idea of the soul buried within the body. However, studies have shown by now that, even though the conception of the body as the tomb of the soul had probably developed under the influence of their conceptual separation, the *sôma* = *sêma* formula is not likely Pythagorean.<sup>58</sup>

While no direct testimonies regarding Pythagoras have survived, there is strong reason to believe that the Pythagorean *way of life* had retained more elements from the old Pythagorean school than the Pythagorean *philosophy* as a system of doctrines, which had gradually been adopted by other philosophical schools and had evolved accordingly.<sup>59</sup> At least in Aristoxenus’ times the Pythagoreans seem to have taken every care of the body; not in the sense of athletic training, but of *âskesis* in the purest sense of the word. Thus, they developed a lifestyle (*bíos*) where the body has its proper role, not as a dead instrument operated by the soul, but as a living organism that actively contributes to the quality of life. These practices also included music (playing instruments, singing, dancing) and, by recovering the disrupted ratios within a living being, they reconnected it with the universe. The use of music thus represented an important aspect of holistic medicine, indicating that the healing of the body cannot possibly dispense with the “correction” of the soul. Only through this could balance in the body be restored.

58 Rein Ferwerda, “The Meaning of the Word  $\Omega$  in Plato’s *Cratylus*,” *Hermes* 113/3 (1985): 271–272.

59 See Zhmud, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism*, 353.

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## POVZETEK

Vež med dušo in telesom zastavlja v antični kulturi eno temeljnih vprašanj, na katerega so skušale odgovoriti različne filozofske šole, zlasti tiste, ki so zasnovale ideal t. i. filozofskega življenja. Učinki glasbe na duševni ustroj in značaj človeka ter njen vzgojni pomen so bili predmet raziskav vse od predsokratikov dalje, vendar se poleg teh pričevanj pojavljajo tudi namigi na uporabo glasbe v medicinski namene. Te prakse se omenjajo tudi v medicinskih spisih hipokratskega korpusa, ki takšne metode povezuje s staro, religiozno obarvano medicino in jih zavrača kot šarlatanske. Najbolj eksplicitna pričevanja so iz spisov novopitagorejskih filozofov 3. stol. po Kr. Ti pisci se sicer sklicujejo na viře, ki segajo vse do 4. stol. pr. Kr., vendar njihova rekonstrukcija t. i. pitagorejskega življenja in vloge glasbe v njem kaže jasne posledice večstoletnega razvoja, v katerem je prišlo do medsebojnega zlivanja pitagorejske, platonске in peripatetske tradicije. Članek odkriva neskladja v teh pričevanjih in skuša z analizo nekaterih besedil poiskati razloge zanje. Tu je na prvem mestu kompleksno pojmovanje človeka kot skupka duše in telesa, pri čemer je poudarek na *psyché*. Bogata zgodovina

tega koncepta pred nastopom platonizma razkriva idejno ozadje, ki je bilo naklonjeno holističnemu pojmovanju človeka in temu ustreznim zdravilskim metodam, med katerimi je imela glasba v povezavi z magičnim učinkom besede vodilno vlogo. Skopa pričevanja iz tega obdobja nam dovolijo le malo več kot ugičati, zato smo sledove takšnih praks prisiljeni izluščiti iz poznejših pričevanj, ki pa so že filozofsko »kontaminirana«. To je tudi drugi razlog za nedoslednost teh pričevanj, v katerih se doktrinalna načela, ki se močno opirajo na Platonove nauke, ne ujemajo vedno z opisom nekaterih praks, ki kažejo na starejše korenine. Med temi praksami je tudi lajšanje bolezenskih stanj z glasbo in s »pripevanjem« (*epaoidé*). Tovrstne metode so v poudarjenem nasprotju ne le s t. i. naravno medicino hipokratske šole, ampak tudi z drugimi oblikami zdravljenja, ki so jih poznale že najstarejše civilizacije in ki so ostale veljavne do danes (uporaba zdravilnih snovi in kirurgije). Čeprav teh praks ni mogoče pripisati neposredno Pitagori ali pitagorejcem, pa nekatera pričevanja kažejo, da so se širile v Grčiji prav v okviru pitagorejske šole. Raziskave o šamanizmu v stari Grčiji in drugod po Evropi razkrivajo, da so bile te prakse del skritega vedenja, v katerega je bila posvečena le izbrana peščica ljudi.