

Provenza, A. (2016). *La medicina delle Muse. La musica come cura nella Grecia antica*. Roma: Carocci editore (Biblioteca di Testi e Studi). 240 pp., ISBN: 9788843070381.

In this book Antonietta Provenza (henceforth AP) has a synthetic aim and deals with an important, complex subject, studied by international scholars for a long time now with different approaches. The title “The Medicine of the Muses. Music as a Cure in Ancient Greece” promises to touch on the medical side of music and the author undertakes this task in 240 pages. The book appears in the series *Biblioteca Testi e Studi*, which has an explicitly educational purpose. The chapters are written in Italian, the language into which are translated almost all of the quotations from the several original sources presented in the text: even so, the book requires an expertise in Classics.

After a section listing the lexicons, critical editions and iconographic images cited in the book and the abbreviations used (pp. 11-20), follows an Introduction (pp. 21-9), where AP explains her purpose, which can be summarised as follows: to show the notion of music therapy conceived in ancient Greece in its earlier days and to describe the contribution of the Pythagoreans (p. 24) in a picture “free as much as possible from Platonic and Aristotelian interpretative assumptions” (p. 25); thereby, she sheds light on the most ancient tradition about enchantment and *catharsis*, in particular through the testimonies of the Peripatetic philosopher Aristoxenus, who had an important Pythagorean background and, in AP’s judgment, is able to offer useful information for a coherent interpretation of Pythagorean music theory and some aspects of Pythagoras’ life, usually regarded only as anecdotes.

The structure of the work is tripartite, with each of the three chapters divided into sub-sections presenting several themes in a synthetic framework, leaving further information, critical details and references to bibliography and sources in the ample and detailed apparatus of notes at the end of each chapter. At the end of the book there is a lengthy bibliography (pp. 183-217), an index of the ancient authors and their works (pp. 219-35) and a useful index of names and important things (pp. 237-9).

The first chapter is devoted to the world of *μουσική* (pp. 31-64) and is characterized by a historical-literary approach, which shows, through different poetic sources from the Archaic age, the intrinsic link between music and cathartic enchantment (*epōidē*): its first section deals with the singer and the art of the Muses (I.1, pp. 31-4), the second with the occasions for musical performances (I.2, pp. 34-7) and the third with the pleasure of listening to music, with references to the Muses, the Sirens and their enchantment (I.3, pp. 37-44); notes follow at the end of the chapter (pp. 44-64).

The second chapter is on *catharsis* and musical enchantment, with a focus on the twofold music therapy in the Homeric poems and a detailed, in-depth look at the Homeric *epōidē* (pp. 65–118). It is articulated in eight sections: in the Introduction are presented the collective and the individual kinds of musical care in the Homeric poems (II.1, pp. 65f.); a second section is on the sources that deal with medicine and magic in ancient Greece with an excursus on Egyptian magical medicine delivered through song (II.2, pp. 66–70); a third on *catharsis* ‘between religion and magic’ with brief references to Pretus, Epimenides, Orpheus and orphism and a reconstruction of magic musical medicine undertaken mainly through tragic sources (II.3, pp. 70f.); a fourth on ‘logotherapy’ in Homer with an excursus on the intonation of the paeon for the resolution of epidemics (but other questions also come into play, such as Elena’s use of Egyptian *pharmaka* and a parenthesis on the relationship between medicine and magic, II.4, pp. 71–4); the fifth section is devoted to Book I of the *Odyssey* and gives a description of the plague and the offer of paeans to Apollo (II.5, pp. 75–9); the sixth section is on the episode in the 19th Book of the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus goes hunting on the Parnassus and is wounded by the boar: AP argues that it is here that we get the first occurrence of the term *epōidē* in Greek literature in reference to the cure of Odysseus’ bleeding, for which drugs and bandages are not sufficient (II.6, pp. 79–86); in a seventh section AP presents Empedocles, whose activity may be interpreted as between science and magic, using music therapy and logotherapy (II.7, pp. 86–9). In the last section she presents the dissent of Hippocratic medicine and the Platonic rationalization of *epōidē* (II.8, pp. 89–95). In the long, detailed notes at the end of this chapter (pp. 95–118) many issues are fleshed out, e.g. the etymology of ‘paian’ (n. 124), the semantic field of *catharsis* in the Homeric poems (n. 134), the presence of Homeric formulas already used as magic formulas by Empedocles (n. 148), the doctor-patient relationship assisted by rhetoric in Plato’s *Gorgias* (n. 174) and in the medical writings of Hippocrates and Galen (n. 215) and a long excursus on the power of enchantment in Sophocles’s plays (n. 247).

The third chapter is on *catharsis* and music therapy in ancient Pythagoreanism (pp. 119–74), a theme that AP treats in eight sections, the first of which is on *ēthos* and *mimēsis* by Plato (III.1, pp. 119–22); the second on the Pythagorean musical *catharsis* by Aristoxenus, recognized as the most authoritative and important ancient source on the Pythagoreans together with Aristotle (III.2, pp. 122–4); the third on the medical meanings of *catharsis* (III.3, pp. 124–7); the fourth on the use of ritual cathartic paeans by the Pythagoreans (III.4, pp. 127f.), with an appendix on the apotropaic musical ‘spring *catharsis*’: ancient rituals reconstructed on the basis of late sources, like Iamblichus and the paradoxographer Apollonius (III.4.1, pp. 129f.); the fifth section is on Pythagorean music

therapy as described by Porphyry and Iamblichus, the two Neoplatonic sources who often quote Aristoxenus (III.5, pp. 131f.); the sixth is on the late sources that present Pythagorean music therapy for the control of anger and violence with a description of the aulos' role (III.6, pp. 132-9); the seventh section treats the care of the soul and the care of the body (III.7, pp. 139-42) with an appendix on music therapy for the correction of *ēthos* in Plato's and Aristotle's theories compared with the late testimonies of the Imperial Age that quote Aristoxenus about the Pythagoreans (III.7.1, pp. 142-7); the last section is on Pythagoras as a superhuman and prodigious being (III.8, pp. 148f.). More information and details are to be found in the notes at pp. 149-74.

In the conclusion (pp. 175-8, with notes at pp. 178-81) AP develops some further topics: the Neoplatonic Iamblichus appropriates the representation of Pythagoreanism accomplished by Aristoxenus and states that their attention to musical *ēthos* preceded Platonism. She presents the medical Hippocratic approach in the *De Victu* noting how in this work musical concepts are used in the definition of the development of the embryo, in relationship with the perfect consonances elaborated in the Greek musical system. She considers also how the idea of harmony as a balanced mixture in Plato's *Phaedon* has analogies with the medical reflection on the *symphōnoi periodoi* and concludes that both were born from the same observation that a *harmonia* is a fundamental element which allows for balance between all things, with a useful function for the human community. Then she considers the Aristotelian and Theophrastean contribution to *catharsis* in terms on which I do not fully agree (more on this below). Then, she highlights that Aristoxenus offered a useful model for the medical speculation concerning the pulsations by Herophilus, then used by Galen. On this basis, she concludes that music therapy, including the treatment of sciatica, over time acquires a different sense, away from the magical one, having to do with external musical rhythms that interact with the internal rhythms of the pulsations shocked by evil but which can be restored to a state of harmony by music.

Referring to the healing of sciatic pain through the rhythms of the pulsations, AP refers to Theophrastus fr. 726A FHS&G (p. 178), but on this point I disagree. My research on Theophrastus' theory of musical *catharsis* leads me to believe that it cannot be associated with Herophilus' medical theory on pulsations, which AP claims to have been elaborated on the basis of Aristoxenus' Pythagorean musical notions (on this topic she quotes, properly, Pigeaud's critical opinion, see p. 180, note 17). Theophrastus used the Aristotelian criterion of the "more and the less" as a guiding principle, which he applied to the physiological enquiries into humors and warmth, by which he tries to explain musical *catharsis*. In the Theophrastean theory, the physiological motions are

connected with the ones of the soul and both are explained in terms of a dynamic relationship between different degrees of “tension” and “relaxation”. Therefore, ethical issues are related to the different degrees of “tension” or “relaxation” of the motions of the soul and are linked to the emotions in so far as this dynamic produces either vices or virtues. His locution ἀπόλυσις τῶν κακῶν (‘release from evils’, see FHS&G 716.130f.) substituted the term *catharsis* in the ethical contexts in which Theophrastus elaborated his original take on the theme. On this interpretation, I refer to my article *Theophrastus on Catharsis and the Need for Release from the Evils Due to Emotions*, published in *Skenē* (2.1, 2016, pp. 69–103), an issue entirely devoted to Ancient and Modern Catharsis that AP does not use, surely because it was not available to her in time.

AP treats the Apollonian component of music therapy, but she only mentions, without developing it, the *catharsis* in the Coribantic and Dionysian experiences (on the Coribantics, nn. 10f.; 126 at pp. 23, 28f.; on the Dionysian rites and Phrygian melodies nn. 16f. at p. 151; on Dionysus, Apollo and Nietzsche’s Apollonian and Dionysian theory n. 116 at pp. 162f.). This is surely a justifiable choice, given the extent of the other themes treated in this book; however, I wonder if this exclusion does not limit the understanding of Aristotelian tragic *catharsis*, which, in my opinion, should be connected with the religious and musical one (see Arist. *Poe.* 1449b22–8, 1455b15 and *Pol.* 1341a21–4). Therefore, I do not agree with the statement that the ancient notion of *catharsis* is naturalized by Aristotle in the field of ‘aesthetics’ (‘l’antica nozione di catarsi [...] è naturalizzata in Aristotele in ambito estetico’, p. 177, and cf. 24): this is simplistic, not only because ‘aesthetics’ in the modern sense was not conceived by Aristotle, but because *catharsis* should be rather considered as a complex, polyvalent notion inside his organic and holistic philosophical system, as is certainly true for Theophrastus.

The book is very rich in good bibliographical references and therefore I need make only very few remarks about the bibliography. Strangely, AP excludes some critical editions or collections in the list of *Lexicons*, *Critical editions*, *Bibliographic repertoires*, *Abbreviations* at pp. 11–20, but we find them listed in the bibliography at pp. 183–217 (for instance Bernabé’s *Poetae Epici Graeci. Testimonia et Fragmenta* or Cramer’s *Anecdota Graeca*; Martano—Matelli—Mirhady’s edition of Praxiphanes’s and Chamaeleon’s Texts by RUSH; von Jan’s *Musici Scriptores Graeci*, etc.). In the same list (p. 13) she quotes the collection of Theophrastus’ texts in two volumes edited by Brill in 1990 as ‘Fortenbaugh’ and not after the conventional sigla FHS&G, which refers to the abbreviations of the four editors’ names. She never quotes the works of Giovanni Comotti, who made several contributions on the topics touched upon. A year after the release of this book, Camille Semenzato published the volume *A l’écoute des*

Muses en Grèce archaïque. La question de l'inspiration dans la poésie grecque à l'aube de notre civilisation (Berlin, De Gruyter 2017), which deals in detail with the themes and the analysis of the sources that AP has discussed in the first and second chapters.

In conclusion, AP has used a rigorous heuristic method to compile an immense amount of information outlining a historical-literary framework that goes from the practical experiences of the earliest ages, which merged into poetic texts and the Homeric poems in particular, to the later philosophical theory of music as therapy for the healing of physical ills as well as an aid to the 'balance of emotions' and a tool for controlling *ēthos*. About Pythagoreanism, she presents a critical analysis of the contribution to this framework made primarily by philosophers of the 4th century BC and then by the Neoplatonists of the Imperial Roman Age. She usefully brings out the connections between Pythagorean musical doctrines and the progress of ancient medical investigations.

Although this book is not an easy read thanks to the dense juxtaposition of detailed, learned information, those interested in a critical literary approach to the material will be satisfied by AP's treatment and can learn a great deal from it, discovering little-known notions. An anthropological approach to ancient Pythagoreanism and music therapy is only hinted at in some of the notes, but this was not one of the stated aims of the book.

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