CHAPTER 5

Authority and Doctrine in the Pseudo-Pythagorean Writings

Bruno Centrone

Within the Pythagorean tradition the supreme source of authority is, needless to say, Pythagoras himself.* The Pythagoreans are the only pre-Socratics named after the founder of their brotherhood. However, if one takes into account the amount of extant Pythagorean literature, which is for the most part apocryphal – as is well known, the amount of apocryphal Pythagorean literature by far exceeds the few fragments which can be considered authentic and safely attributed to ancient Pythagoreans – the predominant name is that of Archytas, who was undoubtedly a prominent figure, although not one as authoritative as Pythagoras. Moreover, a great number of pseudo-Pythagorean writings go under the name of largely unimportant, or otherwise unknown, authors. Nonetheless, this apocryphal literature considerably contributed to lending the necessary authority to a very influential tradition that extended over the centuries. In this contribution I will endeavour, among other things, to explain (a) how Archytas came to be regarded as a major source of authority; (b) why the authors of Pythagorean forgeries made recourse to names which apparently were anything but authoritative; (c) more broadly, what kind of criteria may have guided the authors in building the pseudo-Pythagorean corpus; (d) what relationship exists between these writings and the Platonist tradition.

5.1 The Authoritativeness of Pythagoras and of the Writings Attributed to Him

The creation of authority usually requires some written reference texts, but it is certain that no authentic writings by Pythagoras have been handed down to posterity. Yet the question of whether Pythagoras had left any

* I am grateful to Carl Huffman and Federico Petrucci for their previous reading of this contribution and their helpful comments.

writings behind was much debated in Antiquity (and still is nowadays). Another question is whether the ancient authors critical of Pythagoras' alleged writings believed that (1) Pythagoras had written nothing (or at most a few letters), or at any rate shared the opinion that (2) all of the works circulating under his name were apocryphal. The latter belief could imply that there once existed some writings by Pythagoras, but that these were not divulged by him or were lost for contingent reasons. It is not clear to what period we can trace back the idea that Pythagoras intentionally left no writings; according to Christoph Riedweg,[1] this belief only surfaced for the first time in the first century BC, with the revival of Pythagoreanism. Indeed, the very production of apocryphal writings presupposes that their addressees did not rule out Pythagoras' activity as a writer. But an inclination to favour thesis (1) could easily originate from thesis (2) with a minimal shift, and the two theses are not always easily distinguishable (as is clear, for instance, from Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* 57): a statement such as 'there was no writing of Pythagoras himself' (οὔτε γὰρ αὐτοῦ Πυθαγόρου σύγγραμμα ἦν) is ambiguous in itself and could imply either belief.[2]

Contrary to Riedweg's contention, I believe that a thesis which is very close to the first (even though it assigns a few letters to Pythagoras) can safely be attributed to Sosicrates, as is suggested by a comparison between two passages from Diogenes Laertius' *Lives.* In 1.16, tackling the topic of philosophers who wrote nothing, Diogenes claims that according to some authors Pythagoras and Aristo of Chios did not leave any writings behind, except a few letters;[3] in 7.163 the champions of this thesis are identified as Panaetius and Sosicrates as far as Aristo is concerned,[4] and this would take us to roughly the second half of the second century BC – or, at any rate, to a period before the Pythagorean revival. But in all likelihood this tradition goes back to an even earlier period.[5]

[1] See Riedweg 1997.

[2] More unambiguous are the *anonymi* in DL 8.6 (see n. 8 below) and in particular Plutarch, *Num.* 22.3 (φασὶ μηδὲ τοὺς Πυθαγορικοὺς εἰς γραφὴν κατατίθεσθαι τὰ συντάγματα). Posidonius' statement in Galen, *PHP* 5.6.43.1–4, according to which 'no writing of Pythagoras has been safely transmitted to us' (αὐτοῦ μὲν τοῦ Πυθαγόρου συγγράμματος οὐδενὸς εἰς ἡμᾶς διασωζομένου) instead seems to endorse the opposite view, that originally there existed some writings by Pythagoras.

[3] 'While others wrote nothing at all . . . some add Pythagoras and Aristo of Chios, except that they wrote a few letters' (οἱ δ' ὅλως οὐ συνέγραψαν, ὥσπερ . . . κατά τινας Πυθαγόρας, Ἀρίστων ὁ Χῖος, πλὴν ἐπιστολῶν ὀλίγων).

[4] 'Panaetius and Sosicrates consider his [*sc.* Aristo's] letters to be alone genuine; all the other works named they attribute to Aristo the Peripatetic' (Παναίτιος δὲ καὶ Σωσικράτης μόνας αὐτοῦ τὰς ἐπιστολάς φασι, τὰ δ' ἄλλα τοῦ περιπατητικοῦ Ἀρίστωνος).

[5] One must concede that it is not perfectly clear whether Sosicrates thought that Pythagoras *intentionally* left no writings. Riedweg's contention is that the attribution to Pythagoras of a principled position against writing appeared only later. But ὅλως οὐ συνέγραψαν rather suggests

Be that as it may, until the third century BC no alleged writings by Pythagoras were available to ancient authors – regardless of whether they believed that Pythagoras had written anything. A testimony in Porphyry (*VPyth.* 19), which probably goes back to Dicaearchus,[6] shows that the latter could not rely on authoritative written sources: what Pythagoras told his audiences cannot be determined with certainty, for he enjoined silence upon his hearers. In fact, the firm belief that Pythagoras left no writings, or that alleged writings of his were not divulged, could easily be derived from the tradition of the Pythagorean practice of secrecy, which was surely more ancient.[7] For those who maintained that Pythagoras had left some writings, historical facts such as anti-Pythagorean attacks and the burning down of Pythagorean houses could also buttress the belief that some written material had been destroyed and lost. At the same time, the very idea of Pythagorean secrecy later made the work of forgers easier, as it was used to explain why allegedly authentic material had suddenly cropped up again after centuries.

The production of Pythagorean forgeries begins in the Hellenistic age; only from the third century BC onwards is the circulation of writings bearing the name of Pythagoras well attested. The remnants of these forgeries are too scanty to allow us in all cases to clearly decipher the aims and purposes of their authors; it is certain, however, that they endeavoured to fill an embarrassing gap, given the unquestionable prestige enjoyed at that time by the figure of Pythagoras. The work of the forgers was, at least in some cases, successful. In his life of Pythagoras, Diogenes Laertius (or his source, which in this case is probably Neanthes of Cyzicus) claims that some people absurdly insisted that Pythagoras had left no writings.[8] Diogenes then lists three books by Pythagoras, which he considers genuine, and mentions the more generous position of Sotion-Heraclides Lembus, who held other works, too, to be authentic.

Be that as it may, none of the alleged writings of Pythagoras could easily withstand athetesis. Criticism of allegedly genuine Pythagorean material is

an intentional avoidance of the practice. The fact that Sosicrates attributes some letters to Pythagoras is compatible with the view that Pythagoras left no writings. Evidently, what is meant here is treatises or poems, for otherwise the ἔνιοι would be contradicting themselves.

[6] See Burkert 1972: 122 and n. 7. The attribution of section 19 to Dicaearchus has been rejected by Rathmann and Wehrli.

[7] See for instance Aristotle fr. 192 = Iambl. *VP* 31; Aristox. fr. 43 Wehrli = DL 8.15.

[8] DL 8.6: 'Some people absurdly claim that Pythagoras left no writing at all' (Ἔνιοι μὲν οὖν Πυθαγόραν μηδὲ ἓν καταλιπεῖν σύγγραμμά φασιν παίζοντες); but διαπεσόντες is another possible reading. For a more detailed analysis of this passage, see Centrone 1992, 4188–90.

attested before the first century BC,[9] and, as we have just seen in relation to Diogenes Laertius, it did not always rely on the conviction that Pythagoras had left no writings at all.

So there were different attitudes towards the alleged writings of Pythagoras. Some authors firmly maintained that he had not written anything at all, or that none of his works had survived, while others accepted only a few writings as genuine; but less critical and more generous positions are attested as well. The former belief, along with a widespread scepticism towards the alleged writings of Pythagoras, which fuelled a more generally critical attitude toward the authenticity of Pythagorean material, probably discouraged the production of apocryphal texts in Pythagoras' name and favoured the composition of writings bearing the names of other Pythagoreans. But this is only part of the story.

5.2 The Pseudo-Pythagorean Corpus and the Creation of Authority

If we now take the whole pseudo-Pythagorean corpus into account, what we find is some very heterogeneous material, which is hard to trace back to a common origin and date.[10] A basic distinction within this corpus can be drawn between writings attributed to Pythagoras himself or members of his family, and writings that bear the names of other, more or less renowned, Pythagoreans (this was the criterion used by H. Thesleff for his edition of the pseudo-Pythagorean texts). The latter group is made up of philosophical treatises in the Doric dialect that form a rather homogeneous corpus within the apocrypha. Some of them are preserved in their entirety, while others are only fragmentary – though in some cases the fragments are rather extensive. Concerning their doctrinal content, it

[9] Neanthes, for instance, questioned the authenticity of Telauges' letter (DL 8.55 = Neanthes, *FGrHist* 84 F 26: 'But which of the Pythagoreans it was who had Empedocles as a pupil he did not say. For the letter commonly attributed to Telauges and the statement that Empedocles was pupil of both Hippasus and Brontinus he held to be unworthy of credence'; τίνος μέντοι γ' αὐτῶν ἤκουσεν ὁ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς οὐκ εἶπε· τὴν γὰρ περιφερομένην πρὸς Τηλαυγοῦς ἐπιστολὴν, ὅτι μετέσχεν Ἱππάσου καὶ Βροντίνου, μὴ εἶναι ἀξιόπιστον.)

[10] On pseudo-Pythagorean literature in general see Thesleff 1961 and 1965; Burkert 1961 and 1971; Moraux 1984; Centrone 2000b and 2014; Zhmud 2019. The proposed chronologies fluctuate wildly between the fourth century BC and the second century AD, but the time limits for the composition of the Doric treatises considered here have mostly been narrowed down to between the first century BC and the first century AD: see Baltes 1972 on ps. Timaeus; Szlezàk 1972 on Ps.-Archytas' *Categories*; Moraux 1984: 606–7; Centrone 1990 on the ethical treatises; Ulacco 2017. As for the geographical provenance of the writings, the best candidates are Rome, southern Italy and Alexandria.

mainly consists in a combination of Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines, and the interaction between these two components is difficult to explain.

For specific reasons, I will focus only on these writings: the material is much richer, and allows for more detailed conclusions. But, above all, the Doric treatises are decidedly philosophical in content, and this offers an appropriate context within which it is possible to deal with the question of philosophical authority. The two types of writings mentioned above, which reflect different perspectives and ways of recreating authority, are to be traced back to different branches of the tradition. One branch of the apocryphal tradition attempted to fill the gap by producing forgeries bearing the name of Pythagoras himself. As is shown by the aforementioned passage from Diogenes Laertius, other authors instead shared the belief that Pythagoras had left no writings at all or, at any rate, acknowledged the difficulty of producing reliable forgeries in his name. It became necessary, therefore, to build authority in a different way. And it is here that the name of Archytas comes to the fore. None of the Doric treatises bears Pythagoras' name; some of them are attributed to insignificant or otherwise unknown authors,[11] but Archytas' name is largely predominant, so much so that H. Thesleff even spoke of a *corpus archyteum*.[12] Surely some of these writings have been lost, and the extant ones are for the most part fragmentary, but neither the absence of Pythagoras' name, nor Archytas' predominance can be fortuitous.

In such a scenario some major questions arise: (1) Why is Pythagoras' name systematically avoided? (2) How is Archytas' predominance to be explained? (3) Given that names such as Philolaus or Archytas were rather influential on their own, what kind of authority could have been exercised by such minor or sometimes possibly unknown figures, such as Theages or Callicratidas? How authoritative could a text circulating under the name of one Cleinias or Metopus be? Why did someone choose to attribute these works to such obscure figures? And why did the forgers employ a range of

[11] A particular case is represented by Ps.-Timaeus Locrus' *De natura mundi et animae*, whose authoritativeness was of course guaranteed by its alleged author being the main character of Plato's dialogue and hence the original source of the *Timaeus*. The composition of this forgery fitted very well with the report according to which Plato paid a lot of money for a little Pythagorean book, on the basis of which he composed the *Timaeus* (Timon, fr. 54 = Philolaus A8 DK): see Baltes 1972: 3. Later authors such as Proclus came to consider the Timaeus Locrus authentic, regarding it as the model followed by Plato: see the relevant testimonies in Marg 1972. On the Timaeus Locrus see further Opsomer & Ulacco 2014.

[12] One particular case is represented by Philolaus. As is widely known, many of the fragments attributed to him are spurious, and therefore various apocrypha must have been circulating under his name. In the current corpus of Doric *Pseudopythagorica*, however, the material bearing his name is scant compared to that attributed to Archytas.

different names? (4) Why is a system combining Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines attributed to ancient Pythagoreans?

Concerning question (3), Thesleff put forward the hypothesis that we are faced here with dissenting voices critical of theses maintained in other writings by the alleged 'Archytas'. According to him, these dissenting voices 'seem to have behaved very modestly in choosing names which nobody would find more authoritative than that of Archytas'.[13] However, Thesleff's observation actually reveals the implausibility of his thesis: otherwise unknown names may suggest authenticity, but hardly lend authoritativeness. Moreover, some writings bearing the name of Archytas apparently hold views that are at variance with other treatises by 'Archytas', although for the most part treatises bearing the names of the unknown authors, instead of conflicting with doctrines of 'Archytas', by and large agree with them. The hypothesis, then, of dissenters using alternative names does not hold. I believe, instead, that some definite convictions guided the authors' choice, and this explains the absence of Pythagoras' name as well.

Regarding question (1) (Why is Pythagoras' name systematically avoided?), it is probable that the authors shared the view that Pythagoras had left no writings, or at least were sceptical about the possibility that the alleged writings of Pythagoras could easily be accepted as authentic. The legend of Pythagorean secrecy was widespread, along with the conviction that at least in the first stage of the history of this school (until Philolaus) the Pythagoreans had not divulged its doctrines;[14] for this reason alone, writings bearing the name of Pythagoras were automatically open to the suspicion of being spurious. However, the conscious avoidance of Pythagoras' name could reveal different attitudes, implying either that (a) the doctrines in question were in fact to be traced back to Pythagoras himself, who nonetheless had avoided writing them down, or that (b) the doctrines professed by the historical Pythagoras were to be identified with those belonging to the acousmatic tradition – a tradition of which, as a matter of fact, there is no trace in the Doric *Pseudopythagorica*. It is difficult to reach any certainty on this point, but I am inclined to favour the second option, for reasons I will soon explain.

With reference to question (3), the use of different names possibly serves the purpose of fostering in the readers the belief that there existed a single Pythagorean philosophy, with slight variations, that was shared by all the members of the school. I have argued elsewhere that, despite some

[13] Thesleff 1961: 76. [14] See above and n. 3.

apparent inconsistencies between some of the treatises, a single coherent philosophical system is at work in the Doric *Pseudopythagorica*, even in the political writings, where discrepancies seem more evident (I will soon get back to this point).[15] This is confirmed by the very centrality of the notion of *systēma* in the treatises (the only possible parallel for this, to my knowledge, is what survives of Chrysippus' philosophy). By comparing different *Pseudopythagorica*, it is possible to reconstruct the general notion of *systēma***.** A *systēma* is a complex structure made up of many different parts brought together under a common golden rule. So it is defined by Callicratidas:

> a system is composed by opposites and dissimilar elements, is ordered towards something that is one and the best thing, and is oriented to the common advantage.[16]

The definition particularly stresses the fact that in a *systēma* the better ought to direct and the worse ought to be governed and obey, while intermediate entities must both govern and be governed.[17] The authors seek to discover this same structure at work in all realities across the universe, applying this schema to the political community and the family, as well as to individual life. To sum up, the use of many different voices repeating the same basic doctrine in slightly different forms serves the purpose of proving the inner consistency and unity of the school – an ideal well attested for Pythagoreanism.

As for the political writings, I have argued elsewhere that the kingship treatises, in which monarchy is extolled, are not inconsistent, upon closer scrutiny, with the ideal of a mixed constitution championed by Ps.-Archytas in *On Law*, but only mirror different perspectives within the same single fundamental orientation.[18] Such a tension is already present in Plato (see *Plt.* 301a–e and 302e; *Leg.* 875c–d): kingship is the best form of government if, by divine decree, the state is ruled by a wise king who is the living embodiment of the law; but given the difficulty of finding such a king, it is preferable for the laws to have full authority; hence the predilection for a mixed form of government, combining monarchy and democracy, which still represents only a second-best. Here I only wish to

[15] Centrone 2000b and 2014.

[16] Cf. Callicratidas, *De dom. felic.* 103.20–3: (σύσταμα δὲ πᾶν ἔκ τινων ἐναντίων καὶ ἀνομοίων σύγκειται, καὶ ποτὶ ἕν τι τὸ ἄριστον συντέτακται, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ κοινὸν συμφέρον ἐπαμφέρεται).

[17] This is, to my knowledge, the only attempt ever made in antiquity to *define* the very notion of *systēma.*

[18] See Centrone 2000c: 573–5 and 2014: 335–6.

underline that perhaps it is no chance that a treatise propounding a mixed constitution goes under the name of Archytas, who was the representative of a democratically oriented version of political Pythagoreanism in Tarentum. If we turn to consider the attribution of the treatises on kingship, it is rather remarkable that the names of Diotogenes and Sthenidas are not otherwise attested (one Sthenonidas of Locri is listed in Iamblichus' catalogue, *VP* 267). One Ecphantus of Croton appears in Iamblichus' catalogue, but is otherwise unknown (Ecphantus of Syracuse in Diels-Kranz, the upholder of a geocentric theory, was perhaps only a character in a dialogue by Heraclides Ponticus).[19] The monarchical ideal could hardly have been ascribed to Archytas. Thus, selecting names that pose no problems in this respect, while projecting the reader into an indefinite past, was probably an intentional strategy.

It should be remarked that our authors did not limit themselves to attaching Pythagorean names to their forgeries, but intentionally gave these writings a Pythagorean veneer in order to convey an impression of authenticity, most notably by using an (artificial) Doric dialect. Some minor strategies should also be mentioned, such as the use of examples with suitably Pythagorean contexts (e.g. 'in Tarentum' as an example of the 'where' category, in Ps.-Archytas' treatise *On the Whole System* 22.29 Thesleff). It is striking, then, that many of the names employed, such as Aristombrotos, Diotogenes, or those of alleged Pythagorean women, such as Phyntis and Pempelus, are not otherwise attested, or appear only later, possibly thanks to these very writings (as in the case of Myia in Lucian).[20] As has been pointed out,[21] in the apocryphal literature the very rarity of a name sometimes suggests authenticity.

5.3 Archytas' Authoritativeness and Iamblichus' Account (*VP* 250–67)

Turning to question (2) (How is Archytas' predominance to be explained?), it must be recalled that the first centuries BC and AD were the period of Archytas' greatest fame in antiquity, and he soon became an unquestioned authority.[22] In some sporadic cases this might also be a *consequence* of the vast number of writings circulating under his name, but it is far more likely that treatises came to be forged in Archytas' name owing to his fame, which was based on the tradition of his connection to

[19] Burkert 1972: 341 n. 17. [20] See Centrone 2005: 573–4. [21] Syme 1972.
[22] See Huffman 2005: 21–5 and 324–31.

Plato. As a matter of fact, the references to Archytas in texts from the first centuries BC and AD (Cicero above all) do not reflect doctrines found in the pseudo-epigraphical treatises. Therefore, the main reason for Archytas' prominence was Plato's traditional proximity to him, which hardly needs to be further investigated here – a few hints will suffice. According to a well-known tradition, during his journey to Sicily Plato became acquainted with Archytas, who was his main source of Pythagorean doctrines.[23] Diogenes Laertius presents the correspondence between Plato and Archytas in his *Life of Archytas* (DL 8.79–80). In the first of these letters the Pythagorean claims:

> We attended to the matter of the memoirs and went up to Lucania where we found the true progeny of Ocellus. We did get the works *On Law*, *On Kingship*, *Of Piety*, and *On the Origin of the Universe*, all of which we have sent on to you. (DL 8.80, trans. Hicks 1925)

All of the works mentioned here can safely be identified with the Pythagorean *Pseudepigrapha* of our corpus. The letter was thus forged with the main aim of guaranteeing the authenticity of these writings and explaining their transmission, while also providing a Pythagorean pedigree for Plato.[24] Thus, in the anonymous biography from Photius' library (249.438b16–19) Plato is presented as a disciple of Archytas (the elder!) and as the ninth scholarch, followed by Aristotle, in a Pythagorean line of succession that starts with Pythagoras. Archytas became the most direct link between Pythagoreanism and Plato: under his name writings were composed that presented those Platonic doctrines which Plato could not have derived from Socrates' teachings.[25]

In the process of selecting (or making up) the names of the authors of apocrypha, an important role must have been played by the tradition stretching back to Aristoxenus, whose interest in the figure of Archytas is well known.[26] It is to be remarked that most of the names occur in Iamblichus' catalogue of Pythagoreans, whose source the vast majority of scholars have identified as Aristoxenus.[27] But we can go one step further,

[23] See for instance Cic. *Rep.* 1.10.16; *Fin.* 5.29.87; Apul. *De dog. Plat.* 1.3; Photius 249.438b.

[24] A different explanation is proposed by Thesleff 1962: according to Thesleff the aim of the letter is to extol, in opposition to the Romans' supremacy, the origins of the Lucanians, by making Plato himself dependent on the Lucanian Ocellus.

[25] Zhmud 2019.

[26] Aristoxenus wrote a *Life of Archytas* (fr. 47–50 Wehrli) which had a considerable influence on the later tradition; see Huffman 2005: 4–5.

[27] Iambl., *VP* 267: Archytas, Brontinus, Bryson, Butherus, Charondas, Cleinias, Eccelus, Ecphantus, Euryphamus, Eurytus, Criton, Metopus, Ocellus, Onatas, Philolaus, Zaleucus, Dios (cf. Endios and Odios), Sthenidas (cf. Sthenonidas), Theages. Cf. *VP* 257 and 261.

by taking into account the report of the end of the Pythagorean school found in Iamblichus (*VP* 250–1), which goes back to Aristoxenus: after the burning down of Milon's house, the Pythagoreans departed from Italy, except for Archytas.[28] The most celebrated of them were Phanto, Echecrates, Polymnastus, Diocles, and Xenophilus. At first they dwelt together in Rhegium and 'preserved the Pythagorean *mathēmata*' (ἐφύλαξαν . . . τὰ μαθήματα), but then the sect completely disintegrated. Here I only wish to remark that perhaps it is not by chance that none of these ancient Pythagoreans appear among the authors of *Pseudopythagorica*; if one is to trust reports of this kind, Archytas remained the only intermediary for the transmission of Pythagorean doctrines.

But another section of Iamblichus' work is perhaps even more worthy of consideration. Chapters 265–6 of *The Pythagorean Life* come after a section (254–64) based on Apollonius, whose work Iamblichus draws upon in order to provide an alternative version of the anti-Pythagorean attacks. At 267 Iamblichus provides his renowned list of Pythagoreans, whose source has long been recognized to be Aristoxenus. The source of chapters 265–6, instead, is difficult to ascertain. In this section a brief survey is given of the history of the school, focusing on the succession of Pythagorean scholarchs/*diadochoi*. According to Iamblichus' report, everyone unanimously acknowledged that Pythagoras' successor was Aristaeus, son of Damophon, who had married Theano. The next scholarchs were Mnemarchus, Boulagoras, and Gartydas. After some time the direction of the school was taken up by Aresas Lucanus. To him came Diodorus of Aspendus, who was accepted into the school because of its small number of affiliates. On his return to Greece, Diodorus divulged the Pythagorean sayings. Distinguished members of the school included Cleinias and Philolaus at Heraclea, Thearides and Eurytus at Metapontum, and Archytas in Tarentum.

[28] 'Except Archytas of Tarentum, the rest of the Pythagoreans departed from Italy, and dwelt together in Rhegium. But in course of time, as the administration of public affairs went from bad to worse? *** the most celebrated were Phanto, Echecrates, Polymnastus, and Diocles, who were Phliasians, and Xenophilus Chalcidensis of Thrace. These Pythagoreans nevertheless preserved their pristine manners and disciplines; yet soon the sect began to fail, till they nobly perished,' trans. Guthrie (οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ τῶν Πυθαγορείων ἀπέστησαν τῆς Ἰταλίας πλὴν Ἀρχύτου τοῦ Ταραντίνου· ἀθροισθέντες δὲ εἰς τὸ Ῥήγιον ἐκεῖ διέτριβον μετ' ἀλλήλων. προϊόντος δὲ τοῦ χρόνου καὶ τῶν πολιτευμάτων ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον προβαινόντων *** ἦσαν δὲ οἱ σπουδαιότατοι Φάντων τε καὶ Ἐχεκράτης καὶ Πολύμναστος καὶ Διοκλῆς Φλιάσιοι, Ξενόφιλος δὲ Χαλκιδεὺς τῶν ἀπὸ Θρᾴκης Χαλκιδέων. ἐφύλαξαν μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἤθη καὶ τὰ μαθήματα, καίτοι ἐκλειπούσης τῆς αἱρέσεως, ἕως εὐγενῶς ἠφανίσθησαν.)

According to Rohde,[29] this section too went back to Apollonius, who had invented the whole account. This view has recently been taken up by some scholars,[30] whereas others have linked this section with Timaeus, who in his *Histories* (566F16 = T9) had dealt with the figure of Diodorus. In this respect, it should be noted, first of all, that the end of the section going back to Apollonius (and hence, perhaps, to a different source) is clearly marked in Iamblichus' text (264.16–18): '*and thus much* concerning the attack which was made on the Pythagoreans' (περὶ μὲν οὖν τῆς κατὰ τῶν Πυθαγορείων γενομένης ἐπιθέσεως τοσαῦτα εἰρήσθω). The list of Pythagorean scholarchs, then, must derive from a doxography concerned with the genre of successions (*Diadochai*) – which does not seem to have been one of Apollonius' main interests. Sosicrates, for instance, in the third book of his *Succession of Philosophers*, had dealt with Diodorus as the champion of an innovative way of life, differing from that of earlier Pythagoreans.[31] It seems improbable, then, that the list goes back to Apollonius. However, whether this list of Pythagorean scholarchs – none of whom is mentioned in Aristoxenus' catalogue – is wholly fanciful and a late (Hellenistic) invention, as was maintained e.g. by Corssen,[32] is a question that is best left open. Regardless of whether the whole report is historically reliable, I would suggest that it is precisely a tradition of this sort that might have underpinned the building of the apocryphal corpus and guided authors in their choice of Pythagorean pseudonyms.

It is remarkable, in this respect, that almost all the names of the Pythagoreans mentioned in Iamblichus' passage (Aristaeus, Aresas – these two are not mentioned in other ancient sources – Cleinias, Philolaus, Eurytus, and obviously Archytas) appear as authors of apocrypha. The only exception, represented by Diodorus, is easily explained: Diodorus, who was accepted in the school *faute des mieux*, is seen as the popularizer of the Pythagorean *phōnai*, which were oral precepts and instructions belonging to the genre of *akousmata*. According to a standard view, this tradition was rejected by Aristoxenus, or (as recently argued by Carl Huffman)[33] not

[29] Rohde 1872: 58–9. [30] Zhmud 2012: 132 n. 26.

[31] Sosicrates, fr. 20 (= Athenaeus 163F–164A): 'And Sosicrates, in the third book of the *Succession of Philosophers*, relates that Diodorus used to wear a long beard, and a worn-out cloak, and to keep his hair long, indulging in these fashions out of a vain ostentation. For the Pythagoreans before him wore very handsome clothes, and used baths, and perfumes, and hair of the ordinary length' (Σωσικράτης δ' ἐν τρίτῳ Φιλοσόφων διαδοχῆς βαθεῖ πώγωνι χρήσασθαι τὸν Διόδωρον ἱστορεῖ, καὶ τρίβωνα ἀναλαβεῖν, κόμην τε φορῆσαι, κατά τινα τῦφον τὴν ἐπιτήδευσιν ταύτην προσαγαγόντα, τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ Πυθαγορικῶν λαμπρᾷ τε ἐσθῆτι ἀμφιεννυμένων, καὶ λουτροῖς καὶ ἀλείμμασι, κουρᾷ τε τῇ συνήθει χρωμένων).

[32] Corssen 1912: 348–9. [33] Huffman 2014a: 285–95.

rejected at all by him, but traced back to Pythagoras himself, while at the same time being distinguished from the mathematical strain of Pythagoreanism. It is certain, in any case, that Aristoxenus rejected radical ascetics such as Diodorus. It is hardly fortuitous, then, that a name such as Diodorus' is absent from the pseudo-Pythagorean corpus: Diodorus, the representative of a non-scientific branch of Pythagoreanism, could not be credited with writings which aspired to philosophical validity. The same applies to the subsequent information concerning Epicharmus, who is said to have been not a fully-fledged member of the association, but only a foreign listener. Because of Hiero's tyranny, he refrained from philosophizing in public, but he wrote down the Pythagorean doctrines in metre and disclosed Pythagoras' occult dogmas in his comedies.[34] Accordingly, none of the Doric *Pseudopythagorica* considered here bear the name of Epicharmus. Iamblichus' report on the succession of Pythagorean scholarchs fits very well with the two main strands of the Pythagorean tradition: philosophical Pythagoreanism extends until Archytas, while Diodorus is the divulger of the *akousmata*. Accordingly, philosophical treatises were composed by forgers using the names of the main exponents of the first current, while the champions of the acousmatic tradition (or 'degenerate' Pythagoreans such as Diodorus) do not find any place in the circle of philosophical writers.

We may state, then, that the authors of the apocrypha, when endeavouring to lend authority to their writings, rely on a tradition stretching back to authors like Aristoxenus, or to other Hellenistic writers of *diadochai*, whose reflections are confusedly mirrored in Iamblichus. The prominent role of Archytas and the proliferation of pseudo-Pythagorean names have their roots here. For many concurring reasons Pythagoras' name was unsuitable for lending authority to strictly philosophical doctrines: the image of him as a wonder man or miracle-worker was well established, and his name was associated with the *akousmata*, which were perceived by many as a foreign body and a stumbling block, a superstition incompatible with philosophical doctrines. The belief that he had left no

[34] Iambl. *VP* 266.11–16: 'Epicharmus was also said to have been one of the foreign hearers, but he was not one of the school. However, having arrived at Syracuse, he refrained from public philosophizing in consideration of the tyranny of Hiero. But he wrote the Pythagorean views in metre, and published the occult Pythagorean dogmas in comedies' (τῶν δ' ἔξωθεν ἀκροατῶν γενέσθαι καὶ Ἐπίχαρμον, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ συστήματος τῶν ἀνδρῶν· ἀφικόμενον δὲ εἰς Συρακο ύσας διὰ τὴν Ἱέρωνος τυραννίδα τοῦ μὲν φανερῶς φιλοσοφεῖν ἀποσχέσθαι, εἰς μέτρον δ' ἐντεῖναι τὰς διανοίας τῶν ἀνδρῶν, μετὰ παιδιᾶς κρύφα ἐκφέροντα τὰ Πυθαγόρου δόγματα).

writings was probably already widespread in the Hellenistic age, and the tenet of Pythagorean secrecy also contributed toward this outcome.

Nonetheless, other authors firmly believed that the fundamental doctrines of philosophical Pythagoreanism could be traced back to Pythagoras himself, and this is an ancient tradition too, which endured for a long period of time. For a number of reasons, Numenius, for instance, regarded Pythagoras as the primary source of philosophical wisdom.[35] Significantly, those scholars who have more recently chosen to present Pythagoras as a philosopher have credited him with a doctrine whose outline is bound to remain very vague – a philosophy quite different from the dominant picture of Pythagorean philosophy in antiquity.[36]

5.4 The *Pseudopythagorica* in the Platonist Tradition

We now come to our last question, (4): why is a system combining Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines attributed to ancient Pythagoreans? What purpose does the attribution of this system to ancient Pythagoreans serve? How is the aforementioned blending of Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines to be explained? First, it is difficult to ascertain whether our authors were relying on first-hand knowledge of Plato's and Aristotle's writings; Platonic doctrines in the *Pseudopythagorica* are mostly mediated by the Academic tradition, which profoundly shapes the basic orientation of the treatises towards systematization and classification. The theory of principles plays a fundamental role in all spheres of knowledge, but its very formulation contains innovative elements which make the pseudo-Pythagorean system more than simply a repetition of early Academic doctrines.

The presence of Aristotelian doctrines, particularly in logic and ethics, is substantial in the treatises. Nonetheless, as I have argued elsewhere, a constant effort is made to integrate them within a Platonizing system. Here I can only recall the most basic features of this system.[37] A theory of two principles of Academic derivation – one ordering and determining things, the other being the principle of disorder and indetermination – provides the background for all the treatises, finding application in every domain: in cosmology, ethics, and politics (Arch. *De princ.* 19.5–20.17). The Aristotelian doctrine of categories is integrated into a Platonic-

[35] Numenius, fr. 24 des Places; see also Alexandra Michalewski, Chapter 6 in this volume.
[36] See for instance Kahn 2001: 11–38.
[37] For a more in-depth investigation, I will once again refer to Centrone 2014.

oriented system. Aristotle's hylomorphism is interpreted in the light of the doctrine of Ideas – identified with the Aristotelian Forms – and traced back to these two fundamental principles. In theology, although God is described in terms that fit the conception of the first mover moving the sphere of the fixed stars (Onat. *De deo* 139.11–140.5), he is conceived in Platonic fashion as a demiurge who impresses form upon matter. Also distinctly Platonic is the notion of God's direct action upon the world and of his providential care of man. The Aristotelian idea of a division of the cosmos into two regions is adapted to the two-principle scheme: the ever-moving part, the superlunary region, belongs to the limiting nature, the ever-passive one, which is always subject to corruption, to the undetermined (Damipp. *De prud.* 68.21–25). In ethics, the Platonic precept of assimilation to God (*homoiōsis theōi*) as the goal of human life, while not found in the *Pseudopythagorica* quite in these terms, is dealt with and endorsed in the treatises on kingship. Fundamental notions such as the right mean, and its opposite, whose species are excess and deficiency, are brought back to the original pair of principles. The political treatises too, while reflecting a variety of influences, are essentially of Platonic inspiration.

Since the Aristotelian doctrines are constantly integrated within a Platonizing system, it is tempting to frame these writings within the Platonic tradition. This combining of Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines is typical of so-called Middle Platonism – as is well known, a problematic historiographical category – from the first century BC onward. Indeed, recent scholarship is inclined to view these writings within the framework of Middle Platonism. More precisely, the hypothesis of their attribution to Eudorus' circle is now widely accepted.[38]

The attribution of Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines to ancient Pythagoreans was intended to secure an *imprimatur* of authority, thereby enforcing the idea of the continuity between Pythagoreanism and Platonism. By being traced back to illustrious figures from this philosophical tradition, Platonic doctrines were given an aura of authoritativeness, in accordance with a tendency already established within the Early Academy by Plato's successors. If the hypothesis that has been put forward here with regard to the construction of the Pythagorean *diadochē* is correct, then the overall purpose of the operation was to establish an unbroken continuity

[38] That they may have originated in Eudorus' circle, whose main aim was to reconcile Platonism and Aristotelism by tracing them back to Pythagoreanism, is a concrete possibility: see recently Bonazzi 2005: 152–60 and 2013, and Centrone 2014: 338 with further references.

between the ancient Pythagorean doctrine and the Platonist tradition through the essential mediation of Archytas. At the same time, the aim was also to highlight, on the one hand, the harmony between Plato and Aristotle and, on the other, the idea of the internal unity of the Platonist-Pythagorean tradition, notwithstanding the presence of different voices that disagreed on certain details yet shared the same, ultimately unitary doctrine.