

## 1 Introduction: The Pythagorean Female Sage

The Pythagorean women are a group of female intellectuals who were followers of Pythagoras and are credited with formulating moral precepts and authoring a series of letters and treatises. The evidence for these thinkers ranges from fragmentary materials about Pythagoras educating women in the 5th century BCE in Magna Graecia to a tradition of writings that extends into the 2nd century CE in Alexandria and Rome and was handed down to us as authored by Pythagorean women. Since their attribution has long been debated, these texts are referred to as ‘Pythagorean pseudepigrapha’.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, as Nancy Demand writes, in the obscure history of ancient women philosophers, the case of the Pythagoreans ‘appears as a comparatively bright spot’ (1982: 135). Specifically, the Pythagoreans have attracted the attention of scholars working on women in the history of philosophy for two reasons: first, this is the earliest documented case of female engagement with Greek philosophy. Second, the pseudepigrapha are the first example of philosophical prose ascribed to female authors in Greek antiquity.

This Element introduces readers to the study of the Pythagorean women by reviewing the key questions, sources, scholarly approaches, and challenges and offering new insight into these women’s ideas and the contributions of their alleged writings to the history of philosophy. The purpose is to answer the question: what kind of philosopher is the Pythagorean woman?

Like the rest of Pythagoreans,<sup>2</sup> the Pythagorean women are a multifaceted group of thinkers that presents the researcher with a variety of challenges. The writings are conceptually heterogeneous, written in different dialects, and cover a long span of time over the course of four centuries.<sup>3</sup> This fragmentary evidence and pseudepigraphic texts, nonetheless, jointly sketch the picture of the Pythagorean woman as an authoritative teacher and a wise philosopher. The traditional image of the Pythagorean female sage is that of an expert of the household: Pythagoras was known for educating women on how to be faithful wives, nurturing mothers, and devoted daughters, and in turn, the Pythagorean

---

<sup>1</sup> Different scholars have used different names to refer to these Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic writings. Thom calls them ‘Neo-Pythagoreans’ to distinguish this tradition from early Pythagoreanism (2008: 67–8). By contrast, Reale describes them as ‘Middle Pythagoreans’ to separate the pseudepigrapha from the other Neopythagorean philosophers (1990: 251–72). Finally, most scholars identify these writings as ‘Pseudo-Pythagorean’ to highlight the discontinuities from the early Pythagorean tradition (e.g., Centrone, 1990; Zhmud, 2019). I refer to these texts as Pythagorean pseudepigrapha to emphasise that they were not written by the named author but leave open the question of their connection to ancient Pythagoreanism (see also Horkey, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> On the many facets of the Pythagorean tradition and Pythagorean scholarship, see Cornelli (2013).

<sup>3</sup> The exact dating of these writings is also debated. For a discussion of this issue, see Section 3.1.1.

women show their pupils how to interact with their husbands and raise their children and are credited with writing letters and treatises about family life and domesticity. Yet I argue that the available evidence is more complex and layered and conveys the idea of the Pythagorean woman as both an expert on the female sphere and a well-rounded thinker. It should be noted that in our ancient sources, the Pythagorean women are rarely referred to as philosophers.<sup>4</sup> What I hope to show, nonetheless, is that the texts ascribed to Pythagorean women often engage in an explanatory, systematic, critical, coherent, unconventional, and argumentative way with key problems in ancient Greek philosophy. Therefore, I use the term ‘philosophers’ to stress the philosophical nature of their questions and answers.

There are two fundamental difficulties with studying the Pythagorean women and the writings that are attributed to them: the source problem and the pseudonymity issue. On the one hand, the evidence for the role of women in 5th-century Pythagorean societies is limited, and the few surviving sources are fragmentary and of dubious reliability. On the other hand, a large corpus of texts written under the names of Pythagorean women starts to circulate in the 3rd century BCE. The second challenge, then, is not the lack but the *nature* of the evidence. Specifically, scholars have questioned both whether the texts are apocryphal (i.e., not written by the named authors), if they are in fact authored by women or rather by men writing under female pseudonyms, and whether they are of any philosophical value.

In the first part of the Element, I address the first problem and examine the limited, but nonetheless significant, evidence for women in early Pythagorean societies. Our sources show that women are part of Pythagoras’ audiences and members of his intellectual circles. Although the available evidence mainly refers to the Pythagorean women as mothers, wives, and daughters of Pythagorean men, some women are also known for excelling at the Pythagorean way of life beyond domesticity. Other women, such as Pythagoras’ alleged wife Theano, are said to be educators and lecture their fellow Pythagoreans on a variety of topics, including but not limited to family roles and relationships. In the second part of the Element, I turn to the Pythagorean pseudepigrapha of the Hellenistic period. While I devote a section to reviewing the authorship and pseudonymity debate (Section 3.1.2), I am only secondarily concerned with the question of who wrote the letters and treatises ascribed to Pythagorean women and, most importantly, whether the authors are women. I am first interested in what these texts can tell us about the reception of the Pythagorean women as philosophers. I shall focus on

---

<sup>4</sup> Among the few exceptions is a comment by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 1.80.4) discussed in Section 2.2.3, according to which Pythagoras’ wife is the first woman philosopher.

two groups of treatises – the ethical and the theoretical treatises – which take two different paths to argue for women’s philosophical potential by depicting their authors, respectively, as female ethicists and as metaphysicians.

Overall, in antiquity and in the various stages of the history of Pythagoreanism, the Pythagorean woman is viewed as an intellectual, a thinker, a teacher, and a philosopher. Specifically, I argue, she is viewed both as an expert of the household and as an all-round sage philosophising about the principles and functioning of the cosmos, human society, the immortality of the soul, numbers, and harmonics. The Pythagorean woman is an authority for women, but she also specialises in embryology, psychology, music theory, eschatology, social and political advice, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

### 1.1 A Short History of Pythagoreanism

I begin by distinguishing two stages in the history of Pythagoreanism: the early Pythagorean societies, which were founded in Southern Italy in the late 6th century BCE and prospered until the first half of the 4th century,<sup>5</sup> and the revival of Pythagoreanism between the 3rd century BCE and the 3rd century CE. Pythagoras and the other early Pythagoreans, with few exceptions, left no written works.<sup>6</sup> Later sources, nonetheless, describe Pythagoras as a mathematician, an expert on the afterlife and the transmigration of souls, and the founder of a strict way of life for his community of followers. According to Aristotle, some Pythagoreans believed that numbers are the principles of all things and the whole cosmos is structured according to numerical relationships. According to Herodotus, Pythagoras taught that at death, the soul reincarnated in another animal or human body. Finally, according to Plato, the Pythagoreans adhered to a rigorous lifestyle and dietary restrictions in accordance with their ethical and religious beliefs.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic periods witness the flourishing of Pythagorean texts. This stage is characterised by a tendency to view Pythagoras as the primary source of influence for later Greek philosophical traditions, such as Platonism, Stoicism, and Aristotelianism. This renewed interest in Pythagoreanism manifests itself in two ways: on the one hand, we find the Neopythagorean philosophers, such as Nigidius Figulus in the 1st

<sup>5</sup> On the fall of the early Pythagorean societies, see Aristoxenus Frs. 18–19 (Wehrli, 1974); D.L. 8.46; Iamb. *VP* 251, 265–6. For an analysis of early Pythagorean societies, see von Fritz (1940); Minar (1942); Burkert (1982); Zhmud (2012a: 141–7).

<sup>6</sup> Philolaus of Croton is reputed to be the first Pythagorean to leave a written record of his doctrines (D.L. 8.85; Iamb. *VP* 199).

<sup>7</sup> See Ar. *Met.* 1.5.985b23–24; Hdt. 2.123; Pl. *Rep.* 10.600a–b. The early Pythagorean doctrines are discussed further in Section 2.1.

century BCE in Rome; Apollonius of Tyana in the 1st century CE; and the 2nd-century Platonists Moderatus of Gades, Nicomachus of Gerasa and Numenius of Apamea, all of whom write under their own names about the ancient Pythagorean way of life, mathematics, and metaphysics. On the other, we find the authors of Pythagorean pseudepigrapha, who forge apocryphal writings under the pseudonyms of early Pythagorean philosophers.<sup>8</sup> This corpus comprises treatises, sayings, poems, and letters concerning epistemology, cosmology, metaphysics, logic, and moral and political philosophies; written in various dialects; and surviving either in full or in long fragments. The purpose is again to merge Pythagoreanism with later traditions and depict Pythagoras as the forefather of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies.

The Pythagorean women, too, are divided into two groups: the early Pythagorean women of the Archaic and Classical Age, and the late, or pseudo, Pythagorean authors of the Hellenistic and Imperial Age. According to the surviving sources, which I discuss later, the early Pythagorean women live around the 5th century BCE in Southern Italy and mainland Greece and are members of Pythagorean societies. Iamblichus lists the names of Pythagoras' seventeen most famous female disciples: Timycha, Philtys, the sisters Occelo and Eccelo, Cratesicleia, Cheilonis, Theano, Myia, Lastheneia, Habroteleia, Echekrateia, Tyrsenis, Peisirrhode, Theadusa, Boeo, Babelyca, and Cleaichma. Some of them are reputed to be members of Pythagoras' own family, such as his wife Theano and his daughter Myia. No direct evidence from this first group of women has been handed down to us. In contrast, the late, and arguably pseudo, Pythagorean women are credited with authoring a comparatively large number of texts. The approximate dating ranges from the 1st century BCE to the 2nd century CE. Once again, the linguistic style suggests that these texts are most likely to be forgeries, which their authors attributed to their early Pythagorean predecessors to gain philosophical weight. The corpus includes ten letters – eight of which are ascribed to Theano, one to Myia, and one to an author named Melissa – and at least five treatises – *On Piety*, which is also ascribed to Theano; *On Wisdom* and *On the Harmony of Women* by Perictione; *On the Moderation of Women* by Phintys; and *On Human Nature* by Aesara. As a result, there is evidence of women partaking in both stages of Pythagoreanism: its emergence and first development in the 5th century

<sup>8</sup> On Neopythagoreanism in Rome and Asia Minor, see Flinterman (2014). On the Neopythagorean Platonists, see Dillon (2014). Zhmud distinguishes a third group of Pythagorean mystics who lived between the late 4th century BCE and the 1st century BCE, such as Diodorus of Aspendus and Androcydes, whom he labels as 'post-Pythagoreans' (2012b: 228–30). For a threefold periodisation of the Pythagorean tradition, see also Haskins (2005: 315).

and its Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic renaissance. In the first phase, women take part in Pythagorean societies but leave no writings. In the second phase, numerous texts survive, but the identity of their authors, especially those writings under female names, is debated.

### 1.1.1 Source Problems

The source issue is most effectively summarised by Barbara Graziosi in her review of Sarah Pomeroy's monograph on the Pythagorean women: 'There is little evidence about either Pythagoras or women in antiquity, let alone a combination of the two' (2013).

The surviving evidence for early Pythagorean societies and thinkers is scant and controversial. The challenges are threefold: the lack of direct evidence, the status of the surviving indirect sources, and the presence of forgeries. First, up until the time of Philolaus in the late 5th century and then Archytas in the 4th century, the Pythagoreans left no written works and kept most of their doctrines secret.<sup>9</sup> Second, the indirect evidence available to us is meagre, highly debated, predominantly post-Platonic, and often conflicting over significant points. The most reliable sources are the Peripatetic biographers Aristoxenus of Tarentum and Dicaearchus of Messana in the 4th century BCE and 3rd-century historians such as Timaeus of Tauromenium and Neanthes of Cyzicus. Aristoxenus' account is especially valuable, for he was originally from Tarentum, where the Pythagorean Archytas lived;<sup>10</sup> then moved to Phlius, which hosted a large Pythagorean community (Iamb. *VP* 267); and finally studied in Athens under Xenophilus, a pupil of Philolaus, known as one of 'the last Pythagoreans' (D.L. 8.46). Similarly, another helpful intermediary source is Timaeus, who wrote a history of Magna Graecia and thus had substantial data about early Pythagoreanism in Southern Italy. Nevertheless, these accounts were written centuries after

<sup>9</sup> See Isocrates, *Busiris* 29; Aristoxenus, Fr. 43; D.L. 8.15; Porph. *VP* 57; Iamb. *VP* 163, 199, 226–7, 246–7. Some members might even have been expelled for publishing the secrets. See, for example, Empedocles in D.L. 8.54, on the evidence of Timaeus and Hippasus in Iamb. *VP* 75, 246. On the possibility that some doctrines, such as the transmigration of souls, escaped the vow of silence, see Porph. *VP* 19. In the 3rd century, both Diogenes and Iamblichus refer to some, arguably apocryphal, writings by Pythagoras: the treatises mentioned by Heraclitus (D.L. 8.6–7 – see DK 22 B129), a letter to Anaximenes (D.L. 8.49), his memoirs (D.L. 8.42; Iamb. *VP* 146 – see Laks, 2014: 371–7), and a book titled *Sacred Discourse* (Iamb. *VP* 259 – see Thesleff, 1965: 158.8–168.12). On the existence of spurious Pythagorean texts, see Iamb. *VP* 2. For a discussion of Pythagorean secrecy, see Burkert (1972: 178–9). *Contra* Zhmud, according to whom the Pythagoreans are simply restrained in speech (2012a: 150–65). Regardless of whether Pythagoras left writings of any sort, no direct evidence of pre-Philolaic Pythagoreanism was preserved.

<sup>10</sup> Archytas was an acquaintance of Sphintarus, the father of Aristoxenus (Frs. 1, 19, 20, 30). On Aristoxenus, see Huffman (2012).

Pythagoras' death and are now partially lost. By contrast, the most extensive sources available to us are the three *Lives* of Pythagoras by Diogenes Laertius, Porphyry, and Iamblichus written in the 3rd century CE, whose reliability is nonetheless highly debated by scholars.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, as previously mentioned, in antiquity, there was a tendency to forge Pythagorean writings and attribute later, especially Platonic, philosophical positions back to Pythagoras. The outcome is that the available apocryphal texts outnumber the evidence about original Pythagoreanism. In what follows, I shall begin by reviewing the evidence from those 4th-century sources that are closer to the early Pythagoreans and less likely to have been influenced by the Platonic tradition. Next, I move on to the pseudepigrapha as a different, but not less valuable, manifestation of Pythagoreanism.

Though fragmentary and disputed, these sources consistently refer to Pythagoras' female followers. Specifically, the textual evidence for the Pythagorean women can be organised into three groups: the fragments *about* women, the sayings allegedly *by* women, and the writings *ascribed to* Pythagorean female pseudepigraphers. We first find brief references to women following Pythagoras in the 4th- and 3rd-century accounts of early Pythagoreanism.<sup>12</sup> These passages are later quoted in the *Lives* by Diogenes, Porphyry, and Iamblichus, together with lengthier and unevidenced anecdotes regarding Pythagoras' teachings to his female pupils. I shall analyse this evidence in Section 2. The second group comprises the maxims and moral precepts ascribed to Theano, Pythagoras' wife.<sup>13</sup> Finally, in the 5th century CE, the anthologist Stobaeus compiles a collection of extracts from earlier Greek authors, titled *Eclogues*, which includes the Pythagorean women's pseudepigrapha.<sup>14</sup> I turn to these texts in Section 3.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> On the *Lives*, see Laks (2014); Macris (2014); O'Meara (2014). On Aristoxenus and Dicaearchus, see Fortenbaugh (2007); Huffman (2014b: 274–96, 2019). On Pythagoras in the historical tradition, see Schorn (2014). On source problems in general, see Burkert (1972: 97–109); Dillon and Hershbell (1991: 4–14); Zhmud (2012a: 8–15, 25–77); Huffman (2018).

<sup>12</sup> I include in this group the fragments by the 4th-century comic poets Alexis and Cratinus the Younger, both of whom wrote plays titled *Pythagorizousa* (*The Female Disciple of Pythagoras*), cited by Athenaeus (4.161c–d) and Diogenes (8.37). See Dutsch (2020: 86–9).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the saying against adultery in D.L. 8.43, which is discussed in Section 2.2.3. For the purpose of this Element, I will not analyse the sayings in detail. For a thorough study of this evidence and other maxims reported by Plutarch, Clement of Alexandria, and Stobaeus, see Montepaone (2011: 32–6); Dutsch (2020: 71–114).

<sup>14</sup> I add to this group a fragment from a text on the immortality of the soul attributed to Theano in Clement's 2nd-century collection *Stromata* (4.7.44.2).

<sup>15</sup> The Pythagorean women's texts were translated into German in Wieland's 'Die Pythagorischen Frauen' (1789), into French in Meunier's *Femmes Pythagoriciennes* (1932), into Italian in Montepaone's *Pitagoriche* (2011), and recently into English by Plant (2004), Harper (in Pomeroy, 2013), and Dutsch (2020). For the original Greek, I refer to the collection of

## 1.2 The *Status Quaestionis* from Ménage to Dutsch

Modern scholars' engagement with the Pythagorean women started in 1690 in France with the publication of Gilles Ménage's *Historia Mulierum Philosopharum*. Ménage was profoundly interested in ancient Greek authors: after publishing a detailed commentary of Diogenes Laertius' *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers* in 1663, he decided to compile his own philosophical history, this time focusing on women philosophers. This is meant both as a supplement to Diogenes' work and as Ménage's own contribution to the *querelle des femmes* and the early feminist debates in the 17th century. The purpose is to challenge the assumption that there had been no women philosophers up to the early modern period and collect the available, though slim, information about women who devoted themselves to philosophy in Greek and Roman antiquity. The result is a list of sixty-five names, organised by schools, starting from women Platonists and closing with the Pythagoreans, who are introduced as the best-documented case of female participation in an ancient philosophical community. The chapter notoriously opens as follows: 'It could seem remarkable that there were so many Pythagorean women philosophers when the Pythagoreans had to observe silence for five years and had many secrets which they were not allowed to divulge, as women are very talkative and can scarcely keep a secret' (1984: 47, trans. Zedler).

The 20th century has seen a revival of academic interest in the Pythagorean women. Specifically, there are two trends: scholars working to reclaim women's place in the history of philosophy have devoted substantial space to the Pythagorean women, whereas scholars of Pythagoreanism acknowledge the unusual role women played in the Pythagorean tradition in more general terms.

Historians of women philosophers can be divided further into three groups. The initial tendency has been to trust the evidence for women in Pythagoreanism despite the many source issues. Mary Ellen Waithe and Kathleen Wider start from the premise that 'there were women involved with philosophy throughout ancient Greek history' (Wider, 1986: 22)<sup>16</sup> and that Pythagoras is the earliest and best-known philosopher to admit women among his disciples. They then analyse the available information and extant writings as historically accurate data and draw two conclusions: first of all, the letters and treatises were written by women philosophers, and second, some of them can be

---

Pythagorean writings by Thesleff (1965). The letters have also been edited by Hercher (1873) and Städele (1980).

<sup>16</sup> See also Waithe (1987: 5–9). Another scholar adopting inclusive criteria for ancient women philosophers is Warren (2009: 4). By contrast, Snyder (1991) and Plant (2004) focus exclusively on those women who left written works, which still includes the authors of the Pythagorean pseudepigrapha.

dated as early as the 5th century BCE. Similarly, more recently, Sarah Pomeroy has argued that the female point of view in the Pythagorean pseudepigrapha shows that they were in fact written by women (2013: xv–xxii). These studies have been an invaluable first step for the scholarship on the Pythagorean women.

Scholars have since then reacted to such charitable and optimistic interpretations of the evidence. Two examples of this more sceptic and cautious approach are Claudia Montepaone, who acknowledges the difficulty of retrieving reliable information about Theano and assessing the philosophical value of her teachings (1993: 75–105), and Marguerite Deslauriers, who calls attention to the challenges of studying the Pythagorean women, with special focus on the fragmentary nature of the evidence and the possibility that the Pythagorean pseudepigrapha might have in fact been written by men under female pseudonyms to address an audience of women (2012: 343–9).<sup>17</sup>

Finally, in the ongoing attempt to do justice to women philosophers from the past but with renewed attention to the source issues, the scholarship has started to deviate from the question of the historicity of the Pythagorean women and examine their reception instead. Since the Pythagorean apocrypha are written under pseudonyms, they can give us very limited information about the original authors. Thus, rather than discussing who these women were, when they lived, and who the real authors behind the pseudepigrapha might be, scholars now focus on the content of the texts and what they can tell us about the role of the Pythagorean women in ancient Greek culture: for example, Annette Huizenga has studied the pseudepigrapha in the context of Greek rhetoric in late antiquity (2013), and recently, Dorota Dutsch has contextualised these texts within the ancient Greek literary and philosophical tradition (2020).<sup>18</sup>

That of the Pythagorean women, then, is an emerging study, which so far has been primarily pursued by scholars of women philosophers. In addition, more emphasis has been placed on the Pythagorean women's writings of the Hellenistic period. By contrast, because of the scarcity of sources, the early Pythagorean women and the female status in 5th-century Pythagorean societies have received far less attention in the academic discourse, featuring mostly as brief references in the works of scholars of Pythagoreanism. De Vogel analyses Pythagoras' public speeches, which include his teachings on

<sup>17</sup> For a cautious, but nonetheless detailed, review of the evidence for ancient Greek female philosophers, see also Hawley (1994). The authorship of the pseudepigrapha is discussed further in Section 3.1.2.

<sup>18</sup> For an earlier study of the Pythagorean women as philosophers, see Nails (1989).



the husband–wife relationship (1966: 110–52), and briefly alludes to the actual presence of women in the communities (238, n. 2). Burkert notes that women were part of Pythagoras’ cohort of disciples (1972: 122)<sup>19</sup> and cites Theano as Pythagoras’ wife and the most famous Pythagorean woman (114) but discards the mathematical treatise *On Piety*, which is ascribed to Theano, as ‘curious’. Zhmud lists the names of the women from Pythagoras’ family (2012a: 103) but classifies the rest of the Pythagorean women as literary characters (180). Finally, Huffman acknowledges that women ‘may have indeed played an *unusually large* role in Pythagoreanism’ (Huffman, 2019, emphasis added) and gives a brief account of Theano’s life.<sup>20</sup> Two exceptions worth mentioning are Constantinos Macris’ detailed entries on the Pythagorean women in the *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* (2016) and Catherine Rowett’s reconstruction of women’s role in early Pythagorean politics (2014: 122–3).<sup>21</sup>

Overall, there is almost unanimous consensus among scholars that the Pythagorean women and their pseudepigrapha deserve more and more thorough attention. The question is how to approach them. This Element builds on Dorota Dutsch’s work on the Pythagorean women by highlighting their contributions to the ancient Pythagorean tradition and more generally Greek philosophy, from the 5th century BCE to the pseudepigrapha. Rather than viewing the Pythagorean women as historical figures, I am interested in considering them as philosophers.

## 2 Early Pythagoreanism: Not Only for Men, But Also for Women

This Element revolves around the question ‘What kind of philosopher is the Pythagorean woman?’ I answer this question by looking at both the evidence for women in early Pythagorean societies and the Pythagorean pseudepigrapha ascribed to female authors. In the case of early Pythagoreanism, our main question should be unpacked into two issues: (1) what counts as philosophy for Pythagoras and his early followers? And (2) how did the early Pythagorean women contribute to this project?

<sup>19</sup> See also Burkert (1982: 17–18); Kingsley (1995: 149–72).

<sup>20</sup> See Huffman (2018): ‘Women were probably more active in Pythagoreanism than in any other philosophical movement. . . . Pythagoreanism is the philosophical school that gave most prominence to women’. See also Cornelli (2013: 57–8, 74–5): ‘Among the practices that mark off the Pythagorean community from the rest of Greek society is the admission of women to the same social status of men’; Centrone (2014: 45): ‘Whatever may have been the nature of the ancient Pythagorean fellowship, it seems clear that women played a prominent role in it’; and Riedweg (2015: 96): ‘Women seem to have played in Pythagoreanism a role unparalleled in other philosophical movements’.

<sup>21</sup> Another scholar of ancient philosophy discussing the early Pythagorean women is Demand (1982: 132–5). See also Pellò (2020b).

## 2.1 The Pythagorean Way of Life

There are several unsolved puzzles surrounding the 5th-century Pythagorean communities. One such issue, possibly the most challenging one, is what sort of doctrines Pythagoras taught his disciples (Lloyd, 2014). Far from solving the puzzle, I shall simply draw attention to Plato's own answer.

There are at least three theories our sources describe as central to ancient Pythagoreanism: the belief in the reincarnation of souls, some kind of number doctrine, and the way of life.<sup>22</sup> The earliest surviving evidence pictures Pythagoras as an authority on the afterlife and metempsychosis. For example, one of Pythagoras' contemporaries, the philosopher Xenophanes, ridicules him for recognising the soul of an old friend in a barking dog (DK 21 B7, in D.L. 8.36).<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle describes the Pythagoreans as those who 'devote themselves to mathematics' and believe that numbers are the principles of all things (1.5.985b23–24).<sup>24</sup> Plato, in turn, characterises early Pythagoreanism as follows:

If not in public, was Homer considered a guide in private education, when he was alive, for those who enjoyed his company, and handed down to posterity some kind of Homeric way of living, as Pythagoras himself was especially honoured for this and to this day his followers are somehow distinguished from others by calling their way of life Pythagorean? (Pl. *Rep.* 10.600a–b)

Pythagoras taught his disciples a peculiar way of life, and the Pythagoreans distinguished themselves from others by living in accordance with Pythagoras' teachings. Specifically, Pythagoras is known for regulating his followers' *private* lives. According to Plato, then, the lifestyle is the essence and hallmark of ancient Pythagoreanism. It is the distinctive trait identifying someone as a Pythagorean and separating him, or her, from the non-Pythagoreans more than any number or soul theories.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the criteria for ancient Pythagoreanism, see Huffman (2008b: 292–302); Zhmud (2012a: 119–34). Zhmud criticises the doctrinal criterion, according to which all Pythagoreans believe in the afterlife or study mathematics, and proposes a family resemblance criterion, according to which among the Pythagoreans there is not one single shared feature, but rather a series of overlapping similarities.

<sup>23</sup> Other early sources for Pythagorean metempsychosis are Herodotus (2.81, 2.123, 4.95), Ion (D. L. 1.120), and Empedocles (DK 31 B129, quoted in Timaeus (*FGrHist* 566 Fr. 14); D.L. 8.54; Porph. *VP* 30; Iamb. *VP* 67). See Pellò (2018).

<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that Aristotle links mathematics with a group of 5th-century philosophers he describes as so-called Pythagoreans. For a detailed analysis of this report, see Primavesi (2014). On mathematics as central to mainstream Pythagoreanism, see Schofield (2012: 142).

<sup>25</sup> Pythagoras' opponents, too, criticised his followers for their unusual way of living (Dichaearchus Fr. 34 (Wehrli, 1974); Porph. *VP* 56; Iamb. *VP* 255). On the way of life as the distinctive trait of Pythagoreanism, see Huffman (2008b: 292–301); Cornelli (2013: 55–62);