

## Part I

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### Introduction

Pythagorean Life)

Cambridge University Press

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978-1-108-42531-5 Aristoxenus of Tarentum: The Pythagorean Precepts (How to Live a

Excerpt

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## 1 | Evidence for the Work: the Excerpts Preserved in Stobaeus

Although the *Suda* tells us that Aristoxenus composed an astounding 453 works (fr. 1 Wehrli), only two treatises have come down to us in the manuscript tradition and both are works on musical theory, i.e. some pages from the second book of *Rhythmics* and the *Elementa Harmonica*, which appears to combine two or more different works by Aristoxenus (Barker 2007: 113–35). No list of Aristoxenus’ writings survives from antiquity. Accordingly, we don’t know the titles of most of Aristoxenus’ works. Apart from the two treatises handed down in the manuscript tradition, the titles that we do have are all derived from later authors, who either mention the titles in passing or give them when quoting a passage from Aristoxenus. The only explicit evidence we have for the existence of a work entitled Πυθαγορικοί ἀποφάσεις (*Pythagorean Precepts*) written by Aristoxenus are the lemmata which introduce seven excerpts from the work in Stobaeus’ large anthology of excerpts of both prose and poetry, which he collected for the edification of his son, probably in the early fifth century AD. In six of the seven cases (frs. 1–3 and 5–7) the lemma is identical: Ἐκ τῶν Ἀριστοξένου Πυθαγορικῶν ἀποφάσεων (from the *Pythagorean Precepts* of Aristoxenus). In the seventh case (fr. 4), the slightly different form of the lemma appears to be the result of a corruption of the form used in the other six.<sup>1</sup> Sections of Iamblichus’ *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* are in part virtually identical to parts of the passages quoted in Stobaeus and hence are rightly regarded as coming from Aristoxenus’ *Pythagorean Precepts* (e.g., frs. 8–9 = 33 and 38W). Still other passages in *On the*

<sup>1</sup> The lemma reads “from the (writings) of Aristoxenus the Pythagorean” (Ἐκ τῶν Ἀριστοξένου Πυθαγορείου). This formulation is odd both because no title is given and because Aristoxenus is most unusually called a Pythagorean. It seems likely that at some point in the transmission a copyist mistakenly thought that Aristoxenus was being called a Pythagorean and consciously or unconsciously changed Πυθαγορικῶν to Πυθαγορείου to agree with Ἀριστοξένου. The final word was then either inadvertently dropped or purposely omitted because it was not seen as a title but rather as referring to generic “assertions” of Aristoxenus that could have come from a number of books.

## 4 Evidence for the Work: the Excerpts Preserved in Stobaeus

*Pythagorean Way of Life*, which are not paralleled in Stobaeus, show such similarity in form and content to the material in Stobaeus that it is very likely that they come from the *Precepts* as well (see Chapter 4). Nonetheless, Iamblichus never indicates that he is quoting from anyone in any of these sections of *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* and never directly mentions the *Pythagorean Precepts* of Aristoxenus, so Stobaeus remains our only explicit evidence for the *Pythagorean Precepts*.