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# Soothing Lyres and *epodai*: Music Therapy and the Cases of Orpheus, Empedocles and David

## The Charms of Music: *Harmonia*, Music Therapy and Musical *Ethos*

The psychagogic efficacy of music, namely its power to act on the soul in such a way as to influence characters and behaviors, and even health,<sup>1</sup> is based in ancient Greek thought on a likeness between soul and musical harmony.<sup>2</sup> This idea involves also a “harmonious” order distinguishing human *physis* as being a part of the world order (*kosmos*), as it is possible to notice at least since the time of the pre-Socratics. From many of the surviving fragments of their works<sup>3</sup> we learn of the shift of the term *harmonia*<sup>4</sup> (Bonaventura-Meyer 1932; Lippman 1963; Lambropoulou 1995–1996; Franklin 2002) from material aspects of human life

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See Anderson 1966; West 1992: 31–33 (quoting many references concerning the healing and soothing properties of music); West 2000: 51–68; Barker 2005.

**2** This idea was discussed extensively in ancient Greece at least since the early Pythagoreans. Among the many evidence concerning the topic of soul and musical harmony, I mention here only the well-known passage in Plato’s *Phaedo* (85 e4–86 a3) where Simmias refers to the notion of soul as a harmonious blend of the elements composing the human body (verisimilarly recalling the physiological theories and the notion of *isonomia* of the Pythagorean physician Alcmaeon of Croton, see 24B4 DK = Aët. 5.30.1 and 24A3 DK = Arist. *Metaph.* A 5.986a22; cf. also Pl. *Symp.* 186d5–e3), and the passage from *On Soul* (4.407b30–32), where Aristotle says that, according to some philosophers “soul is a kind of *harmonia*. Indeed [they say] also that *harmonia* (ἁρμονία) is a blending and combination of opposites and the body is composed of opposites (καὶ γὰρ τὴν ἁρμονίαν κρᾶσιν καὶ σύνθεσιν ἐναντίων εἶναι, καὶ τὸ σῶμα συγκεῖσθαι ἐξ ἐναντίων)” (trans. by Huffman 1993).

**3** See, for instance, Philolaus, 44B1 DK = Diog. Laert. *Vit. Phil.* 8.85 and Philolaus, 44B6 DK = Stob. Flor. 1.21.7d (1.188.14 Wachsmuth) with Huffman 1993: 123–145. Cf. also Heraclitus, 22A22 DK = Arist. *Eth. Eud.* 1235a25.

**4** The verb ἁρμόζω, denominative of ἄρμα and referring particularly to carpentry (Chantraine 1999: s.v. ἄρμα), originally meant *to join together* or *to fit* different pieces together into a functional and coherent whole. In Mycenaean tablets, for instance, the form *a-na-mo-to* (ἀνάρμοστο)

to the *kosmos*. A strong bridge between the pre-Socratic *harmonia* and musical healing is built by Aristotle in his *Politics* (1340b7–19), where he states that “the modes and rhythms of music have an affinity (συγγένεια) [with the soul], as well as a natural sweetness. This explains why many thinkers connect the soul with harmony — some saying that it is a harmony, and others that it possesses the attribute of harmony” (trans. by Barker 1995). Beginning from such an affinity, Aristotle deals with the use of music in the education of young people, that is, with its role in the making of the Greek man<sup>5</sup>, and also with the therapeutic — and in no way ethic — effects of the *aulos* on people performing rites including enthusiastic music. These people, affected by ἔλεος ‘pity’ and φόβος ‘fear’ at an exceedingly high degree, seemed, after the rites were carried out, as if they underwent ἰατρεία ‘medical therapy’ and κάθαρσις ‘purification’, since the music performed with the *aulos* and the κίνησις ‘movement’ induced by it healed excessive emotions.<sup>6</sup>

Music therapy was widespread in ancient Greece, and much evidence on musical remedies concerns the early Pythagoreans.<sup>7</sup> The notion of “musical catharsis,” in particular, has been generally associated with them, although, as far as we know, it first appears clearly only in the eighth book of Aristotle’s *Politics*.<sup>8</sup> Evidence concerning music therapy, on the other hand, is scattered in Greek

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seems to refer to carts that have not yet been assembled (see KN Sf. (2) 4420 and Chadwick et al. 1971: 291), while the form *a-ra-ro-mo-te-me-na* (KN Sd 4403) refers to assembled ones.

5 On pp. 305–306, I deal with musical *paideia* and musical *ethos*.

6 See also on pp. 306–307.

7 See, for instance, Aristox. frag. 26 Wehrli (1967 = *Anecdota Parisiensia* 1.172, in Cramer 1967: οἱ Πυθαγορικοί, ὡς ἔφη Ἀριστοξένος, καθάρσει ἐχρῶντο τοῦ μὲν σώματος διὰ τῆς ἰατρικῆς, τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς διὰ τῆς μουσικῆς “the Pythagoreans, as Aristoxenus said, made use of medicine for purifying the body, and of music for the purification of the soul”); Iambl. *VP* 64.110–113; Porphy. *VP* 32–33; Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 80.384a.

8 The problematic reliability of Iamblichus of Chalcis (ca. 245–325 CE) and Porphyry of Tyrus (ca. 234–305 CE) — our main sources concerning Pythagoreans and musical catharsis — should be noted, especially since they lived many centuries later, and their reconstruction of the early Pythagoreanism seems to have been heavily influenced by Aristotle himself and by Plato and the Neo-Platonism (see, e.g., Huffman 1999; Riedweg 2002: 10–16, 37–63). Both Iamblichus and Porphyry seem to depict Pythagoras as a predecessor of Plato and the Neo-Platonism in order to present Neo-Platonic notions as stemming from an authoritative source. Another factor that partially weakens the reliability of their writings is that some of many Pythagorean *pseudepigrapha* (Thesleff 1961, 1965; Centrone 2000) were available to them. Besides this, Iamblichus, in particular, seems to portray Pythagoras as a “pagan holy man” (Fowden 1982; Burkert 1982: 13, 17, n. 97). Consequently, although it is most likely that the early Pythagoreans used musical remedies, considering their strong interest in music, we cannot yet state the same for their real formulation of a notion of musical catharsis, since there is no evidence of this before the fourth century BCE, namely before Aristotle and his theory of catharsis (see also Wallace 1995). On this matter see also Provenza 2012.

literature since its origins: the first kind of musical remedy in Greece is the sung spell (*epode*), attested in the *Odyssey* (19.457–458).

## The epode between Greece and the Near East

The *Odyssey* mentions *epode* together with bandaging (Kotansky 1991: 108) as the remedy against a hemorrhaging wound, used by Odysseus's maternal uncle after a boar had bitten his thigh (Renehan 1992).

The word ἐπωδή (Pfister 1924; Lain Entralgo 1970; Furley 1993; Rocconi 2001) consists of ὠδή, contracted from αἰοδή 'song' and the preposition ἐπί 'upon', so that it can be understood as a song upon someone or upon a certain part of his body. Thus, *epodai* are spells for healing, which were probably sung when they were first formulated, although they cannot be considered as a proper part of real musical art. While some scholars assert that in an incantation just the words are important (e.g., West 1992: 32),<sup>9</sup> and not the melody or rhythm,<sup>10</sup> both the structure of the word ἐπωδή and the "charming" effects that music in ancient Greece was credited with — resulting especially in the use of verbs such as θέλω 'to enchant'<sup>11</sup> and κηλέω 'to charm'<sup>12</sup> — seem to stress the musical element of the *epode*, thus connecting the 'magic'<sup>13</sup> use of *epodai* with music therapy. This connection is clearly visible for some poets, that, according to tradition, were able to

<sup>9</sup> The power of the words in incantations is attested, for instance, in a passage from Plato's *Euthydemus* (289e5–290a4), where the τέχνη of the rhetoricians (λογοποιοί) is considered a part of the τέχνη of the charmers (ἐπωδοί), which were believed to be able to affect a κήλησις 'enchantment' on dangerous beasts and diseases. For rhetoric and magic, see, for instance, De Romilly 1975.

<sup>10</sup> At least since the Hellenistic period, the word *epode* refers to incantations as "magic formulas" in contexts where no reference to music is ever made. As for these magical texts, which are known to us from papyri (our most important source on Hellenistic magic), see Preisendanz 1973–1974; Betz 1991, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Ath. 14.618a (for the musical practice of *synaulia*); Luc. *Ind.* 12 (Orpheus's lyre); Pherecr. frag. 102a3 (cf. *Scholia (Graeca in Homeri) in Iliadem* 13.302: Amphion's lyre enchants even stones); Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.72.5. The verb θέλω is associated with both the lyre and the *aulos*.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Soph. *Trach.* 1000–1003 (the charmer is called αἰοδός; the musical element appears clearly in the name); Pl. *Symp.* 215b–216c and *Phdr.* 266d–267d.

<sup>13</sup> It seems worth specifying that the notion of "magic" (for a general survey, see Collins 2008: 1–26; see also Bremmer 1999; Dickie 2001; Carastro 2006) in this essay is opposed neither to that of "science" nor to "religion," since ancient magic involved also remedies against diseases (see Kotansky 1991; Scarborough 1991; Graf 1991; Gordon 1995), and was strictly associated with religion (Dickie 2001: especially 18–46). This appears clearly in the common belief in the demonic origins of diseases (Hippoc. *Morb. sacr.* 1; Edelstein 1967; Lanata 1967; Burkert 1992: 65–73; Lloyd

cure people from disease and entire communities from epidemics. For instance, the citharode Terpander of Lesbos (seventh century BCE) suppressed a *stasis* in Sparta using his music (Terp. *test.* 14a; 14b; 19; 22 Gostoli; cf. *test.* 14c, on the efficaciousness of his λόγοι ‘words’, rather than his music), and the Cretan musician Thaletas of Gortyna (Terp. *test.* 19 Gostoli; Thiemer 1979: 124–126), an author of paeans that cured the Spartans affected by a *loimos*, according to tradition. Their songs then seem to have been quite similar to the *epodai*, (Gostoli 1990: 87), since they healed every kind of disease. Additionally, the effects of the *epode* seem to be similar to those of music in a Lesbian local myth told by the historian Myrsilus of Methymna (*FGrH* 477 F 7a = Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.31). In this story the Muses charm the king Machares and soothe his anger by singing with the accompaniment of the lyre (αἱ δὲ συνεχῶς κιθαρίζουσαι καὶ καλῶς κατεπάδουσαι τὸν Μάκαρα ἔθελγον καὶ κατέπαυον τῆς ὀργῆς). The two verbs κατεπάδω ‘to subdue by song’ and θέλω seem to affirm that the therapeutic effects of the *epode* does not stem just from its words, but also from music. Furthermore, both music and *epodai* seem to have had an effect through a kind of hypnosis. This is attested by the use of the verb καταλέω ‘to charm by flute-playing’ — referring to ritual contexts where the *aulos* was used for arousing *mania* in order to heal weaknesses and fears —, referred to the charming effect of music (see, for example, Pl. *Leg.* 790e).

The frequent association of music therapy and *epodai* as remedies and the use of both by the same person lend further support to the importance of music within *epodai*.<sup>14</sup> Pythagoras, for instance, used music therapy — excluding the *auloi* — and *epodai* (Iambl. *VP* 114, 164 = 244; Porph. *VP* 30 and 33), and we shall see that the same is true also for Empedocles. In this context, it is no coincidence that Pythagoras was said to have visited Egypt and the Near East, where he learned the basis of his doctrines (see Iambl. *VP* 11–19; Porph. *VP* 6–12; McEvilley 2002: 81–89);<sup>15</sup> in fact, the use of sung spells for healing was common in those regions (Pinch 1995; David 2004: 131–136),<sup>16</sup> where magic healers were also singers, attesting to the importance of music among such peoples.<sup>17</sup> An interest-

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2003: especially 1–27). Nevertheless, things seem to have been different at least since Plato and Hippocrates and their condemnation of magic.

14 Magicians are often said to “sing” their spells: see, e.g., Hdt. 7.191; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 36.39.

15 As for the circulation of knowledge between Mesopotamia, Egypt and ancient Greece, especially regarding medicine, see Thomas 2004.

16 Already the *Odyssey* (4.231–232) gives evidence of the skill of the Egyptians as magicians; in ancient Mesopotamia spells are the most attested therapeutic aide (Cunningham 1997: esp. 1–8, 162).

17 Among studies concerning music in the ancient Near East, I limit my references here to Farmer 1969a, 1969b; Burgh 2006.

ing case may be represented by the Babylonian figures of the *ašipu* ‘exorcist’<sup>18</sup> and the *kalû* ‘lamentation singer’, intended to avert evil by appeasing the wrath of the divinity (Beaulieu 2007: 10–15). In Mesopotamian culture, music was credited with magical powers, and a metaphysic energy was associated with both words and sounds. The activity of the Persian *Magi*, priests performing sacrifices and singing incantations (De Jong 1997: 362–367; Bremmer 2003 [= 2008a] — especially theogonies (see, e.g., Herod. 1.132) — for shunning evil, has a significant bearing on this metaphysical characterization of magic itself. On the other hand, the presence of music in spells proves that to ward off evil and disease was a most important aim of magic; this can be seen even in the *Veda* (Sigerist 1971: 148–165; 1977: 267–296, 442–477).

The strong relationship between magic and medicine is also attested in Hittite texts, where the physician worked in collaboration with the magician, and were sometimes often one and the same, since magic rituals and formulae were considered complementary to the physician’s skills (Bryce 2004: 166–167, 200). The ancient Greeks might have learned magic, as well as many other elements of their own culture, from the Near East,<sup>19</sup> and especially through Anatolia and Thracia, a land they considered “far” and often associated with magic and magicians (Graf 1995; Bremmer 2003 (= 2008a). Some outstanding similarities exist between Greek and Near Eastern magic: for instance, performativity (Tambiah 1968) — the particular way in which symbolic words create the sense of reality and act upon the real world —<sup>20</sup> and sympathetic magic were common in both (Faraone 1993).

Nevertheless, an important difference between the use of magic in Greece and in the Near East concerns the social role of seers and practitioners of magic; in Greece, the “magicians” were not a specifically defined category, whereas in the Near East, magic was the province of priests and professional practitioners in general, such as the Iranian itinerant priests, which the Greeks became acquainted with particularly in the sixth century BCE (see West 1971: 239–242; Burkert 1983, 1992: 41–46). An example for these is a kind of ancient Mesopota-

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**18** That the *ašipu* used “magic” remedies together with “medical” ones has been demonstrated by Maul 2004; cf. also Ritter 1965.

**19** Some notable studies on this topic were written by Burkert (1992: esp. 41–87; 2003); Graf (1997 [1994]) and Bremmer (2008a). The Romans too were aware of the Oriental origins of many magical practices: see, e.g., Tac. *Ann.* 2.69. The origins of Greek music are connected with the Near East as well, Anatolia being a prominent source of such cultural imports (see West 1992: passim; West 1997: 31–33).

**20** This feature of magic is clearly expressed in the Derveni Papyrus, an allegorical interpretation of one of the Orphic theogonies: as we read in column 6, the ἐπωδὴ of the μάγοι and their sacrifices were able to drive demons away; on this issue, see Tsantsanoglou 1997: 99–100, 111.

mian spells called *eršemmas* that were believed to appease an angry god; their use might be considered in some way similar to that of the paeans in Archaic Greece. In the *Iliad* (1.472–474) the Achaeans sing a paean in order to soothe Apollo’s anger, so that he will deliver them from the pestilence he himself had sent to them. However, the young Achaeans singing the paean to the god were not priests, while *eršemmas* were always performed in temples by *gala* ‘singer-priests’.<sup>21</sup> Magic in the Near East had public uses as well as private ones, and it was considered necessary for the society and for the State as a whole: some kinds of maledictions, for instance, concerned lawbreakers, and were included in the official documents of state archives (MacMahon 2002: 129–131; MacMahon 2003: 278–279).

Magic in Greece, on the other hand, focused on the private sphere, as demonstrated by the use of *katadesmoi* ‘binding spells’, maledictions engraved on small lead tablets (*tabellae defixionum* ‘curse tablets’) that were pierced through with a nail and buried in the ground, thus entrusting them to the spirits of the Underworld (Faraone 1991; Gager 1992; Ogden 1999; Collins 2008: 64–88). This type of magic is in a certain sense not entirely different from the *epodai*,<sup>22</sup> since magicians that specialized in dealing with the dead (namely in necromantic rites) were credited with both the use of *epodai*, and of *katadesmoi* (Johnston 1999a: 93). Then we might say that music must have been involved, in some way, in necromancy rites too; this is clearest in the case of the *goos*, the song of the *goês* ‘sorcerer’ for evoking the dead (see further hereafter, on pp. 316–319).

Although spells were widespread across the ancient world, a tendency to skepticism concerning their efficacy and ethic legitimacy is attested both in the Near East and in Greece: in the Bible and in the Apocrypha magic is often considered a foreign practice (e.g., Deut. 18:10–11; Ricks 2001) and is strongly disapproved of (Wisdom of Solomon 12: 4), while in Greece a clear condemnation of magic is expressed in the fifth century BCE by Plato (see *Resp.* 364b–365a; *Leg.* 909b, 932e–933e; Motte 2000) and Hippocrates (see, e.g., *Morb. sacr.* 6.354 Littré, [magicians and purifiers] προσποιέονται [...] πλέον τι ειδέναι “pretend to have superior knowledge.”)<sup>23</sup> Plato had in fact distinguished between magic and religion, considering them different as far as their aims and methods are concerned (Graf 1995;

<sup>21</sup> *Eršemmas* have been published by Cohen (1981).

<sup>22</sup> The use of both *epōidai* and *katadesmoi* is strongly related to orality. For this aspect ancient Greek magic differs significantly from Egyptian magic, which was essentially related to writing (D. Frankfurter [1994], quoted by Johnston 1999a: 93).

<sup>23</sup> As Burkert asserts (1972: 164), the profession of a superior knowledge is a typical feature of “shamans,” while τεκμαίρεσθαι, that is putting knowledge to the test through practice, is the main concern of scientists.

Nutton 2004: 115–118 on medicine in the *Timaeus*), and Hippocrates — as one can see especially in the treatises *On the Sacred Disease* and *On Ancient Medicine* — strongly criticized and rejected both the traditional magical-religious remedies (Lloyd 1979: 15–29, 47–49; Jouanna 1999: 181–193; Laskaris 2002: 97–124) considering them irrational for they assumed that there was a divine origin for every kind of disease,<sup>24</sup> and their practitioners, impious for they pretended to subject the gods to their own will (Hippoc. *Morb. sacr.* 31). According to Hippocrates, each disease has instead a natural cause (see Hippoc. *Aer.* 22), rather than a divine one; he therefore proposes an inductive therapeutic method based on a careful inquiry of the symptoms of a disease and of its course (Lloyd 1979: 49–58, 146–169; Lloyd 1990: 47–62. For a general survey on Hippocratic medicine, see Jouanna 1999; Nutton 2004: 53–102), and not relying on the knowledge of specific remedies such as spells and purifications (*Morb. Sacr.* 18).<sup>25</sup> Skepticism concerning the therapeutic use of spells — and of music as well — characterizes tragedy as well: in Sophocles' *Ajax* (582), the skilled physician is said to use surgery when needed, instead of singing *epodai*, while in Euripides' *Medea* (190–203) the nurse states that music cannot heal pain and sorrow.

With regard to music, however, some philosophers and physicians present a positive attitude, since they were credited with ethic effects; thus, on the one hand it affected both character and behavior, and on the other hand, its effects on the soul could concern the body as well. Some remarks on this matter appear in Plato, especially in the *Timaeus* (71–72, 86–88 and Provenza 2006), and in medical treatises (see, for instance, Galen *De san. tuen.* 6.40 Kühn).

*Ethos* seems then to be the difference between the therapeutic use of music and that of *epodai*: in this regard, it is noteworthy that the use of spells is only attested as far as physical and “tangible” diseases are concerned (for instance, hemorrhage, as in the case of Odysseus), and never for the therapy of the soul or character. David, using music rather than spells against Saul's disease in the first *Book of Samuel*,<sup>26</sup> brings evidence to a notion of the healing effect of music on the soul in contrast with the idea of spells, since these ones involve demonic magic and are thus opposed to Yahweh, the only God and the real origin of everything.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Galenus Hippocratis Prognosticon et Galeni in eum Librum Commentarius 1, vol. 18/2, 17–18 Kühn and Plut. *De superst.* 170e.

<sup>25</sup> It seems yet worth reminding at this point of the association of religion with medicine in the cult of Asclepius: the practice of medicine in sanctuaries, where the god was believed to act as a doctor (especially through dreams), gained great significance from the fifth century BCE (Lloyd 2003: 40–61; Nutton 2004: 103–114).

<sup>26</sup> See pp. 323–324.

<sup>27</sup> This fundamental difference between magic in ancient Mesopotamia and the use of prayers and lamentations to Yahweh among the ancient Israelites is stressed especially by Walton 1990:

## Musical Ethos and the Exclusion of the Aulos from Paideia

The theory of musical *ethos*<sup>28</sup> is based on the observation of the psychagogic effects of music, since different musical instruments, rhythms and melodies were believed to affect the minds and behaviors of people listening to them in different ways.

Aristotle's *Politics* and Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* are our main sources about musical *ethos* (Lippman 1964; Anderson 1966; Barker 2005; Rocconi 2007) and its importance within the education of the young people (*paideia*).<sup>29</sup> The meaning of musical *ethos* seems to be efficaciously summarized in a passage from Plato's *Laws* saying that rhythm and harmony make the soul become ordered, and enable it to praise the good and to blame what is ethically repugnant (Pl. *Leg.* 669b–670a). Ascribing certain musical modes to noble-mindedness and moderation and making the aristocratic boy to perform and listen to them was then an effective means of persuasion, aimed at bringing those young people to comply with the ideals of the social group they belonged to: receiving musical education and learning to appreciate the different musical modes were considered to provide the young people with moral excellence.

The most famous distinction of the *harmoniai* from an ethical point of view can be found in Plato's *Republic* (398–400),<sup>30</sup> where “mournful” and “relaxed” *harmoniai* are banned from the *polis*, and only the Dorian and the Phrygian are accepted, because they alone suit a man who is capable of preserving his dignity and strength of mind both at times of trouble and war and in joy and peace.

Melodies in the Dorian mode were considered the most suitable for the education of the young people (Pl. *Resp.* 398–400; Arist. *Pol.* 1342a–b; Ath. *Deip.* 14.624d),<sup>31</sup> since this mode was believed to inspire virtue (ἀρετή) and moderation

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138–151.

**28** Both in Plato's *Republic* (3.400b, 424c) and in Aristides Quintilianus's treatise *De musica* (2.14.80–81 W.-I.) the origins of this theory are linked with Damon of Oa. Connected with the Sophists, Damon lived in the second half of the fifth century BCE, and was a friend and political advisor of Pericles (Plut. *Per.* 4). He was well known mainly for his reflections about musical *ethos*. As for this complex figure, I limit my references here to Lord 1978 and Wallace 1991, 2004.

**29** A “traditionalist” point of view on music education and musical *ethos*, reflecting both a longing for the ancient aristocratic education and a sad and strong disapproval of the ongoing “hedonistic” musical innovations represented in particular by Euripides and the “New Music” (on which, see, especially, Csapo 2004), is expressed by Aristophanes in *Clouds* (961–972, 1355–1376).

**30** See also Ath. 14.624c–625f (ca. 200 CE), where a survey on musical modes is carried out according to their ethnic and formal characters.

**31** For the definition of musical mode, see Aristox. *Harmonica* 2.37.



(σωφροσύνη), which the aristocratic ethic was based on. The lyre was considered as the instrument most suitable to the Dorian mode.

On the other hand, Plato had quite a different opinion as far as the *aulos* was concerned. He considered this instrument unsuited to education and banned it from the *polis* because of its πολυχорδία ‘being many-stringed’ and παναρμονία ‘embracing all modes’ (*Resp.* 399d4–5).<sup>32</sup> The *aulos*<sup>33</sup> could modulate very easily between different pitches and between one scale and another, and musicians experimented with it for the sake of pure *hedone* ‘pleasure’ – that is, in order to meet the taste of their audience without any concern for *ethos* – exploiting the full range of its mimetic qualities. Another non-ethic feature of the performance with the *aulos* was that its players – mainly professional performers – could not sing as they played it. These features are significant, since *ethos*, on the one hand, was mainly associated with words (*Resp.* 400d5–6) and not with music, that is, with *sung* musical performances (*Resp.* 398d5–10; cf. Pind. *Ol.* 1.2, ἀναξιφόρμιγγες ὕμνοι), and professionalism, on the other hand, was considered unsuited for free men, that is, to the aristocrats (see, for instance, Arist. *Pol.* 1341a17–21, 1341b8–18).

Despite these contradictions and ambiguities, the *aulos* played a major role in different religious and social contexts, both public – such as religious feasts with musical competitions, where dithyrambs were performed – and more restricted, even private ones, such as the Dionysiac and mystic rites, symposia and funeral rites.<sup>34</sup> The role of the *aulos* within these rituals, as far as the *enthousiasmos* – the characteristic frenzy of the Dionysiac rites – is concerned, is fully acknowledged by Aristotle; in the eighth book of *Politics* he maintains that this instrument has nothing to do either with *ethos* – which is why it must be excluded from the education of the young people – nor with action (πρᾶξις), but is instead both enthusiastic and therapeutic. Aristotle states that the Phrygian melodies performed with the *aulos* inspire the souls, as it happens, for instance, to people listening

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**32** The refusal of the *aulos* was more evident from the beginning of the fourth century BCE; Plato must have had an important role in it. Political reasons could have been the origin of both its ethical rejection and the myths concerning its “foreign” nature. These aspects have been analyzed thoroughly – also with important references to iconography – by Martin (2003). See also Wilson 2003 (in the same collection as the former) on Critias and the relationship between music and politics in Athens at the end of the fifth century BCE.

**33** For its organological and historical aspects, see Schlesinger 1939; West 1992: 81–107; Mathiesen 1999: 177–222.

**34** Interesting and stimulating comments on the features of the *aulos*, its religious and social role and what concerns its effects on people are made in Wilson 1999, that I refer the reader to for a complete and clear treatment of the problematic aspects of this complex musical instrument.

to the tunes of Olympus<sup>35</sup> (*Pol.* 1340a7–10), and that the sacred tunes performed with the *aulos* and subjecting the soul to frenzy (ἐξοργιάζοντα) bring about ἰατρεία and κάθαρσις (*Pol.* 1342a7–11) to different degrees of widespread passions. These passions are pity (ἔλεος), fear (φόβος) and frenzy (ἐνθουσιασμός) itself, and their purification occurs together with relief and pleasure (*Pol.* 1342a14–15, πᾶσι γίγνεσθαι τινα κάθαρσιν καὶ κουφίζεσθαι μεθ' ἡδονῆς)<sup>36</sup>. Together with the sound of percussions and dance (see, e.g., Aeschylus, *Edonoi* frag. 57 Radt; Pind. *Dithyr.* frag. 70b Lavecchia; Eur. *Bacch.* 120–134), the *aulos* was also then believed to accomplish a kind of “psychotherapy” within the Dionysiac rites (Arist. *Pol.* 1342a, see above, p. @; Pl. *Leg.* 790d–791b, as far as the Corybantic rites are concerned), and was associated as well with the recovery from some diseases of the body, such as sciatica (Theophr. frag. 726 Fortenbough). Three types of percussion instruments were associated exclusively with these rites and with the performance of enthusiastic music that put their participants in frenzy and aroused a discharge of emotions:<sup>37</sup> κρόταλα ‘rattles’ — producing a clapping sound when shaken — τύμπανα ‘drums’ and κύμβαλα ‘cymbals’ — little round metallic plates.<sup>38</sup>

Music therapy and the different characterizations of musical instruments seem then to represent a rich field of research, within which we shall now focus on the therapeutic use of the lyre, for two reasons: the ancient Greeks realized very early in their history that the soothing effects of the lyre could be associated with *ethos*, and more generally with the idea that health was mainly dependent upon moral balance. Moreover, the lyre seems to be the first musical instrument ever to have been used for healing, as seen from evidence concerning people that made use of both the lyre and the oldest attested musical remedy, the *epoidai*. We shall examine this role of the lyre in the cases of Empedocles and Orpheus.

<sup>35</sup> A semi-legendary aulete who was said to have lived in Phrygia in the eighth century BCE.

<sup>36</sup> Among the many studies dealing with the Aristotelian theory of catharsis I mention here only Ford (2004) most recent study on musical catharsis in Aristotle’s *Politics*.

<sup>37</sup> It seems noteworthy that percussions too were used in necromancy, and are, in fact, the instruments more often associated with γοητεία ‘witchcraft’, even if lyres were sometimes used in such rituals as well. We will come back to this remark later on (see pp. 318–319).

<sup>38</sup> On percussions, see West 1992: 122–128; Mathiesen 1999: 159–176.

## The Lyre: An Aristocratic and Divine Instrument

The lyre,<sup>39</sup> strum with a plectrum, is a model-instrument of ancient chordophones.<sup>40</sup> From the harmony of the world order, to the *ethos* associated with human behaviors, it performs a prominent role within the cultural landscape of the ancient Mediterranean: the Near East was actually the cradle for many ancient Greek instruments (Thiemer 1979: 127–138; West 1992: 49; 1997: 31).<sup>41</sup> The biblical instrument most similar to the lyre is the *kinnor*,<sup>42</sup> and it was the most important musical instrument for the ancient Israelites, as it emerges from archaeological finds (Braun 1994: 1505–1506, 1516–1517; 2001: 525–527; 2002: 16–19). From the Near East, the lyre was adopted also by the Cretans and Mycenaean (Maas and McIntosh Snyder 1989: 2–9, especially for archaeological references; Anderson 1994: 1–15), and the term seems to be first attested in Greece in a Linear B tablet from Thebes, where it appears in the dual form *ru-ra-ta* (Franklin 2006b: 56).

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**39** I follow M. L. West (1992: 51) in using the term *lyre* in a generic sense, with reference to the box lyre (the only kind of stringed instrument in the Homeric Poems). In Archaic Greek literature the word φόρμιγξ (verisimilarly Thracian in its origins, this is the oldest term referring to stringed instruments in ancient Greek; see Durante 1971: 152–153, 159) is the general term for designating instruments of the lyre class. It overlaps in usage with κίθαρις or κιθάρα and also with λύρα and χέλυς, since it probably was “a strictly poetic word for a considerable time” (West 1992: 50–51; on these terms, see also Maas and McIntosh Snyder 1989: 26–27 (φόρμιγξ), 30–31 (κίθαρις), 34–36 (λύρα, but, see also 79–81), 54–55 (κιθάρα)). Homer uses φόρμιγξ and κίθαρις with no distinction, though the latter occurs only five times. Φόρμιγξ is predominant also in Pindar (less frequent are λύρα and κίθαρις, while κιθάρα is never used, as well as in the Homeric Poems). Where iconography is concerned, the word φόρμιγξ may refer to the round-bottomed, straight-armed lyre depicted in paintings and statues since the days of the Mycenaean, and played especially by Apollo and the Muses (when mortal men are depicted, this instrument usually appears hanging on the wall) (Mathiesen 1999: 253–258).

**40** For a general survey of the chordophones of the family of the lyres, see Wegner 1949: 28–52; Maas and McIntosh Snyder 1989; West 1992: 48–70; Bélis 1995; Mathiesen 1999: 234–270.

**41** The similitude proposed by West (1997: 1) that “culture, like all forms of gas, tends to spread out from where it is densest into adjacent areas where it is less dense,” proves highly representative and meaningful for what concerns the Near East as the birthplace of most fundamental aspects of Greek civilization. It seems noteworthy that the Greeks themselves were aware of the eastern origins of the musical instruments and “styles” they used (the myth of Marsyas is an important evidence for this) although they often tried to claim the origins of deep-rooted practices and customs by ascribing them to a mythical “inventor” (πρώτος εὐρητήης), thus justifying and founding the superiority of the Hellenic culture.

**42** The word *kinnor* stems from the root \**knr*, which exists also in Canaanite, Phoenician, Cypriot (*Kinyras*) and Ugaritic (Franklin 2006a). It is first attested (in the form *kinnarum*) in a written document from Ebla, which may date to 2400 BCE (Franklin 2007: 33). It is worth reminding that neither *kinnor* nor *nebel* — another stringed instrument most widespread in ancient Israel — is likely to have been a harp: see Braun 1994: 1505; 2001: 527–529; 2002: 16–19.

The traditional tortoiseshell *lyra* (West 1992: 56–57; Mathiesen 1999: 237–248), reproducing the musical instrument that the Greeks traditionally believed was invented by Hermes,<sup>43</sup> was rather small and, most probably, high pitched. The larger *kithara* (West 1992: 51–56; Mathiesen 1999: 258–270) was the corresponding instrument in formal and public performances, where it accompanied choral songs intended to define and strengthen the identity of the community.

So while the small *lyra* plays an important role in the education of the young people, in regard to the whole community, the large *kithara* vouches for the ethical and educational aspect of melodies performed in religious rites and feasts in the *polis*:<sup>44</sup> for instance, in Plato's *Republic* (399d7–8) only the *lyra* and the *kithara* are considered useful for the sake of the *polis*,<sup>45</sup> and in *Laws* (812b–e), some rules are laid down for the teachings of the κίθαριστής, 'the teacher of *kithara*' aimed at making the young people achieve ἀρετή 'virtue' by imitating (μιμήσεις)<sup>46</sup> that which is ethically good. Moreover, a strict regulation concerning musical genres and their choral performances is put forward through an analogy between the νόμοι, considered as city laws, and the musical νόμοι (Pl. *Leg.* 799e10–800b1), namely songs performed with the accompaniment of the *kithara* (*Leg.* 700b5–6, 722d6–e1, 800e11–801b1, 801e1–802a5; *Resp.* 424c3–6; ps.-Arist. *Pr.* 19.28).<sup>47</sup>

The role of the lyre in musical education seems also to prefigure its therapeutic effects, on the grounds of an indissolubility of soul therapy and body therapy,<sup>48</sup> that may be traced, for instance, in Plato's thought (e.g., in *Chrm.* 156c). Already in the earliest Greek literary works that have come down to us, the use of the lyre is not restricted to the sphere of ethics and education, but extended also to some forms of music therapy, leading way to what we may call "psychotherapy." In the *Iliad* (9.185–189; cf. Ath. 14.624a; Ael. *VH* 14.23), for instance, Achilles plays the *phorminx* for soothing his anger and turning his thoughts away from Agamemnon's outrage of his honor (τιμή), and probably also for taking his mind

43 The word λύρα is first attested in *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 423.

44 Aristotle (*Pol.* 1341a18–20) leaves "professional" musical instruments, viz. suitable for competition and used in public performances (among which is the *kithara*), out of the youth education curriculum of the young people. The technical developments of musical instruments, and thus of performances, at the beginnings of the fourth century BCE could account for Aristotle's point of view. These innovations brought about a tendency to "professionalism" in performances, namely to virtuosity.

45 For the role of "strings" in Athens, see the detailed and thorough analysis in Wilson 2004.

46 For Plato, as well as for Aristotle, music conveys *ethos* by means of imitation.

47 For the classification of νόμοι, see Poll. *Onom.* 4.78–80 and ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 1132c–1134e.

48 On the soul and the body in Greek thought, especially before Plato, see Vegetti 1985: 201–228.

off the strains of battles.<sup>49</sup> Achilles' skill of playing the lyre might be understood as the outcome of an excellent aristocratic education (*Scholia Vetera in Iliadem* 9.188c3),<sup>50</sup> that would have aroused in him such a preference for this instrument as to lead him to choose it for himself among the spoils of Thebe.<sup>51</sup>

The association of the lyre with an aristocratic environment seems to stem from its link with the gods, in particular — for what concerns the Greeks — with Apollo, the god of light: it is not by chance that Apollo sometimes plays the part of musician at a cosmological level, since he “tunes” the world order as if it were a lyre, using sunbeams as a plectrum (Plut. *De Pyth or.* 16. 402 a7–b1 = Cleanthes 1.502.2 von Arnim 1903–1905; Scythinus, frag. 1 West 1972) and arousing harmonious sounds from the universe.

Moreover, in the aristocratic ethics, corroborated by myth, the lyre was often associated with the bow: in the *Odyssey* (21.404–411), when Odysseus takes the bow, ready to slaughter Penelope's suitors, the poet describes the hero handling his bow and observing it as a singer with his lyre, and the plucked string utters a sound similar to the cry of a swallow (v. 411, ἡ δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ἄεισε, χελιδόνι εἰκέλη ἀύδήν).<sup>52</sup> Similarities between bow and lyre stand out also in a much-studied fragment of Heraclitus (Heraclitus, 22B51 DK) — quoted by Plato in the *Symposium* (187a) — where harmony is said to spring from the reciprocal tension between opposites, as it happens with bow and lyre (Liddell-Scott 1293: s.v. παλίντονος, 3; Kirk et al. 1983; Serra 2003: 216–231); the verb ψάλλειν is, in fact, used often for

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**49** So the *Iliad* gives evidence also for musical performances in non-religious contexts: in the *ekphrasis* concerning the shield of Achilles (Hom. *Il.* 18.495, 569–570, 604–605) there is the first evidence ever in Greek literature for musical performances that are intended merely for amusement and not for worship; in that description, music seems to have an important function in everyday life.

**50** For Achilles' education, see Robbins 1993. According to tradition, Achilles learned music, medicine and the art of war from the centaur Cheiron (see, for instance, Hom. *Il.* 11.832 (medicine); ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 1146a; Philostr. *Imag.* 2.2.1–5; *Her.* 32; 45). This kind of education shares some similarities with eastern examples, as, for instance, the Indic *gurukala* (Sharan 1968; Vikrant 2005), namely the ancient educational training for Brahmins, including instruction in toxicology (snake-bites) and medicine, as well as music, archery and the study of the Vedas.

**51** A city in the same region as Troy. It seems worth mentioning that the scholiast may have anachronistically interpreted the text, since we have not any further evidence for an application of the Archaic *paideia* for the age of the Trojan War. This issue is part of the problem of interpreting the chronological frame of Homer.

**52** Odysseus's skill in archery reminds of its association with royalty in the Near East and in Egypt. We can think, for instance, of the Bronze Age Egyptian royal archery test, which was introduced by the Hyksos (it was already widespread in Persia); as attested in an inscription on a stone from Giza, pharaoh Amenophis II (1438–1412 BCE) had an extraordinary skill in bending the bow (West 1997: 431–435; Crowther 2007: 27–28).

both, as attested by Plutarch's mention of the performance of music using the bow as a lyre (Plut. *Demetr.* 19.10). Φόρμιγξ ἄχορδος 'lyre without strings' appears as an allusion to the bow in Arist. *Rh.* 1413a (= *Fragmenta Adespota*, 951 Page 1962).

The association of bow and lyre seems to be confirmed also where the divine is concerned, and in particular in the characterization of Apollo, the closest among the gods to the world of aristocracy: while programmatically stating his own skills in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* (131–132), the god actually refers to playing the lyre, using the bow and prophesying, and in Pindar's fifth *Pythian Ode* the lyre stands as his own musical instrument, through which he puts "peaceful good governance" (ἀπόλεμον [...] εὐνομία, 65–67) into men's minds. This association of bow and lyre reflects the aristocratic ethics and is widespread in the Greek world since the Homeric poems: in the first book of the *Iliad* (43–54), Apollo shoots arrows from his bow in order to spread a plague among the Achaeans, while a few verses later he sets himself as the god that brings harmony through the music of the lyre (1.603–604: Apollo plays the lyre for banqueting gods while the Muses accompany him with their songs). Besides this, Apollo himself is soothed by the music of paeans (1.472–474), and so, he frees the Achaeans from the plague he himself had sent them because of Agamemnon's outrage against the priest Chryses.

The strong link between Apollo and the lyre is also reflected in the relationship of the god with Orpheus, the mythical musician that shows the extraordinary power of the lyre and possesses, like Apollo, the traits of a lyre player and a prophet (*mantis*) (West 1983: 1–38); sometimes Apollo is actually named as Orpheus's father (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.176–177, ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος δὲ φορμιγκτᾶς ἀοιδᾶν πατῆρ / ἔμολεν, εὐαίνητος Ὀρφεύς, "From Apollo came the father of songs, the widely praised minstrel Orpheus" [trans. by Race 1997]; *Scholia in Pindari Pythias* 4.313a; it is undetermined whether the poet meant "the lyre player, Apollo's son," or "the lyre player by means of Apollo"; see Braswell 1988: 255–256). Orpheus was also considered a founder of initiation rites (τελεταί, Ar. *Ran.* 1032–1033; ps.-Eur. *Rhes.* 941–949) and the teacher of Musaeus (West 1983: 39–44), another mythical musician who was believed to be a predecessor of Homer and Hesiod and to have taught how to heal diseases (Ar. *Ran.* 1033). Both Orpheus and Musaeus were considered wonder makers by means of music, and Musaeus's name refers clearly to the Muses, associated with Apollo in their turn.

These mythical figures of wonder makers seem to show that the aspects of charm and "miracle" cannot be excluded from the general framework of the effects of music. Actually, the lyre itself has the power to "charm," establishing through this power a new order coming from Apollo and the Muses. This is well illustrated in the opening sequence of the strophe and antistrophe of Pindar's first *Pythian Ode*, where the poet shows in extremely fine verses the splendor

of the lyre, Apollo's (the god of the light) and the Muses' (who preside over arts, τέχνη) favorite musical instrument. The gods play the lyre, and are also subdued by its sounds; they are subjected to the power of the music of this instrument, that acts on the mind as a charm (v. 12, θέλγει φρένας) and is able to soothe anger and stop violence. Neither dance nor feasts can do without the lyre, and Zeus's thunderbolt itself, though made of a perennial fire, is put out by it. The father of the gods' eagle falls asleep on his scepter, his back rising in tune with the sounds of the lyre,<sup>53</sup> and even Ares, the war-god, "delights his heart in sleep" (v. 11: ἰάθει καρδίαν κώματι) and enjoys music as much as to be distracted from his tasks. The lyre therefore can even make the gods unmindful of their prerogatives and subdue violence.

If the lyre is so powerful when it comes to the gods, its effects can be no less when human beings are concerned. Pindar celebrates the victory of Ieron — the dedicatee of the ode — in the chariot race, while simultaneously taking the reactions of the gods to music as a model of its effects; it seems that through the music he aims at producing an atmosphere of beauty and pleasure for his audience, that may relieve them of their daily troubles and distress. The action of music is very close to that of a mighty persuasion (those performing music, the singers, "obey" that: Pind. *Pyth.* 3–4: πείθονται δ' ᾠοῖδοι σάμασιν / ἀγῆσιχόρων ὀπτόταν προομιῶν / ἀμβολὰς τεύχης ἐλελιζομένα, "and the singers heed your signals, whenever with your vibrations you strike up the chorus-leading preludes" [trans. by Race 1997]), and the charms of music are like arrows (κῆλα):<sup>54</sup> everybody surrenders to them,<sup>55</sup> subdued by their might,<sup>56</sup> forgetting all else.

In what follows, I will deal with some literary testimonies concerning the therapeutic effects of the music of the lyre on passions and the excesses brought about by them,<sup>57</sup> focusing especially on its efficacy in soothing anger and stop-

<sup>53</sup> The soothing effect of the lyre is evident in the participle χαλάξαις 'letting down' (v. 6), having the wings of the bird as its object.

<sup>54</sup> According to the scholium 21a–c, κῆλα would be in the place of κηλήματα (21b: κῆλα τὰ ὑπὸ μουσικῆς θέλγματα). The verb θέλγειν, in the following verse, reinforces the image of the music acting as a charm by subjecting the listeners' senses. On these verses of Pindar's first *Pythian Ode*, see, especially, Brillante 1992.

<sup>55</sup> Contrarily, music frightens Zeus's enemies (13: ὅσσα δὲ μὴ πεφίληκε Ζεὺς, ἀτύζονται), so that at the end of the composition (97–98), the notes of the φόρμιγγες do not welcome Phalaris, the cruel tyrant of Agrigentum.

<sup>56</sup> One can notice the participle κατασχομένος 'subdued', referred to Zeus's eagle (v. 10).

<sup>57</sup> It is possible to notice in ancient popular etymologies that the lyre was often linked with the therapy of human affections: Eustathius of Thessalonica (*Prooem. ad Pind.* 34.5), for instance, says that the word λύρα comes probably either from λύειν ἄρας ('to dissolve pains'; *Etymologicum Gudianum*, 375.6–9, s.v. λύρα), since in antiquity people believed it to be able to release from pains, or from λύτρον ('ransom': *Etym. Magn.* 572.1; *Scholia in Dionysium Thracem* 173.33e

ping violence. These testimonies concern Empedocles, Orpheus and, from the biblical world, the young David. As we shall see, the two mythical figures, Achilles and Orpheus, may be considered very close to the historic ones, that is Empedocles and David, so that the myth proves useful once more for the reconstruction of historically attested practices and notions.

## Therapeutic Use of the Lyre

In some stories, the lyre acts as an appeaser of anger and violent outbursts, and is also used to banish sorrow, low spirits, distress and real mental disorders. Among the sources attesting the psychagogic effects of the lyre and its use as a remedy, I limit myself to remind the reader of a few anecdotes concerning the early Pythagoreans told by Iamblichus (*VP* 65–66, 110–111, 113) and Porphyry (*P.* 32–33).<sup>58</sup> The “ethical” effects of the lyre are clearly visible in them:<sup>59</sup> in Iambl. *VP* 65–66, for instance, Pythagoras uses the lyre for exerting self-control and encouraging decorous behavior in his disciples.<sup>60</sup> Pythagoras himself surpasses all men in being the only one able to listen directly to the heavenly harmony (the music of the spheres), through which he puts back in order his mind according to the right proportions (Iambl. *VP* 66, τὸν τοῦ νοῦ λόγον εὐτακτούμενος), that is, according to the harmonious *rationes* on which the heavenly music is based. The lyre appears there as the musical instrument that imitates and reproduces the harmony of the world order, thus capable of restoring man’s well-being when he is upset. Moreover, the Neo-Platonist philosopher makes it clear that Pythagoras performed a kind of musical “self-therapy,” having enjoyed the privilege of

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and 308.15, cf. Hilgard 1883–1901; Eust. *Comm. in Il.* 574.36 van der Valk 1971–1987), because of Hermes’s “compensation” to Apollo after he had stolen his brother’s herd of oxen. While the real etymology for λύρα remains unknown (Chantraine 1999: 651, s.v. λύρα), the popular ones seem interesting and useful for understanding the ancient perception of the effects of this musical instrument.

**58** For the reliability of Iamblichus and Porphyry as sources for the early Pythagoreanism, see above n. 8.

**59** For the Pythagorean “ethical” rejection of the *aulos*, see Iambl. *VP* 111; Aristides Quintilianus 2.18, p. 91, 28–31 Winnington-Ingram.

**60** Cf. Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 80.384a1–5, where the exhalations of a compound named κύφι, which was believed to purify the faculty of getting beneficial and revealing dreams, are compared with the sounds of the lyre, “which the Pythagoreans used before sleep, to charm and heal the emotive and irrational part of the soul” (οἷς ἐχρῶντο πρὸ τῶν ὕπνων οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι, τὸ ἐμπαθὲς καὶ ἄλογον τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξεπάδοντες οὕτω καὶ θεραπεύοντες, trans. by Griffiths 1970).



listening directly to the highest music, the heavenly one, of which human music is just an imitation.

The use of the lyre as an appeaser of anger seems, then, to be efficacious as far as both the one playing it and the one listening to the music are concerned. It can also be considered a kind of “group therapy”: this can be seen, for instance, in the treatment that Pythagoras’s disciples underwent in springtime, that included singing and listening to paeans performed with the accompaniment of the lyre (Iambl. *VP* 110).

As far as the use of music therapy in case of mind and behavior disorders is concerned, I will refer to two sources in particular, both dealing with extraordinary men that show some remarkable similarities: the first of these sources is Iambl. *VP* 113 and 114, in which the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles of Agriguntum plays the part of the healing musician; the second — within a different cultural context, the biblical one — is an episode from 1 *Reg.* 16.16<sup>61</sup>, recounted in Greek many centuries later by the historian Flavius Josephus (*AJ* 6.166–169), in his account of the beginning of the relationship between King Saul and the young David.

## **Empedocles Musician and Magician: Therapy with Music and “Healing Words”**

In an anecdote concerning Empedocles, reported in Iamblichus’s *Life of Pythagoras*: the pre-Socratic philosopher,<sup>62</sup> who was entertaining a guest at home, succeeded in calming the murderous rage of a young man whose father had been previously condemned to death by the guest himself. He did so by singing with the accompaniment of the lyre the verse of *Odyssey* “dispelling sorrow and anger, and making all evil be forgotten” (νηπενθές τ’ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἅπάντων. Hom. *Od.* 4.221). Empedocles succeeded both in saving his guest from being murdered and in restraining the young man from committing an act that would have had a dreadful outcome for himself as well. Empedocles’ young “patient” is described as seething with anger, and appears deeply upset (ὡς εἶχε

<sup>61</sup> I refer in this paper to the Greek version of the *Septuagint*, where the books intended as *Regnorum* correspond to the *Books of Samuel* of the Masoretic text.

<sup>62</sup> Considered a pupil of Parmenides and Pythagoras (see, for instance, Diog. Laert. 8.51–77), Empedocles was also believed to be a wonder-working physician (Hermippus, frag. 27 Wehrli 1974, and, in part., Diog. Laert. 8.58–59, where it is said that Gorgias maintained that he himself had sometimes been present while Empedocles performed his wonders). As we shall see, the syntagm εὐηκέα βάξιν ‘healing utterance’ in Empedocles, 31B12.11 DK hints at the spells (*epoidai*) performed by him.

συγχύσεως καὶ θυμοῦ). The source stresses that as the young man burst into Empedocles' house the latter was already playing the lyre for his guest's amusement, and needed only to change the tune and to perform a calming melody in order to achieve the soothing effects he desired. In Empedocles' hands the lyre turns from a source of pleasure (τέρψις), aimed merely at entertaining, into a "therapeutic" instrument that proves effective against a psychophysical disorder manifested as a fierce fit of anger (θυμός). Therefore, Empedocles prevents the young man from committing a crime by "healing" his fury, described as a real disease (πάθος). Thus, while "it is very hard indeed for men, and resented, the flow of persuasion into their thought organ" (31B114 DK = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.9, trans. by Inwood 1992), as Empedocles himself states, it seems that music facilitates in this, being a most effective instrument of persuasion.<sup>63</sup> Music, then, appears in this story as an instrument for deterring violence, through soothing and charming effects that free people's minds of anger, coaxing them to abandon their craving for revenge.

There is some relation between this story and some fragments of Empedocles. Moreover, some elements emerging from them further suggest that, before the Hippocratic treatises, "medicine" and "magic" were not considered as separate disciplines, and music itself — either in its "proper" form or in the form of the *epode* — played an important part in the set of remedies offered by them both.

The traits of the man of science emerging from the fragments ascribed to the poem *On Nature* (Περὶ Φύσεως) and those of the seer (*mantis*) and the healer (*iatros*),<sup>64</sup> seen in the fragments considered as a part of *Purifications* (Καθαρμοί),<sup>65</sup> seem to accord with the complex character of Empedocles: these last two designations, used also as far as Orpheus is concerned,<sup>66</sup> are often attributed to lyre players<sup>67</sup> and are fully incorporated in the figure of the wise man (σοφός) "of exceptional knowledge" (περιώσια εἰδώς) and "master of all kinds of particularly

<sup>63</sup> See Sext. Emp. *Adversus Musicos* 6.5, where the persuasion (πειθώ) of music is said to be θελγούση 'charming'.

<sup>64</sup> Seers were very often also healers, as in the case of Melampus, the healer of the Argive women's madness (see, for instance, Hdt. 9.34). See Bremmer 2008b (= Bremmer 2008a: 133–151) on Melampus as a travelling seer and the analogies between this figure and eastern seers. For the characterization and the role of the seer in ancient Greece, see Flower 2008.

<sup>65</sup> For the existence of only one poem by Empedocles, including these two parts, rather than of two distinct poems, see Inwood 1992: 8–19. Empedocles' *Purifications* were part of the repertoire of *rhapsodoi*, as we read in Ath. 620d; see Franklin 2002: 19.

<sup>66</sup> On the presence of Orphic features in Empedocles' thought, see, especially, Riedweg 1995.

<sup>67</sup> See *Fragmenta Aesopota*, 405 Kannicht-Snell 1981: Death (*Thanatos*) states that Night has not given birth to her as mistress of the lyre (δεσπότην λύρας), as a seer (μάντιν), or as a healer (ιατρόν). In several sources there is some evidence of a work on medicine (ἱατρικός λόγος) that Empedocles himself wrote (Diog. Laert. 8.77 = Empedocles, 31A1 DK; *Suidae Lexicon*, s.v. Ἐμπεδοκλής = 31A2 DK; Arist. *Poet.* 1447b16–20; Plin. *HN* 36.69.202).

wise deeds” (παντοίων τε μάλιστα σοφῶν ἐπιήρανος ἔργων: Empedocles, 31B129 DK, trans. by Inwood 1992; cf. Iamblichus, *VP* 65; Porph. *VP* 30 and 31). The superiority of this figure to the common man is emphasized in particular in Late Antiquity, but is already made prominent by the philosopher from Agrigentum (Empedocles, 31B146 DK = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 4.150). So, though strictly centered on the musical healing of passions and ethically orientated, Iamblichus’s evidence does not seem to contradict the therapeutic aspects of music reconstructed through the fragments of Empedocles moreover, this passage underlines the importance he ascribes to remedies (*pharmaka*) as an instrument through which the wise man demonstrates his indispensability for the community.<sup>68</sup>

This considered, the anecdote mentioned in *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* is noteworthy in my opinion, for its contribution to the characterization of the figure of the *sophos* and to the understanding of its perception; moreover, it is also coherent with information about the activities of Empedocles, known to us through the fragments themselves, and in particular through frs. B111 and 112 DK.<sup>69</sup>

In the former, placed by Diels at the end of the poem *On Nature* (Περὶ Φύσεως), Empedocles appears as a μάντις and initiator in rites, and announces to Pausanias, his disciple, that thanks to his teachings he will become master of weather phenomena, so gaining preeminence within the community. Pausanias will first learn the remedies for evil and old age (φάρμακα δ’ ὄσσα γεγάσι κακῶν καὶ γήραος ἄλλακ’ / πεύση) and everything he shall need for ruling over the weather phenomena; he shall learn even how to bring the dead back to life (v. 12, ἄξεις δ’ ἐξ Αἴδαο καταφθιμένου μένος ἀνδρός, “you shall bring from Hades the strength of a man who has died” [trans. by Inwood 1992]).<sup>70</sup> This aspect is deeply related to the tradition concerning the *goes* (Burkert 1962), which characterizes also Orpheus as he attempts to bring his wife, Eurydice, back to life using the persuasion of his

<sup>68</sup> In Empedocles, 31A112 DK and Diog. Laert. 8.70, we read that Empedocles succeeded in healing a plague that affected the city of Selinous, close to Agrigentum, by deviating the flows of two rivers, so that the inhabitants of that city considered him to be on the level of a god.

<sup>69</sup> Collins (2008: 108) is of different opinion, since he considers this story as “probably apocryphal,” and focuses on it mainly for the reference to the Homeric verse used as a charm, the only aspect that in his opinion would prevent us from considering it “merely amusing” (but see Provenza 2012, pp. 124–126).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Diog. Laert. 8.69, where Empedocles succeeds in healing a dying woman. A similarity can be noticed between Empedocles and Pythagoras; the latter — according to the oldest evidence concerning him, Xenophanes, DK 21 B 7 = Diog. Laert. 8.36 — professes the doctrine of the transmigration of souls (which, according to Herodotus [2.123], was brought to Greece from Egypt) and would have asserted that he was immortal.

music.<sup>71</sup> The word γόης refers to a practitioner of magic<sup>72</sup> that, especially in the late Archaic and Classic periods, seems to be primarily a specialist in dealings with the dead (Johnston 1999a: 82–123);<sup>73</sup> it is Thracian in its origin,<sup>74</sup> and stems from the same root as γόος (Burkert 1962: 43) — the ritual lament sung to deliver the dead from the world of the living to the Underworld<sup>75</sup> — and the verb γοάω, meaning “to sing a song of mourning.” In Aeschylus’s *Persians*, the *goos* is mentioned as a kind of “song” for conjuring the spirits of the dead up from the Hades (v. 687, ψυχάγωγοίς [...] γόοις;<sup>76</sup> Graf 1995: 35). This seems to attest its older use as a magic song for the dead within rituals that can be characterized as necromantic (Graf 1995: 30–33; Johnston 1999a: 111–118; Ogden 2001: 110–112).

Kingsley (1995: 226) maintains that, in this fragment, Empedocles appears as a kind of “shaman”<sup>77</sup> opposing Orpheus; though, as a matter of fact, he is an

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**71** Our oldest source for this episode of the myth of Orpheus is Eur. *Alc.* 357–362 (this tragedy was performed in 438 BCE), that mentions also Eurydice’s return from the Underworld.

**72** Plato considers *goeteia* — as well as everything concerning magic — as an awful *techne*, as it is clear for instance in *Leg.* 909b, 933a (he refers the word *goêtes* also to the Sophists, represented as “charmers”: see, for instance, *Soph.* 234c, 235a). Notwithstanding, Plato refers the word *goês* to Eros in *Symp.* 202e in order to emphasize his skill in enabling the human to communicate with the divine.

**73** See also Johnston 1999b: a condensed and modified version of the same.

**74** *Goeteia* (Johnston 1999a: 102–118), the *techne* of the *goes*, has Near Eastern origins: the Greeks took over the idea of manipulating the dead through specialized techniques from Mesopotamian culture in the late Archaic period (see Johnston 1999a: 86–95). This would have happened in a time when communication with the dead was part of their own culture and was becoming increasingly isolated from everyday life (Johnston 1999a: 95–100). As for Orpheus as a Thracian singer, it should be noted that this feature might refer to the eastern origins of Greek music and of mystery rites (see *Scholia in Euripidem Alcestis* 968, concerning σάνιδες ‘wooden tablets’ inscribed with Orpheus’s magical words and stored in a sanctuary of Dionysos on Mount Haemus, in Thracia), rather than to its “shamanistic” aspects (these can be considered inappropriate also for Zalmoxis, the Thracian δαίμων ‘semi-divine being’ who was believed by the Getae, a Thracian tribe, to assure life after death; see Hdt. 4.93–96; Pl. *Chrm.* 156d–e; Graf 1987: 91–92; cf. Guthrie 1962: 159 for the Greek adoption of the Thracian concept of immortality), since the story of his descent to the Underworld cannot be dated prior to the fifth century BCE, and seems to be related to the power of his music. Graf (1987: esp. 80–85) points out that shamanism is not the appropriate notion in respect to Orpheus’s descent to the Underworld.

**75** As for *goos* and its difference from *threnos* — a lament sung by professional performers (usually men) and exalting the virtues of the dead — see Alexiou 1974: 11–13, 102–103 and Johnston 1999a: 100–102.

**76** We know that Aeschylus himself wrote a drama bearing the title *Ψυχάγωγοί*. Tragic passages where *goos* is mentioned — both as a ritual lament, and as a necromantic spell — are listed in Alexiou 1974: 225–226 n. 6.

**77** Burkert (1962, 1972: 153–154) and Dodds (1951: 145–147) also understood the last verse of the fragment in a “shamanistic” sense.

unsuccessful shaman failing to bring back to life his wife, Eurydice<sup>78</sup> despite having been able to persuade the gods of the Underworld thanks to the power of his music. So these verses together with frag. B112 DK seem further to confirm the inappropriateness of the category of “shamanism” to ancient Greece<sup>79</sup> and instead let the personality of Empedocles come out as that of a *goes* who is able to help his community both by means of evoking the souls of the dead, and by performing *epodai* for healing diseases: *goetes* were, in fact, also credited with the use of *epodai* (Dionysos, for instance, is said to be a γόης ἔπωδός in Eur. *Bacch.* 234).<sup>80</sup>

Even the lyre appears as a further element contributing to characterize Empedocles as a *goes*, so that the anecdote told by Iamblichus can be rightly considered within the Empedoclean tradition: the lyre was used, in fact, by *goetes* for evoking the spirits of the dead, although percussions, especially drums, were typical of this kind of rituals (Graf 1987: 83). An important evidence of this is offered by the title of an Orphic poem, Λύρα, that was handed down only in a scholium to Verg. *Aen.* 6.119 discovered in codex *Parisinus lat. 7930* in 1925 and therefore not included in Kern’s collection. The text of the scholium refers to Varro, who would have asserted that “*librum Orphei de vocanda anima Liram*

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**78** Pl. *Symp.* 179d is our oldest evidence about the tragic outcome of Orpheus’s attempt to lead his wife back from the Underworld.

**79** Many scholars have considered Empedocles a “Greek shaman”: I limit my references here to Dodds 1951: especially 135–178 (about “shamanism” in ancient Greece, see also the oldest and most famous reference, Meuli 1935) and to Burkert (1962) who finds some outstanding features of shamanism in the figure of the *goes*. Their opinions have later been accepted by Kingsley (1995) and more recently by Collins (2008: 52–54). Inconsistencies in this point of view have been raised, yet much evidence — collected particularly over the last three decades by Jan Bremmer — suggests that “shamanism” properly considered is quite far from Greek thought and from its practice concerning the relationship between the living and the dead. For instance, the reviving of the dead could seem a “shamanistic” feature of Empedocles, yet he can in no way be considered a shaman, because he neither descends to the Underworld, nor performs ecstatic trances and his soul does not leave his body (Bremmer 1983: 33–34; cf. also Minar 1971). So figures previously considered as “Greek shamans” — especially Pythagoras, Epimenides, Empedocles, and Orpheus — lack of a fundamental feature of the Siberian and northern shamans, namely, ecstasies involving excursions of the soul. Bremmer (1983: 29–48; 2002: 27–40) has particularly stressed this point by demonstrating that evidence for shamans among the Scythians themselves is doubtful, and scholars considering the abovementioned early Greek figures as “shamans” are influenced by later interpretations, since contemporary reports contain no evidence of “shamanism” in relation with them. I find it therefore more appropriate to define such figures as those mentioned above as *goetes*, rather than “shamans,” keeping in mind that the Greek *goes* is quite far from the “shaman,” and is a special kind of magician who declares himself mainly able to connect the living with the dead using his *epodai*.

**80** See Johnston 1999a: 111 n. 71 for further references.

*nominari*,” and concludes: “*et negantur animae sine cithara posse ascendere*” (West 1983: 30). The scholium seems related to necromancy with the lyre (Nock 1927: 170) lurking behind the myth of Orpheus’s descent to Hades, but might also refer to the music of the spheres and to the ascent of the human soul through the cosmic circles “aided” by the music of the lyre, which is similar to the soul’s own music (West 1983: 30–32). The solution offered by West (1983: 32–33), in whose opinion the “cosmic” Alexandrian interpretation is joined by the tradition concerning the Orphic Mysteries in southern Italy — where the lyre was involved as an instrument for the “release” of the souls from the horrors of death<sup>81</sup> — links cosmology with necromancy, so offering an interesting point of view on the conceptual evolution of Archaic practices that enjoyed a substantial *revival* in the Hellenistic and Roman Ages.

As far as this *goetic* aspect of the personality of the pre-Socratic philosopher is concerned, it is still possible to notice some perplexity in modern studies that seems after all to be unjustified; several decades ago, for instance, van Groningen (1956) resolutely rejected the attribution of the verses of this fragment to Empedocles.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, arguing for disparity between “science” and “magic” in Empedocles’ thought and rejecting the latter, Casertano (2000: 217–228), for instance, has proposed a “rational” and metaphorical interpretation of the figure of Empedocles as a magician.<sup>83</sup> However, if we consider both the verses, namely what we are really able to read of Empedocles’ thought and the evidence given by his contemporaries, such as the sophist Gorgias, a disciples of Empedocles that clearly refers to Empedocles’ activity as that of a *goes* (Diog. Laert. 8.59; Battegazzore 1999), things seem to be quite different from the two abovementioned trends of interpretation. Some verses of Empedocles’ that have come down to us seem to have been most probably a part of his activity as a magician (Kingsley 1995: 232), especially since the tradition of Empedocles being a magician (Mauduit 1999) clearly stems from what Empedocles says about himself (Kingsley 1995:

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**81** Cf. also Burkert 1992: 65 on the use of setting pipes in graves to soothe the wrathful spirits of the dead, preventing them from bringing evil to the living.

**82** He ascribes them to a comic poet who intended to make a caricature of the philosopher.

**83** Casertano maintains that although on a formal level Empedocles’ poetry is characterized by magic and ritual elements, generally connected to Orphism, his thought was, in fact, detached from these practices. Therefore, the contents of Empedocles’ verses, that is, what he really wishes to convey through his verses, and the *form* in which he conveys them, would appear to be two very different matters. Regarding frag. B111 DK, Casertano (Casertano 2000: 224–225, n. 12) maintains that Empedocles most probably referred to his own ability to acquire the learning of the deceased, that enriched his own mind with knowledge, as it is attested also in Empedocles, 31B129 DK.

221), that makes us consider him a *iatromantis*,<sup>84</sup> a “divine” healer performing his tasks through prophecies, charms and purifications<sup>85</sup> (Vegetti 1996; Kingsley 1999: 101–115; interesting and fascinating though odd). In this regard, frag. B112 DK, transmitted by Diogenes Laertius (8.62; according to the edition of Diels and Kranz, this fragment would be the first of *Purifications*) appears to be all-important and is worth quoting it in its entirety:

ὦ φίλοι, οἱ μέγα ἄστῳ κατὰ ξανθοῦ Ἀκράγαντος  
 ναίετ' ἄν' ἄκρα πόλεος, ἀγαθῶν μελεδήμονες ἔργων,  
 ξείνων αἰδοῖοι λιμένες, κακότητος ἄπειροι,  
 χαίρετ'· ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός  
 πωλεῦμαι μετὰ πᾶσι τετιμένος, ὥσπερ ἔοικα,  
 ταινίαις τε περιστέπτος στέφεσίν τε θαλείοις.  
 τοῖσιν † ἄμ' † ἄν' ἴκωμαι ἄστεα τηλεθάοντα,  
 ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναίξιν, σεβίζομαι· οἱ δ' ἄμ' ἔπονται  
 μυρίοι ἐξερέοντες, ὅπῃ πρὸς κέρδος ἀταρπός,  
 οἱ μὲν μαντοσυνέων κεκρημένοι, οἱ δ' ἐπὶ νούσων  
 παντοίων ἐπύθοντο κλυεῖν εὐηκέα βάξιν,  
 δηρὸν δὴ χαλεπῆσι πεπαρμένοι <ἀμφ' ὀδύνησιν>.

“O friends, who dwell in the great city of the yellow Acragas, up in the high parts of the city, concerned with good deeds, <respectful harbours for strangers, untried by evil> hail! I, in your eyes a deathless god, no longer mortal, go among all, honoured, just as I seem: wreathed with ribbons and festive garlands. As soon as I arrive in flourishing cities I am revered by all, men and women. And they follow at once, in their ten thousands, asking where is the path to gain, some in need of divinations, others in all sorts of diseases sought to hear a healing *word*,<sup>86</sup> having been pierced <about by harsh pains> for too long a time” (trans. by Inwood 1992).

Empedocles’ personality in this fragment towers above the community he is a part of and for whose sake he carries out an essential activity; we learn this from his assertion that he goes about his fellow-citizens “as a deathless god” (Trépanier 2004: 79–81), and that great honors and veneration are bestowed upon him (4–6). Moreover, the community is eager to take advantage of his powers, yearning for his predictions. Among these are also some people afflicted by disease and longing for a “healing word” (10–12).

<sup>84</sup> The word is referred to Apollo in Aesch. *Eum.* 63 and to his son, the Egyptian medicine god Apis, in Aesch. *Supp.* 263 (cf. also Aesch. *Ag.* 1621–1623).

<sup>85</sup> See for instance the case of Melampus “purifying” the Proitides from their madness in Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.2.2.

<sup>86</sup> I prefer to translate βάξιν into “word,” instead of using the term “oracle,” proposed by Inwood. The reasons will be clarified in what follows.

The term βάζις, that can be translated in a broad sense as “word” but is also used to denote oracular responses (Soph. *Trach.* 87), seems to refer in this context to the practice of *epodai*. It is almost as though we can see these people, afflicted with every kind of pain, asking Empedocles at least for solace: according to Diocles of Carystus, a physician of the Sicilian Medical School<sup>87</sup> — that referred to Empedocles as an ancestor — the *epode* would have the same effects as the παρηγορία ‘assuagement’, since it acts on the πνεῦμα ‘breath’, of a wounded person, connecting it to the breath of the therapist, and arousing a kind of sympathy between them (*Scholia in Homeri Odysseam* 19.457 [vol. 2, p. 681 Dindorf] = Diocles, frag. 150 van der Eijk 2000: Diocles refers to the specific action of sung spells as that of a hemostat). This fragment, then, corroborates the representation of Empedocles as a *goes* offered by frag. B111 DK.

Thus, Empedocles performed his activity of physician making use of both “traditional” remedies, as for instance words forming a spell (*epode*), and of remedies (*pharmaka*), so that, applying Detienne’s (1977) effective definition, his portrayal as a wise man might be regarded as that of a “master of truth”<sup>88</sup> (Lloyd 2003: 24–27). However, as is the case with frag. B111 DK, several scholars have been skeptical about hints to magic in frag. B112 DK, mainly about the meaning of the εὐηκὴς βάζις and about its use by Empedocles. According to Wright (1981: 10), for instance, the mention of both φάρμακα κακῶν ‘remedies to evils’, in frag. B111 DK and εὐηκὴς βάζις ‘healing word’, in frag. B112 DK, would place Empedocles within the extent of sorcery (*goeteia*) and spells, rather than in that of medicine, because magic is to be considered as opposite to medicine. Nevertheless, the notion of “scientific” medicine, as we understand it nowadays, also on the basis of the Hippocratic treatises (especially *On Ancient Medicine* and *On the Sacred Disease*), can be applied neither to Empedocles’ times, nor to his overall activity, since magic and medicine seem to overlap within his thought to the point that magic takes the form of a real medical remedy (Kingsley 1995). The use of the word (βάζις) as a spell for healing diseases would show this aspect of Empedocles’ personality.

The use of music for soothing impulsive and violent moods has two aspects: on the one hand it shows Iamblichus’s interest in setting the philosopher within

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<sup>87</sup> This school would seem to be connected with the use of magic, so that, according to some scholars, the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* would really refer to this while carrying on a strong controversy against magic (Jones 1979: 10–11). Diocles practiced as a physician in the first half of the fourth century BCE; his literary production is known only through summaries and quotations made by other authors, especially Galen (van der Eijk 2000).

<sup>88</sup> Detienne’s essay focuses on the role of the word as a medium of truth (ἀλήθεια) and of deception, and as an instrument of persuasion (πειθώ) in the Archaic Greek poetry.



an ethical background that seems deeply influenced by Plato's thought, thus emphasizing his relationship with Pythagoreanism (revised by the Neo-Platonic thinkers in the light of Plato); on the other hand, beyond later interpretations, it seems to be connected with the complex set of the "traditional" practices.

Wright's "rationalization" of the εὐηκῆς βᾶξις goes as far as retrenching Empedocles' activity within his community to the only aspect which we would consider acceptable from a "scientific" point of view: she maintains that this syntagm would not be used to refer to a spell, but rather to the diagnosis of a disease, and at the same time to orders of remedies, "which would be all that the conditions of a crowded street surgery would allow" (Wright 1981: 267). However, the precariousness of life, that would have distressed the Ancients at least as much as it does distress us, together with the charisma that Empedocles was certainly gifted with — as far as can be learned from the fragments — must have made him a leading figure and a steady point of reference within his community (Lloyd 2003: 24–26); these features do not seem to be in contrast to the practice of magic.

Taking, then, frs. B11 and 112 DK into account, the anecdote about Empedocles being a healer by means of music in Iamblichus's *Life of Pythagoras* appears to be quite consistent with the Sicilian philosopher's personality<sup>89</sup> as it emerges from his self-testimony: the effect of a Homeric verse working as a spell does not actually seem of less importance in soothing anger than the musical performance with the lyre, so that an agreement between the use of music therapy and that of spells seems to emerge from this anecdote and the abovementioned fragments, as well as from what concerns Orpheus, a lyre player who was also credited with the use of *epodai*.<sup>90</sup> Besides this, Orpheus's descent to the Underworld makes him a magician with the traits of a *goes* (this is true also for Empedocles, though the latter is never said to have descended to Hades); Orpheus's decapitated head uttering oracles on Lesbos (Ogden 2001: 208 and n. 19) actually turns him — at least after death — into a *mantis*.

In Iamblichus *VP* 113–114, Empedocles appears to be associated, on the one hand, with the Pythagorean tradition concerning music therapy (Lain Entralgo 1970: 74–82) and, on the other hand, with the ancient use of sung spells rooted in folklore: as far as this aspect is concerned, the passage seems to echo the εὐηκῆς βᾶξις, the 'healing word' of frag. B112 DK. Therefore, even if the recentness of Iamblichus's anecdote is noteworthy, limiting the interpretation of such an event to musical *ethos* would nevertheless appear artificial. Actually, it does not seem

<sup>89</sup> Kingsley (1995: 247–248) mentions the use of a Homeric verse as a spell against anger that can be found, about a millennium after Empedocles, in an Egyptian magic papyrus known as the *Paris Papyrus* (Heim 1892: 515).

<sup>90</sup> See on p. 311.

necessary to assume the existence of an *ethos* theory behind an event that may be explained by evidence itself, namely by the traditional use of music and old songs for soothing agitation and psychophysical upset (which, for instance, Plato refers to in *Laws* 790–791, in relation to a comparison between babies and people taking part in the Corybantic rites). Moreover, the remedy used by Empedocles for soothing anger places itself within the range of the Pythagorean use of music for healing, and we have no reason to believe that the early Pythagoreans, as well as Empedocles himself, had connected these practices with an *ethos* theory, rather than with “musical magic.”

## David and the Kinnor

An episode in the Bible, distant in time and in historical context from the aforementioned ones, shows that in different cultures (even if not unconnected one from the other) the same qualities were attributed to music and to its effects on human life, including also its capability to beneficially treat diseases.

In 1 *Reg.*, the events concerning the arrival of David at the court of King Saul have a strong connection with his musical skills, thanks to which he gains the king’s trust and begins his ascent to glory and power. Since the spirit of God had departed from him, Saul was assailed by evil spirits that wore him out. The king’s advisors then suggested resorting to music therapy, by looking for a skilled *kinnor* player (see above, n. 42) that would play this instrument every time Saul underwent the onslaught of the evil spirits afflicting him with madness. After Saul agreed to this proposal, he was told that a young man from Bethlehem, one of Jesse’s sons, was a skilled *kinnor* player, as well as being wise, handsome and an expert at handling weapons: these features evidence that the Lord is with him (1 *Reg.* 16.18). A messenger was then sent asking that David is released from guarding his father’s flocks and sent to the king. When David arrived at the court of Saul he immediately enjoyed his favor, since he proved able to free the king from his distress: “As the superhuman spirit seized Saul, David took the *kinnor* in his hands and played it (καὶ ἐλάμβανεν Δαυιδ τὴν κινύραν καὶ ἔψαλλεν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ). Saul calmed down and felt better (ἀνέψυχεν Σαουλ, καὶ ἀγαθὸν αὐτῷ), and the evil spirit drew back from him”<sup>91</sup> (1 *Reg.* 16.23; my translation). Josephus (*AJ* 6.168–169) tells the same events pointing out that the young David was a real doctor for the king; actually he states that “as the king was troubled by those evil spirits, whenever this would happen, David was his only doctor, since he

<sup>91</sup> Gregorius Nyssenus (*In inscriptiones Psalmorum* 5.33 Jaeger) represents the healing effect of the music of David through the verb *κατεπάδω*.

was able to make Saul to come to his senses by means of songs and playing the *kinnor*” (my translation). The symptoms of Saul’s disease are referred to as “suffocations and strangulations” (πνιγμοὺς [...] καὶ στραγγάλας, *AJ* 6.166) and may be connected with a disease of the soul, but represent real physical pains as well, and prove to be sensitive just to music therapy.

Youth, beauty and skill both in playing the *kinnor*, and in handling weapons, emerge as basic features within the description of David. These are the same essential traits characterizing the well-educated young Greek aristocrat, and earlier, the hero, as in the case of Achilles playing the *phorminx* in the ninth book of the *Iliad* (see above, pp. 11–12). David’s own gracefulness and the results he gets remind us moreover of an assertion ascribed to Damon<sup>92</sup>, acknowledged in tradition as the founder of the theory of musical *ethos*: according to him, “in singing and playing the *kithara*, the boy has to show not just courage and wisdom, but also righteousness” (δ[ε]ῖν ἄ<ι>δον[τα ἢ κιθ]αρίζοντα τὸν [παῖδα] μὴ μόνον ἀνδρε[ῖαν ἐμφαίν]εσθαι καὶ σω[φροσύνη]ν ἀλλὰ καὶ δι[καιοσύνη]ν, Philodemus *De Musica* 3.77.13–17, 55 Kemke 1884 = Damon, 37B4 DK). It is possible to notice in this interesting fragment that the virtues associated with somebody playing a musical instrument are also considered as a guarantee of the ethical efficacy of the music performed, that would prove to be beneficial for listeners. We could think then that the dignity and high-mindedness coexisting within young David corresponded to the Greek σωφροσύνη ‘temperance’ and δικαιοσύνη ‘fairness’, the virtues owned by people educated to a moderate and moderating music and able to help others by means of that.

## Orpheus and David

In Jewish tradition, David is considered the author of most of the *Book of Psalms*, which represents the foundations of Hebrew sung poetry. This outstanding aspect of David as the initiator of an extraordinarily important musical tradition seems to connect him — as far as Greek culture is concerned — with Orpheus, to whom the beginnings of the Greek musical and poetical traditions are ascribed. Like David, Orpheus sings with the accompaniment of the lyre,<sup>93</sup> through which

<sup>92</sup> See above, n. 28.

<sup>93</sup> Moreover, he is sometimes considered to be the actual inventor of the lyre — the main instrument in the Greek musical system: in Timotheus’s *Persians* (fourth century BCE), for instance, it is said that “first Orpheus yielding rich music (πρῶτος ποικιλόμοσος Ὀρφεύς), Calliopes’ son, was father of the lyre” (221–223; my translation). Although <χελ>υν is a reconstructed lection, it appears trustworthy. As Geerlings (2005: 256–257) has maintained, in Early Christian iconogra-

he is able to do great wonders: he makes trees and mountains move and draws wild beasts around him<sup>94</sup> (for instance, in Eur. *Bacch.* 560–564; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.23–34; Conon, frag. 45 Jacoby = Test. 115 Kern; Ov. *Met.* 10.88–108, 143–144),<sup>95</sup> while birds gather and fishes come to surface at the sound of his lyre. This aspect can be observed also in a fragment of the lyric poet Simonides of Ceus (frag. 567 Page 1962 = Tzetz. *Chil.* 1.309–310, p. 14 Kiessling) — most probably the oldest literary evidence (from the second half of the sixth century BCE) of the powers of Orpheus' music.<sup>96</sup> So the musician succeeds in mastering nature, just as Empedocles pretends, in his turn, that he is able both to do so and to endow others with such a power by means of his wisdom (*sophia*). Moreover, although David is not said to perform music for animals, namely for the flocks he pastured, while Orpheus is said to charm even animals by means of his lyre, both these figures seem nonetheless to be connected with nature.

However, the characters of Orpheus and David seem to contrast where struggles against powers that are either hostile to men's wishes or prove harmful are involved. By many of his music, Orpheus succeeds in persuading the gods of the Underworld to return his wife, Eurydice, to him alive. Nonetheless, he fails to comply with their prohibition to turn back and look at her before they have both left Hades, and Eurydice disappears forever. David, on the other hand, succeeds in defeating the evil spirits upsetting Saul in his fits of madness, even if his musical performance must be repeated whenever a fit occurs. Nonetheless, within the saga of the Argonauts, Orpheus is considered the rescuer of his fellow travelers from the fatal danger of the Sirens, by outdoing them in singing (Eur. *Hyps.* frag. 752g Kannicht 2004; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.891–919; *Scholia in Apollonii Rhodii Argonauticas* 1.23 = Herodorus 31F42–43 Jacoby): in this respect, he seems once again close to David, for he prevails against evil. Moreover, Orpheus fights evil with his music to the end. He tries to defend himself against the Thracian

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phy the figure of Orpheus with the lyre is often associated with Christ, since through his music he emerges as a prefiguration of Christ's incarnation, according to the Fathers of the Church.

**94** The motive of Orpheus surrounded by wild and domesticated animals, listening to his music, is widespread in Christian iconography of the second to fourth century CE, in which Orpheus is associated with King David playing the *kinnor* (Eisler 1925: 11). King David is shown playing his instrument for animals in an "Orphic" iconographic scheme, in a mosaic from a synagogue in Gaza, now exhibited at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem (508–509 CE; Gareizou 1994: 97, catal. 170).

**95** Lieberg (1984) discusses Orpheus' powers over nature as they appear in Latin poetry of the Augustan Age.

**96** Orpheus also plays the lyre in the oldest known iconographic testimonies of him, namely on a metope of the shrine of the Sicyons at Delphi (about 570 BC; Blatter 1984: 593, catal. n. 2; Kern 1922: 1), and on an Attic Black-Figure plate of the second half of the sixth century BC (it bears no inscription, but probably represents Orpheus playing the lyre and surrounded by animals; see Gareizou 1994: 98 n. 191 and Callipolitis-Feytmans 1974: 194–195, 364, pl. 67 K 14).

women who want to murder him by opposing their violence with his lyre,<sup>97</sup> and his head continues to sing even after he is beheaded (Conon, frag. 45 Jacoby; Luc. *Ind.* 109 = T 1052 I, III Bernabé; Ov. *Met.* 11.50–55), thus showing that the beauty of the divine gift of song — as well as the harmony within the world order — shall never stop.

The persuasive aspect of Orpheus's music is sometimes explicitly placed within the sphere of the *epode* as it appears, for instance, in some Euripidean verses: in *Alcestis* (357) there is actually a reference to Orpheus's skill in persuading by means of words (γλώσσα) and music (μέλος), so that the effect of his songs is clearly assimilated to that of a spell (359: ὕμνοισι κηλήσαντα),<sup>98</sup> while in *Iphigenia in Aulis* (1211–1215) the protagonist, about to be sacrificed, mentions persuasion by means of a spell (*epode*) as Orpheus's skill par excellence, saying that she has nothing but tears to dissuade her father from his wicked resolution to sacrifice her. An *epode* of Orpheus is further mentioned in Euripides' *Cyclops*, the only satyr play that has come down to us in full, where the chorus of satyrs says that this spell is so powerful that it can cause a firebrand to thrust itself in the Cyclops's eye (Eur. *Cyc.* 646–648). Some verses of *Alcestis* (962–972) refer to Orpheus's therapeutic activity: in fact, the chorus, referring to the ineluctable force of necessity (ἀνάγκη), claims that there is no remedy (φάρμακον) for this necessity — not “in the Thracian tablets of the poet Orpheus,” nor “in the cures which Phoebus Apollo gave to the Asclepiads, providing remedies for poor suffering mortals” (966–972; trans. by Conacher 1988).<sup>99</sup> Orpheus's *epodai* then seem to remind us of Empedocles' ones, mentioned in frag. B112 DK, pointing out that song, even in the form of sung spells, generates persuasion in listeners and helps to overcome difficulties, besides restoring psychophysical health.

Similarities between Orpheus, Empedocles and David seem then to emerge not only where the use of the lyre is involved: Orpheus is associated with *epodai* and mystic practices, as well as Empedocles. On the other hand, traditionally, he is a young musician to whom the Greeks ascribe the origins of their musical heritage, just as the Jewish people ascribe theirs to David. Moreover, David's use

<sup>97</sup> It is a dominant idea in iconography relating to Orpheus's death: see, for instance, Garezou 1994: 86, catal. n. 44.

<sup>98</sup> Christopoulos (1991: 214–215) contrasts the practical purposes of Orpheus's music, which are also linked with charms, to the “intellectualistic” purposes of Apollo's music.

<sup>99</sup> In these verses, the “irrational” magic medicine and the “scientific” Hippocratic medicine are juxtaposed in order to stress the helplessness of both against death, the ineluctable impending fate of all men — death. It is also notable that in the tablets mentioned in the text, the musical element does not play any role, but rather the spoken words do: these verses are therefore close to the notion of *epôidê* as “magic formula” that becomes predominant in Late Antiquity and is mainly attested in magic papyri.

of music for healing Saul may be easily compared with Empedocles using the lyre in the Iamblichean passage.

It is also noteworthy that music stands out in the first *Book of Samuel* (1 Reg. 16) and in the abovementioned passage of Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews* as a motif in David's fortunes: he appears in the biblical story as a musician and a music therapist and gains the king's trust thanks to these skills. Once the king's trust has been gained a long series of troublous events starts, marked also by Saul's envy and hatred, eventually leading David to assume royal dignity. Besides this, in the episode of the conveyance of the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Reg. 6; Wright 2002), David shows that he himself fully actualizes the musical aspect of the worship of Yahweh, asserting that he does not feel any shame when performing music and dancing in the presence of his servants and female slaves, for he does so in order to praise God. These performances involve then a use of music and dance aimed to establish a close bond with God. Moreover, David is, of course, a great expert in musical art capable of using music for various purposes, including therapy. Therefore, contrary to Michal, Saul's daughter and David's first wife, who is not an expert in music and claimed that David behaved inappropriately in front of his servants and his people, crossing the limits of dignity in an indecent and careless agitation (Wright 2002: 215–225), David asserted that he did his best in performing music and dance to honor God (Wright 2002: 223, 225: four of the divinity's five senses can be stimulated: namely, the senses of smell and taste by means of sacrifice and the senses of hearing and sight by means of music and dance). Further, he shows through his glee that he enjoys God's favor.

In the events of David's life, the *kinnor* is not only a musical instrument in the service of worship, but also a worldly one, since it allows to do something for the sake of people afflicted with pains.<sup>100</sup> The entire range of this instrument's capa-

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**100** According to Rouget (1986: 213–218), David's intervention in the case of Saul in 1 Reg. 16 does not concern music therapy. He maintains that David does not function as an exorcist of the evil spirit tormenting Saul, for the king himself is a prophet, and prophetic virtues in the Bible are inspired through music (as it is seen, for instance, in 2 Reg. 3.10–15): just the music performed by David allows Saul to recover the spirit of God, whose removal had caused the possession by the evil spirit. To Rouget's mind, music therapy must also be excluded, since it implies a magic connotation of the virtues of music, which would be far from what can actually be read in the text. In my opinion, it is significant, nevertheless, that as soon as David enters with the *kinnor*, intending to make the evil spirit to withdraw, it indeed departs from Saul, whereas, when Saul makes attempts on David's life (1 Reg. 18.10–12); this episode is mentioned by Rouget as well) because he is envious of the young man's successes, he is not at all hindered by the music David is performing at that moment, but rather resigns to David because he successfully dodges his lance twice (a sign that he enjoys God's favor). The reason could be that David used different melodies on different occasions; however, it cannot be dismissed that the good spirit could return to Saul only after David had driven away from him the evil spirits by means of a musical performance.

bilities is thus used for positive purposes. These features, as it has been shown, are present also in the myth of Orpheus acting as a savior by means of playing his lyre whose effect on listeners is compared to that of a charm.

## Conclusions

In this essay I have examined some pieces of evidence concerning the healing powers of the lyre, finding that this instrument often appears in the same contexts in which the *epodai* are found, and in association with them. The Iamblichean anecdote concerning Empedocles in *Life of Pythagoras* 113–114 exemplifies this association, and its reliability, in its turn, is corroborated especially by Empedocles frs. B111 and 112 DK and by the evidence concerning *goeteia*. On this basis, some significant similarities between Empedocles and Orpheus and also between them and David have been observed. These are strengthened by the spread of the use of music for healing in the Near East and by the eastern origins of the Greek music itself. The biblical episode seems to attest to further similarities between Near Eastern and Greek healing musical practices.

Psychic therapy by means of the lyre is thus evidence for the ancient people's perception of the beneficial effects of music, attested in ancient Greece at least since Hesiod's *Theogony* at the earliest. In that theological and cosmological poem (98–103) music immediately (ταχέως) diverts men's mind from sorrow (πένθος) and causes them to forget worries (δυσφοροσύνη) and grief (κῆδη) thanks to the singer (ᾄδοις) whom the Muses love (96–97: ὄντινα Μοῦσαι φίλωνται). These verses, summarizing the main topics we have been dealing with, show how helpful musical instruments can be in several circumstances, beyond the “official” realms of religion and the education of the young people.

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This considered, I think that the episode in 1 *Reg.* we have been dealing with shares similarities with many other cases of music therapy, including those mentioned in this essay, and can thus be understood as such. In the biblical context, on the other hand, the association of harmony within man, in the sense of the psycho-physical well-being of the individual and the presence of Yahweh in his life, cannot be disregarded, since everything in human life depends on the will of God. Besides this, in my opinion, the notion of music therapy regarding this episode does not contrast with the prophetic virtues that have been given to Saul: having prophetic virtues does not in itself guarantee that, the king, being human, is not subjected to weaknesses or to evil in general. These can be set right by the intervention of one who, like David, can play the *kinnor* and make use of musical therapy, thanks to God's favor bestowed upon him and endowing him with such powers.

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## Volume VIII

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