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# Theophrastus on Catharsis and the Need for Release from the Evils Due to Emotions

Abstract

Theophrastus had a systematic approach to the traditional problem of “catharsis” and treated the question referring to different fields of knowledge. He proved a keen and unprejudiced observer and collector of the largest possible number of experiences that may describe different kinds of catharsis. At a speculative level, he proceeded in continuity with and yet going beyond his teacher’s opinions. Important building blocks in the construction of his cathartic theory were the development of the Aristotelian method through the criterion of the “more and the less”, which became the guiding principle he applied to physiological enquiries into humors and warmth. This led to a consequent focus on the physiological motions connected with the ones of the soul (both explained in terms of a dynamic relationship between different degrees of “tension” and “relaxation”, two key terms) and with the interpretation of ethical issues in relation to the different degrees of “tension” or “relaxation” of the motions of the soul linked to the emotions in so far as this dynamics produces both vices or virtues. The locution *apolysis tôn kakôn* (“release from evils”) seemingly substituted the term “catharsis” in the ethical contexts in which Theophrastus elaborated his original take on the theme. The cathartic effect of the physiological and psychological “release from evils” operated through a precise use of the human voice (valid both in music and in the performing arts) involves both the performer and the audience: from an ethical point of view, *apolysis tôn kakôn* (i.e. catharsis) represents the unique end or purpose of his qualitative conception of music. In his view, religious piety does not consist in animal sacrifice or in traditional rites, but rather in an ethical “catharsis from evils” (*katharsis ton kakon*); therefore, this religious issue might be considered as the starting point and the conclusion of Theophrastus’s philosophical theory of catharsis, a theory in which the whole range of his science is involved.

## Preliminary Remarks

From the considerable production of the Peripatetic philosopher Theophrastus only a few texts have been preserved through the medieval manuscript tradition, along with a substantial number of testimonies and fragments on

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themes that touch on the whole range of knowledge defined by Aristotle. In this article I wish to address the issue of catharsis and enthusiasm in Theophrastus aware of this limitation.

In the testimonies and fragments of Theophrastus the terms catharsis and enthusiasm are kept separate. Even so, it seems possible to recognize signs of a systematic theory connecting these topics one to the other; this theory seemingly develops teachings and experiences derived from a long previous tradition (Hoessly 2001), and demonstrates a degree of originality towards his own master.

It is important to be clear at the outset that Theophrastus used the term “catharsis” several times, in keeping with the use of his master Aristotle, but never in the technical sense attributed to Pythagoras’s definition of musical therapy:

Iamb. *VP* 110

‘Υπελάμβανε δὲ καὶ τὴν μουσικὴν μεγάλην συμβάλλεσθαι πρὸς ὑγίαν, ἄν τις αὐτῇ χρῆται κατὰ τοὺς προσήκοντας τρόπους. εἰώθει γὰρ οὐ παρέργως τῇ τοιαύτῃ χρῆσθαι καθάρσει· τοῦτο γὰρ δὴ καὶ προσηγόρευε τὴν διὰ τῆς μουσικῆς ἰατρείαν (κτλ).

[He (i.e. Pythagoras) maintained that music could be very helpful to good health, if it was used in the proper ways. And he was not infrequently accustomed to use this kind of “catharsis”: in fact he referred to musical healing in this way . . . ]<sup>1</sup>

Porph. *VP* 33

καὶ ὑγιαίνουσι μὲν αὐτοῖς αἰεὶ συνδιέτριβεν, κάμνοντας δὲ τὰ σώματα ἐθεράπευεν, καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς δὲ νοσοῦντας παρεμυθεῖτο, καθάπερ ἔφαμεν, τοὺς μὲν ἐπωδαῖς καὶ μαγείαις τοὺς δὲ μουσικῇ. ἦν γὰρ αὐτῷ μέλη καὶ πρὸς νόσους σωμάτων παιώνια, ἃ ἐπάδων ἀνίστη τοὺς κάμνοντας. ἦν <δ’> ἃ καὶ λύπησιν λήθησιν εἰργάζετο καὶ ὀργὰς ἐπράννε καὶ ἐπιθυμίας ἀτόπους ἐξήρει.

[(Pythagoras) always paid attention to his disciples’ health, curing those who were sick with physical diseases and encouraging those who suffered from psychological affections, as we have already said, the former by sung spells and magic, the latter by means of music. He had healing melodies that cured somatic troubles, and when he sang them, the sick were restored. He had also melodies that let one forget pain, soothed wrath and removed inappropriate desires.]

The Peripatetic Aristoxenus (a colleague of Theophrastus’s) describes the Pythagorean catharsis with the following variant:

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of Greek and Latin quotations are mine.

Aristoxenus, fr. 26.2-3 Wehrli

οἱ Πυθαγορικοί, ὡς ἔφη Ἄριστόξενος, καθάρσει ἐχρῶντο τοῦ μὲν σώματος διὰ τῆς ἰατρικῆς, τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς διὰ τῆς μουσικῆς.

[As catharsis for the body the Pythagoreans used medicine and music for the soul.]

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle used the term catharsis with reference both to tragic catharsis (*Poet.* 6, 1449b22-8) and to religious ritual (*Poet.* 17, 1455b15). Besides a few occurrences that are not significant for us now (*Pol.* 3.6, 1281b36-7, 7.11.1331a33), in the *Politics* he devotes ample space to the issue using the term catharsis and its cognates with reference to music. He presents the aulos as an orgiastic instrument useful to catharsis and lets us understand that catharsis is a quasi-therapeutic phenomenon to be distinguished from *paideia* (education), but no less important for the citizens.

Arist. *Pol.* 8.6, 1341a21-4

ἔτι δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ αὐλὸς ἠθικὸν ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ὄργιαστικόν, ὥστε πρὸς τοὺς τοιοῦτους αὐτῷ καιροὺς χρηστέον ἐν οἷς ἢ θεωρία κάθαρσιν μᾶλλον δύναται ἢ μάθησιν.

[Moreover the aulos has not an ethical effect but rather orgiastic, so that it ought to be used on the occasions in which the spectacle has the purpose of purification rather than of instruction.]

In the eighth book of the *Politics* Aristotle devotes special attention to musical catharsis, promising to treat the definition of “catharsis” more precisely when he writes about poetics, but the few (important) lines we read in *Poet.* 6, 1449b24-8 and 17, 1455b15 do not seem to correspond to the intended purpose. Aristotle might have developed this topic in the lost second book of *Poetics* (Rostagni 1927: XLII; Flores 1988: 39-40 and n. 3; Janko 1984: 64) or in a lost section devoted to poetics in the *Politics* (Halliwell 1986: 190-1 and n. 32).

Arist. *Pol.* 8.7, 1341b38-9

τί δὲ λέγομεν τὴν κάθαρσιν, νῦν μὲν ἀπλῶς, πάλιν δ' ἐν τοῖς περὶ ποιητικῆς ἐροῦμεν σαφέστερον.

[Now we are speaking of catharsis without elucidation, but we shall say more explicitly what we mean by this term writing about poetics. (Trans. by Rackham 1932)]

I have selected this parenthetical remark from a long period in which Aristotle presents catharsis as the second of three features and purposes of music:

Arist. *Pol.* 8.7, 1341b37-41

φαιμέν δὲ οὐ μᾶς ἔνεκεν ὠφελείας τῇ μουσικῇ χρῆσθαι δεῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ πλειόνων

χάριν (καὶ γὰρ παιδείας ἔνεκεν καὶ καθάρσεως – τί δὲ λέγομεν τὴν κάθαρσιν . . . – τρίτον δὲ πρὸς διαγωγὴν πρὸς ἄνεσιν τε καὶ πρὸς τὴν τῆς συντονίας ἀνάπαυσιν)

[We say that music ought to be employed not for the purpose of one benefit that it confers but on account of several, (for it serves the purpose both of education and of *catharsis* – now we are speaking of *catharsis* . . . [see previous quotation] – and thirdly it may provide amusement, recreation and rest from our tension).]<sup>2</sup>

I will return to the third purpose of music (relaxation and rest) distinct from *catharsis* at the end of the article. Suffice it here to say that, even if Theophrastus picks up most of the *catharsis* theory expressed by Aristotle in that ample section of *Politics* (*Pol.* 8.7, 1341b19-1342b34), he develops the purpose of music in a substantially different way.

Here another key passage of this section of the *Politics*:

Arist. *Pol.* 8.7, 1342a4-17

ὁ γὰρ περὶ ἐνίας συμβαίνει πάθος ψυχᾶς ἰσχυρῶς, τοῦτο ἐν πάσαις ὑπάρχει, τῷ δὲ ἥττον διαφέρει καὶ τῷ μᾶλλον, οἷον ἔλεος καὶ φόβος, ἔτι δ' ἐνθουσιασμός· καὶ γὰρ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς κινήσεως κατοκώχημοί τινές εἰσιν, ἐκ τῶν δ' ἱερῶν μελῶν ὀρώμεν τούτους, ὅταν χρήσωνται τοῖς ἐξοργιάζουσι τὴν ψυχὴν μέλεσι, καθισταμένους ὡσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως· ταῦτό δὴ τοῦτο ἀναγκαῖον πάσχειν καὶ τοὺς ἐλεήμονας καὶ τοὺς φοβητικούς καὶ τοὺς ὄλως παθητικούς, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους καθ' ὅσον ἐπιβάλλει τῶν τοιούτων ἐκάστῳ, καὶ πᾶσι γίγνεσθαι τινα κάθαρσιν καὶ κουφίεσθαι μεθ' ἡδονῆς. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὰ μέλη τὰ πρακτικὰ παρέχει χαρὰν ἀβλαβῆ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

[The state of emotion that occurs powerfully in some souls is the same in all of them, but with varying degrees of intensity, as with pity, fear and enthusiasm. In fact, *some are very taken by this motion*, but we see that these people, when they make use of songs that excite the soul, by virtue of the sacred melodies are sedated as if they had found a cure and purification. Those who feel pity and fear necessarily experience the same, those who in general are sensitive and others, to the extent that each is affected by similar emotions, and for all of them there is purification and a pleasant relief. Similarly songs of action offer a harmless joy to people.]

Aristotle recalls what he wrote in chapter 5, where he described people who got enthusiastic when they listened to Olympus's chants, and marks own that enthusiasm is a "pathos":

<sup>2</sup> See discussions about the interpretation of this problematic passage in Dirlmeier 1940: 82-4; Barker 1946: 349, n. 4; Kraut 1997: 209; Schütrumpf 2005: 651-2.

Arist. *Pol.* 8.5, 1340a8-12

ἀλλὰ μὴν ὅτι γιγνόμεθα ποιοί τινες, φανερόν διὰ πολλῶν μὲν καὶ ἐτέρων, οὐχ ἥκιστα δὲ καὶ διὰ τῶν Ὀλύμπου μελῶν· ταῦτα γὰρ ὁμολογουμένως ποιεῖ τὰς ψυχὰς ἐνθουσιαστικάς, ὁ δ' ἐνθουσιασμός τοῦ περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἦθους πάθος ἐστίν.

[But that we are affected in a certain manner is clear both from many other kinds of music and not least from the melodies of Olympus; for these admittedly make our souls enthusiastic, and enthusiasm is an affection of the character of the soul. (Trans. by Rackham 1932)]

It is also noteworthy that Aristotle speaks of different degrees of passions after the principle of “the more and the less”, and presents enthusiastic people as “taken” by a “movement” (of their souls): Theophrastus will carry forward exactly these ideas.

In this regard, it is worth quoting Kraut’s comment on *Pol.* 8.7, 1341b36-1342a16, which focuses on a fundamental problem:

When music purifies, it has an effect on an adult who has already been educated and whose character has been formed. This serves an ethical purpose, but that purpose is not to educate the adult, but to surmount an emotional obstacle to virtuous activity. (Kraut 1997: 209)

As is well known, Aristotle’s treatment of catharsis is at the same time fundamental and aporetic.<sup>3</sup>

I will focus on Theophrastus’s therapeutic theory of music under the following headings:

1. Theophrastus on catharsis (scientific writings and religious perspective);
2. Theophrastus on musical healing in *On Enthusiasm(s)*;
3. Theophrastus’s *On music* and the purpose of this art.

## 1. Theophrastus on Catharsis: His Scientific Writings and His Religious Perspective

### a. Occurrences of the Term “Catharsis” in Theophrastus

Catharsis and its cognates are terms with an important historical background in religious rites and magical therapy to which I will return (see 1.b). Theophrastus employs the word a few times in a religious context; however, the number of these occurrences is inversely proportional to their philosophical

<sup>3</sup> A long-lasting debate has been engendered on this issue; see, among the others, Ničev 1982; Halliwell 1986: 350-6; Luserke 1991; Marchiori 2006; the contrasting interpretations of Belfiore 1992 and Sifakis 2001; the brief bibliographical overview in Provenza 2011: 94, n. 94 is also useful.

importance.<sup>4</sup> As already said, I have found no occurrence of the term catharsis in the field of music, where, as will be noted, other terms are used.

In keeping with Aristotle, Plato, and the Hippocratic School, the term is more often used to express the simple idea of “cleaning” / “washing” or more technical meanings (especially in medicine or in natural science). The different ambits define the various senses of this word. It is therefore necessary to consider the broad semantic field of catharsis and the way it is employed by Theophrastus in his entire philosophical system: in such a framework, the notion of musical healing also occurs; unlike Aristotle, though, Theophrastus conveys this notion without actually employing the term *katharsis* or its cognates.

In Theophrastus’s writings on natural science,<sup>5</sup> the verb *kathairein* and its cognates are used in the sense of “cleaning” / “purifying” from extrinsic elements:

- In *About creatures that appear in Swarms* = 359A.16 and 18 *FHS&G*, *katharma* is used in the sense of “refuse” / “rubbish”.
- In *On Sense and What is Sensed*, fr. 1 § 89.7 (Wimmer 1866: 340.18) the phrase *kathairein to halmyron* refers to the biological purgation from salinity.

Minerals are subject to “purification” too:

- Theophrastus speaks of “refined gold” in *On stones* 46.2 (Eichholz ed. 1965) (cf. Plat. *Pol.* 303d7-8).
- He writes about *katharisterion* as the “place of purification, where the grains of silver are cleaned from the mines” in *On Metals* (Theophr. 201.3 *FHS&G*).

About environmental purification:

In *On Winds*, fr. 5 § 50.7, 8, 13 (Wimmer 1866: 386.45, 46, 51) *apokatharsis* refers to the effect of purification brought about by the snow.

<sup>4</sup> Janko felt that the notion of the religious origin of catharsis supported by Bernays (1857) had been superseded “since his essay it has been widely accepted that the idea of catharsis derives from medicine (‘purgation’) rather than from religion (‘purification’)” (Janko 1984: 139), but anthropological and historical research has provided the evidence that the origin of catharsis has to be attributed to sacrifices and ablutions performed in response to an ancestral conception of religious imperatives. See Lloyd-Jones 1971: 55-78, Parker 1983: 2 (“the Hippocratic doctor, in seeing ‘impurity’ as cause and symptom of disease is an heir to the prophet or oracle”) and Burkert 1992: 55-64. A detailed *status quaestionis* can be found in Hoessly 2001: 17-81.

<sup>5</sup> I referred to the following editions: Hort 1916 (*Research on Plants* = *HP*), Einarson and Link 1976-90 (*Plants Explanations* = *CP*), Eichholz 1965 (*On Stones*), Fortenbaugh 2003a (*On Sweat*).



Botanic purification coincides with “pruning”<sup>6</sup> in:

- *HP* 9.6.3.1; *CP* 2.5.4.14, 3.7.12.10 (*katharsis*).
- *HP* 1.3.3.2, 1.9.1.13 (*anakathairein*).
- *HP* 1.1.3.15, 9.11.9.9 (*apokathairein* with the explicit sense of “cleaning away elements unnecessary by nature”).
- *HP* 2.6.5.3, 2.7.1.4, 2.7.2.1, 2.7.2.6, 2.7.3.3; 4.13.3.13; *CP* 2.12.6.3, 2.15.3.12, 3.2.1.9, 3.2.2.6, 3.7.5.2, 3.7.8.3, 3.7.9.1, 3.7.10.2, 3.7.10.8, 3.8.2.2, 3.9.1.2, 3.9.5.10, 3.18.2.4, 3.19.1.5, 3.19.1.7, 3.19.3.3, 5.8.2.7-8, 5.15.3.7-8 (*diakatharsis* and its cognates).
- *CP* 5.9.11.9; *HP* 9.7.4.5 (*perikatharsis* and cognates in the sense of “pruning” / “thinning the topmost roots of the vine” and “scraping the roots clean”).

In his botanical works, Theophrastus describes the effects of physiological purification (“upwards” and “downwards”) provided by various herbs, plants, flowers, roots, fruits or fruit-juices. He seems to have made careful research, observing without prejudice their use by doctors, herbalists and magicians:<sup>7</sup>

- *Katharsis* and *kathairein* are used with reference to the purging effect that different parts of several herbs or plants induce by causing diarrhoea in *HP* 3.18.13.14, 6.3.1.13 and 16, 6.3.6.5, 9.8.4.6 9.10.2.4, 9.11.8.4 (*kathairei kato mallon*), 9.12.4.6, (*kathairei kato*), 9.13.6.11 (*kathairei kato*), 9.17.3.2.
- In *HP* 9.9.5.11-15 Theophrastus pays attention to some therapeutic properties, describing the strange fact that in the cases of *thapsia*, *iskhas*, *libanotis* “part of the same root should purge (*kathairein*) upwards and another part downwards”, while with the “driver” (*elaterion*) “the same parts should purge both upwards and downwards”. In *HP* 9.11.11.4-5 he specifies that only the herb called *libanotis* (the barren variety) has a root that “can purge (*kathairein*) both upwards and downwards”. See also *HP* 9.20.3.10 and 12-13.

<sup>6</sup> Highland explains purging as a form of “transformative catharsis” different from purgative catharsis. He interprets the Theophrastean botanical purging as a kind of transformative catharsis applicable to human emotions as “a maturing process with profound and lasting results for the person instead of a temporary release of pent-up emotions that will need to be reapplied periodically” (2005: 162).

<sup>7</sup> On Theophrastus’s method of gathering a great deal of information from those who cultivated and used plants for practical (including medical) use see Preus 1988: “But Theophrastus is more than simply a mirror of his sources. He has in fact philosophical motivations for his research, motivations that are similar to those that brought Aristotle to zoological investigation. . . . Theophrastus is investigating ‘natures’ and those natures are the functional parts of the entities that he investigates quite as much, sometimes more than, the entity as a whole” (77).

- In *Charact.* 20.6.2 the verb *kathairein* describes the disagreeability of the man who “at dinner tells how he was cleaned out top and bottom after drinking hellebore and the bile from his faeces was blacker than the broth on the table”, and in *On Dizziness* 12.95 (Sharples 2003) the “persons who still have to be (properly) purged”.
- *akatharsia* refers to a physical impurity in *On Sweat* 5.32 and 13.84 (Fortenbaugh 2003a).

Theophrastus also examines some specific medical purification effects:

- in a passage of *HP* 7.6.2.13 he uses *kathairein* in order to refer to the medical effect of the lettuce-juice that *purges away dropsy*.
- in *HP* 7.12.3.8 with the verb *hypokathairei* he presents the medicinal property of the pounded root of *theseion* (bitter to the taste) that *purges the bowels (koilian)*. Cf. *HP* 9.12.3.7 about the same effect of the fruit of the wild poppy.
- *HP* 9.9.5.4 with *kathairein* he describes the fruit of the germander that *purifies bile*.
- In *HP* 9.11.9.13 he presents the fruit of the *tithymallos* (called “myrtle like”) that “*purges the phlegm downwards*”.
- In *HP* 9.8.4.6 he describes the purging effect of the fruit of the hellebore used by the people of Anticyra, also noting that “*this fruit contains the well-known drug called sesamodes*”.

The following passages are indirectly but deeply connected with some topics that will be discussed below with regard to musical catharsis:

- In a passage of *HP* 9.9.3.4 Theophrastus writes that “cyclamen juice mixed with honey is a purge for the head” (ὁ δὲ ὀπὸς πρὸς τὰς ἀπὸ κεφαλῆς καθάρσεις ἐν μέλιτι ἐγγεόμενος), i.e. it mitigates headaches;<sup>8</sup> it is interesting to observe that, in the same context, he adds that the juice “is also conducive to drunkenness, if one is given a draught of wine in which it has been steeped” (καὶ πρὸς τὸ μεθύσκειν, ἐὰν ἐν οἴνῳ διαβρέχων διδῶ τις πίνειν), and that the root of cyclamen is said to be “a good charm for inducing rapid delivery and as a love potion” (ἀγαθὴν δὲ τὴν ῥίζαν καὶ ὠκυτόκιον περιάπτων καὶ εἰς φίλτρα), showing that the same kind of plant can at the time “purge” and “excite”. We will return to this oxymoric cathartic effect also in relation to musical therapy.
- Theophrastus also writes about the beneficent effect of the root of the kind of poppy called *Herakleia* for purging upwards and healing epileptics: ταύτης ἡ ῥίζα καθαίρει ἄνω· χρῶνται δὲ τινες πρὸς τοὺς

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Diosc. 2.164; Plin. 25.133, 26.149.

ἐπιλήπτους ἐν μελικράτῳ (HP 9.12.5.4) [the root of this plant purges upwards: and some use it in a posset of mead for epileptics].<sup>9</sup>

As we shall consider below (§ 2), in *On Enthusiasm(s)* Theophrastus describes the therapeutic effect of exciting music for healing epileptics.

In another passage, he reminds us of the purifying effect of a particular variety of hellebore called ‘of Melampus’, which is associated with magic rituals of purification (Parker 1983: 207-8, 212-13, 215, 230, 290, n. 45):

HP 9.10.4.9

Καλοῦσι δὲ τὸν μέλανά τινες ἔκτομον Μελαμπόδιον, ὡς ἐκείνου πρῶτον τεμόντος καὶ ἀνευρόντος. καθαίρουσι δὲ καὶ οἰκίας αὐτῷ καὶ πρόβατα συνεπάδοντές τινα ἐπωδὴν καὶ εἰς ἄλλα δὲ πλείω χρῶνται.

[Some call the black variety “the hellebore of Melampus”, saying that he first cut and discovered it. Men also purify houses and sheep with it, at the same time chanting an incantation. And they put it to several other uses.]

In HP 9.13.6.11 he describes the effect of the scorpion plant (leopard’s bane) and that of the polypody, noting that the former resembles a scorpion and it is also useful against stings of that creature and for certain other purposes, adding:

ἡ δὲ τοῦ πολυποδίου δασεῖα καὶ ἔχουσα κοτυληδόνας, ὡσπερ αἱ τοῦ πολυπόδος πλεκτάναι. καθαίρει δὲ κάτω· κἂν περιάψηταί τις οὐ φασιν ἐμφέεσθαι πολύπου.

[The root of polypody is rough and sucks like the tentacles of the polyp. It purges downwards: and, if one wears it as an amulet, they say that one does not get polyps].

In *Characters*, Theophrastus describes and caricatures superstitious religious acts of purification by presenting the superstitious man as one who purifies the house frequently (*Char.* 16.7 Diggle) and asks to be purified himself (*perikathairesthai*) with a squill or a puppy (*Char.* 16.14 Diggle, see also Parker 1983: 30 and n. 65, 230-2 and n. 136).

In all these texts, Theophrastus seems to have carefully reported several cases that he called “catharsis”, observing and collecting them without prejudice, only seldom adding a personal opinion. However, Theophrastus’s personal beliefs about religious catharsis emerge in his *On Piety*, where the verb καθαίρειν, the adjective καθαρός, and the adverb καθαρῶς occur four times in the space of a few lines to express the need of a pure *ethos* on the suppliant’s part when he is sacrificing (584A linn. 154, 156, 158, 161 *FHS&G*).

<sup>9</sup> This and the following translations of Theophrastus’s *Research on Plants* are Hort’s (1916).

It is worth quoting here the whole Theophrastean passage:<sup>10</sup>

Porph. *De Abst.* 2.19.4 = 584A.154-61 *FHS&G*

δεῖ τοίνυν καθηραμένους τὸ ἦθος ἰέναι θύσοντας τοῖς θεοῖς θεοφιλεῖς ταύτας τὰς θυσίας προσάγοντας, ἀλλὰ μὴ πολυτελεῖς. νῦν δὲ ἐσθῆτα μὲν λαμπρὰν περὶ σῶμα μὴ καθαρὸν ἀμφιεσαμένοις οὐκ ἄρκειν νομίζουσιν πρὸς τὸ τῶν θυσιῶν ἀγνόν. ὅταν δὲ τὸ σῶμα μετὰ τῆς ἐσθῆτός τινες λαμπρυνάμενοι μὴ καθαρὰν κακῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχοντες ἴωσιν πρὸς τὰς θυσίας, οὐδὲν διαφέρειν νομίζουσιν, ὥσπερ οὐ τῷ θειοτάτῳ γε τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν χαίροντα μάλιστα τὸν θεὸν διακειμένῳ καθαρῶς, ἅτε συγγενεῖ πεφυκότι.

[Therefore it is necessary that when men are going to sacrifice, they approach *cleansed* in character, bringing to the gods sacrifices that are pleasing to them, but not expensive. Men do not think it sufficient for the *purity* of sacrifices that they have bright clothes on a body that is *not cleaned*. But whenever some people approach sacrifices having brightened up their bodies together with their clothing, while possessing a soul that is *not cleansed of evils*, they think it makes no difference, as if god did not take special delight in the most divine thing within us when it is *in a cleansed condition*, since it is by nature akin to him. (Trans. by *FHS&G*)]

One should note how the wording μὴ καθαρὰν κακῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχοντες (“while possessing a soul that is *not cleansed of evils*”, emphasis added) remarks in a religious context the fundamental ethical problem that even his *On Music* seeks to answer, as we will soon see.

In this work, Theophrastus reduces to absurdity the idea that in religious rites blood sacrifices are “holy acts” capable of producing catharsis; he argues that, on the contrary, they are absolutely impious, and does this with a kind of rationalistic reasoning that can be recognized also at the basis of the book *On the Sacred Disease* (attributed to Hippocrates), which exposes the internal contradictions of the widespread theory that the sacred disease (i.e. epilepsy) always stemmed from a sacred punishment from the Gods.<sup>11</sup> Theophrastus in his *On Piety*, like the author of *On the Sacred Disease*, redefines the word “holy” and indirectly the concept of catharsis (Laskaris 2002: 113-24).

#### b. *Catharsis in Theophrastus from a Religious Perspective*

The theme of purification or, more technically, of catharsis presents itself with an anthropological significance that reaches our own time as indicated by the extensive modern bibliography on the topic. Burkert, presenting different instances of purification in the ancient Greek world, cites numerous

<sup>10</sup> A *status quaestionis* and a critical approach to Porphyrius’s contribution on Theophrastus’s *On Piety* have been summarized by Fortenbaugh 1984: 262-85.

<sup>11</sup> *On the Sacred Disease* 1.1-13; 2.1 (Jouanna 2013); see Laskaris 2002: 108-10.

very macabre occasions on which the ritual of purification is reduced to “magical and utilitarian aspects” (Burkert 1998: 187-90).

Theophrastus’s work *Peri Eusebeias* (*On Piety*) addressed directly the theme of religious sacrifice, expressing an original point of view compared to the predominant Greek tradition or even to the theory of his master Aristotle (*Pol.* 1.3, 1256b15-23): the idea of “purification” comes into play here.

In his *Homo Necans*, Walter Burkert claims that, since the Palaeolithic, the nature of the bloody rituals involving human and, later on, animal sacrifice may be interpreted as an attempt to justify the violence that human beings cause to everything that is alive (Burkert 1981: 24, also 1985: 79-83).<sup>12</sup>

Blood sacrifice as an individual and collective act of purification has informed religious rituals since the earliest times (Massari 1961: 281-3): animal sacrifices represent a key element in all private and public religious ceremonies of the city-states of the ancient world (not only in Indo-European culture) as a means for getting order, cleanliness, sacredness and redeeming the *miasma* (Parker 1983).

In column B, line 5 of the *Sacred Law of Selinous* (a fifth-century lead tablet describing the cathartic procedures for those convicted of murder) we read the prescription for sacrificing a pig.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the *Lex cathartica of Cyrene* (end of the fourth century BC) testifies precise rules for regulating the city’s purification rites of individuals guilty of familial blood crimes (*SEG* 9.72; see Parker 1983: 332-51, 352-74). The sacrifice of the pig is a *topos* (Parker 1983: 386-8). We might recall the famous image of the Apulian bell krater by the Painter of the *Eumenides* (see image 1), in which, after the matricide Orestes is *purified* by Apollo who, in Delphi, drips the blood of a pig over him. This is a clear iconographic reference to Aeschylus’s *Eumenides*, in which the bloody rite of purification of the contaminated matricide is described in detail (Hoessly 2001: 108-31).<sup>14</sup>

- |       |   |     |
|-------|---|-----|
| (Op.) | βρίζει γὰρ αἷμα καὶ μαραίνεται χερὸς,<br>μητροκτόνον μίασμα δ' ἔκπλυτον πέλει.<br>ποταίνιον γὰρ ὄν πρὸς ἐστία θεοῦ<br>Φοίβου καθαρμοῖς ἠλάθη χοιροκτόνοις.<br>...   | 280 |
| (Op.) | ἄφθογγον εἶναι τὸν παλαμναῖον νόμος,<br>ἔστ' ἂν πρὸς ἀνδρὸς αἵματος καθαρσίου<br>σφαγαὶ καθαιμάξωσι νεοθήλου βοτοῦ.<br>πάλαι πρὸς ἄλλοις ταῦτ' ἀφιερῶμεθα<br>οἴκοισι, καὶ βοτοῖσι καὶ ῥυτοῖς πόροις.<br>Aeschylus, <i>Eumenides</i> 280-3; 448-52 | 450 |

<sup>12</sup> Walter Burkert passed away in March 2015: to him goes my grateful remembrance.

<sup>13</sup> *SEG* 43. 630; Dimartino 2003: 305-49; Salvo 2012: 125-57.

<sup>14</sup> Aesch. *Eum.* 283, 449; cf. Aesch. fr. 327 R.; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.690-720.

[For the blood is growing drowsy and fading from my hand, and the pollution of matricide has been washed out: at the hearth of the god Phoebus, when it was still fresh, it was expelled by means of purification-sacrifice of a young pig. . . . It is the law that a man who has committed homicide must not speak until blood has dripped over him from the slaughter of a young beast at the hands of a man who can cleanse blood pollution. I have long since been purified in this way at other houses both by animal victims and by flowing streams. (Trans. by Sommerstein 2008)]



IMAGE 1. *The Purification of Orestes in Delphi. Apulian Bell Krater by the Painter of the Eumenides (Paris, Louvre K 710).*

Burkert observes that the ritual is a demonstrative and therefore harmless repetition of the shedding of blood:

To offer a surrogate victim to the pursuing powers of vengeance is an idea which seems natural in expiating a murder, but the essential aspect seems to

be that the person defiled by blood should once again come into contact with blood. (Burkert 1985: 81)

As a result of this purification rite, the “visible” blood spot could be washed away and the crime – in this way – was not suppressed, but overcome (see Burkert 1985: 81; Hoessly 2001: 99-149).

Since ancient times, purification through the blood sacrifice of a male animal had therefore become a norm established in public and private rituals. The headquarters of the popular assembly and the theatre in Athens were routinely purified through a ritual in which some officials, the *peristiarchoi*, carried piglets in circles around the square, cut their throats spraying blood over the seats, cut off their genitals and eventually threw them away (Burkert 1985: 81-2). As is well known (and for this reason I will not dwell on the subject), all the Dionysian festivals revolved around the ritual sacrifice of a goat, a ram or a bull, ritual acts that, according to historians of ancient religion, alluded to the mystical ceremony of the sacrifice of the dismembered Dionysus. According to the anthropological reading of the “scapegoat” the animal victim is sacrificed to displace on to it the responsibility for a crime of which it is innocent, but from which a community feels the need to be freed (Girard 1982; Parker 1983: 24-6, 258-60; Burkert 1998: 51-3; Dimartino 2003: 326, n. 82). Similarly, in the Jewish tradition, *Leviticus* records the rituals of the “scapegoat” whose blood was shed to cleanse the temple and the altar desecrated by the sins of the Israelites (*Lev.* 16.5-10). In this regard, we recall that among the names of Dionysus there is also *Eriphos*, “kid” (Hesychius s.v. Ἐριφος). The apocryphal *Epistle of Barnabas* interprets the rite of the scapegoat in *Leviticus* as a symbolic foreshadowing of the self-sacrifice of Jesus.

This long, yet not exhaustive overview of the historical, cultural, and anthropological question of catharsis through blood sacrifices was necessary in order to better frame the issue against which Theophrastus argues in his *On Piety*. Large sections of this work are preserved by Porphyry’s *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*.

As Heraclitus and Empedocles had done before him,<sup>15</sup> Theophrastus argues against animal sacrifice, contradicting Aristotle’s point of view about the inferiority and submission of animals to human beings (*Pol.* 1, 31256b15-27). Theophrastus introduced instead the idea of an original friendship (*philia*) and familiarity (*oikeiosis*) between human beings and all the other ani-

<sup>15</sup> “They purify themselves from blood staining them with other blood, as if one entered the mud, wanted to wash himself in the mud” (Heraclitus B5 DK). Empedocles, in the *Katharmoi*, due to his belief in metempsychosis, i.e. in the possibility of a human being reincarnating as an animal, gave continuity to the Orphic-Pythagorean doctrines against eating animals and sacrificing any animated being (Empedocles 31 B 135-9 DK; references to the Pythagoreans in A 31, B 135, 136).

mate creatures (without exceptions). If a person aims to be truly pious, he cannot sacrifice a living being because “θυτέον οὖν ἐκ τῶν ἡμετέρων, οὐ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων” [“we should sacrifice from what is ours, not from what belongs to others”] (Porph. *De Abst.* 2.13.3 = 584A.129-30 *FHS&G*):

ἡ γὰρ θυσία ὁσία τίς ἐστι κατὰ τοῦνομα. ὅσιος δὲ οὐδεὶς ὃς ἐκ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἀποδίδωσι χάριτας, κἂν καρποὺς λάβῃ κἂν φυτά, μὴ ἐθέλοντος.

[Sacrifice, as its name suggests, is something holy, but no one is holy if he returns favours out of other people’s possessions without their consent, not even if he takes crops or plants. (Porph. *De Abst.* 2.12.4 = 584A.109-12 *FHS&G*; trans. by Clark 2000)]

Instead of purifying him, the blood sacrifice spreads and contaminates the wrongdoer, requiring a further and more appropriate act of purification. Theophrastus’s position is radical, as he also recommends a vegetarian diet (Porph. *De Abst.* 2.53.3 = 584C *FHS&G*).

To support his argument, Theophrastus traces the origins of sacrifice back to ancestral times, when – he says – the rites did not require the killing of animals:

διὰ πολλῶν δὲ ὁ Θεόφραστος <ἐκ> τῶν παρ’ ἐκάστοις πατρίων ἐπιδείξας, ὅτι τὸ παλαιὸν τῶν θυσιῶν διὰ τῶν καρπῶν ἦν ἔτ’ εἰπὼν πρότερον τῆς πόας λαμβανομένης, καὶ τὰ τῶν σπονδῶν ἐξηγεῖται τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον.

Theophrastus uses examples from many ancestral customs of different peoples to show that the ancient form of sacrifice was crops. He says, too, that even earlier grass was collected. He also explains libations, as follows. (Porph. *De Abst.* 2.20.2 = 540A.169-75 *FHS&G*; trans. by Clark 2000)

According to Theophrastus’s reconstruction, the oldest forms of sacrifice offered the harvest and only after repeated famines were people led to sacrifice animals instead of offering crops.

In his research on the subject, Theophrastus describes and comments also on the Syrian-Jewish practice of sacrificing animals:

καίτοι Σύρων μὲν Ἰουδαῖοι διὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς συνήθειαν ἔτι καὶ νῦν, φησὶν ὁ Θεόφραστος, ζυθοθυτούντων εἰ τὸν αὐτὸν ἡμᾶς τρόπον τις κελεύει θύειν, ἀποσταίημεν ἂν τῆς πράξεως.

[Although among Syrians – Theophrastus says – Jews still even now sacrifice animals on account of a rite of sacrifice that goes back to the beginning, if someone should order us to sacrifice in the same way, we should stand back from the deed. (Porph. *De Abst.* 2.26.1 = 584A.261-3 *FHS&G*; trans. by Clark 2000)<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See Clark 2000: 150, n. 269.



Before I momentarily depart from the religious theme of purification, to which I will return later on, I would like to summarize the important idea that Theophrastus's religious catharsis – as I will further discuss below – coincides not so much with ritual practices of sacrificing and not at all with any magic procedures<sup>17</sup> as with the pure (i.e. cleansed from evils) *ethos tes psyches* of the offerer.

This rational but still not unreligious perspective follows in the wake of fifth-fourth century BC sophistic thought and Hippocratic medicine, strongly elaborated by the Aristotelian philosophy.

## 2. Theophrastus on Musical Healing in *On Enthusiasm(s)*

Theophrastus touched on the topic of musical therapy, which his master had called “catharsis” in the *Politics*, in a work devoted to a special kind of emotion: enthusiasm.

The one-book *Peri enthousiasmou* is included in the list of Theophrastus's writings compiled by D.L. in *VP* 5.43<sup>18</sup> and in Ath. *Deipn.* 14.18 624A-B.<sup>19</sup> This title is variously translated into English as *On Frenzy*<sup>20</sup> or *On Inspiration*.<sup>21</sup> However, Apollon. *Mirabilia* 49.1-3 mentions the same book with a plural name, *Peri enthousiasmôn*, which the editors of Theophrastus's sources propose to translate as *On (Types of) Inspiration*.<sup>22</sup>

Meursius suggested reading *Peri enthousiasmou* (1640: 24-5); accepting the genitive plural present in the manuscripts (a *lectio difficilior*) modern editors assume that in this book Theophrastus was studying various types of behaviour that could go under the name of enthusiasm, as they shared the same physiological symptoms. Theophrastus might have also discussed analogies between the physiology of enthusiasms and those of other diseases (connected to the principles of “the more and the less”, of “tensions” and “relaxations”, and of “heating” and “cooling”),<sup>23</sup> observing that the same kind of musical healing could mitigate different pathologies; probably he also enumerated a series of examples and empirical constants with the aim

<sup>17</sup> On the question of magic catharsis, see Laskaris 2002: 49-53; on the cure of the Sacred Disease (*epilepsis*), see *ibid.*: 68-9, 98-9; Gregory 2013: 73-4.

<sup>18</sup> *Peri enthousiasmou, one book*, Theophr. 1 lin. 102 *FHS&G*.

<sup>19</sup> Theophr. 726B *FHS&G*.

<sup>20</sup> Hicks 1980: 491.

<sup>21</sup> Theophr. 1 lin. 102 *FHS&G*.

<sup>22</sup> Theophr. 726A *FHS&G*. Sharples translates this title as *On Inspiration* since he does not believe that the book presented a formal classification of different types of enthusiasm (1995).

<sup>23</sup> 271, 331A-F, 335, 438 *FHS&G*. See Matelli 1998: 214-19; 2004a: 170-3.

of defining the physiological nature of enthusiasm.

It is not clear exactly how we are to understand the term *enthousiasmos*. According to etymological lexicons, the word comes from the verbs *enthousiazō* or *enthousiaō*, two verbs derived from the noun *theos*, evolved with two different types of suffix: *-azo* expresses the inchoate aspect, while the suffix *-iao* can denote, together with the desiderative value, also a state of morbidity, such as verbs *emetiaō* (“I feel sick”), *ophthalmiaō* (“I suffer from *ophthalmia*”) and other similar cases. *LSJ* translates both *enthousiazō* and *enthousiaō* without differentiating as “to be possessed or inspired by a god, to be in ecstasy” and interprets the noun *enthousiasmos* as “inspiration, enthusiasm, frenzy”. I suggest that, at least for now, we can leave the question open using the term *enthusiasm* and, in each case, allowing the context of the text to determine the more precise meaning.

Three sources on Theophrastus’s *On Enthusiasms* (or *On Enthusiasm*) offer complementary information about his ideas on the therapeutic effect of the aulos for healing affections of the body or of the soul:

1) Apollon. *Mirabilia* 49.1-3 = Theophr. 726A *FHS&G*<sup>24</sup>

Ἄξια δ’ ἐστὶν ἐπιστάσεως [τὰ εἰρημένα.] <ᾗ> Θεόφραστος ἐν τῷ Περὶ Ἐνθουσιασμῶν ἐξεῖπεν. φησὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος τὴν μουσικὴν πολλὰ τῶν ἐπὶ ψυχὴν καὶ τὸ σῶμα γιγνομένων παθῶν ἰατρύειν, καθάπερ λιποθυμίαν, φόβους καὶ τὰς ἐπὶ μακρὸν γιγνομένης τῆς διανοίας ἐκστάσεις. ἰᾶται γάρ, φησὶν, ἢ καταύλησις καὶ ἰσχυιάδα καὶ ἐπιληψία· καθάπερ πρὸς Ἀριστόξενον τὸν μουσικὸν ἐλθόντα - χρήσασθαι αὐτὸν ἴτου μαντίου τοῦ τῆς Πασιφίλης δαμωτι ἀδελφῆς† - λέγεται [τὸν μουσικὸν] καταστῆναι τινα ἐξιστάμενον ἐν Θήβαις ὑπὸ τὴν τῆς σάλπιγγος φωνὴν· ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον γὰρ ἐβόησεν ἀκούων, ὥστε ἀσχημονεῖν· εἰ δέ ποτε καὶ πολεμικὸν σαλπισιέ τις, πολὺ χεῖρον πάσχειν μαινόμενον. τοῦτον οὖν κατὰ μικρὸν τῷ αὐλῷ προσάγειν, καὶ ὡς ἂν τις εἴποι ἐκ προσαγωγῆς ἐποίησεν καὶ τὴν σάλπιγγος φωνὴν ὑπομένειν.

[The things that Theophrastus said in his *On Enthusiasms*<sup>25</sup> are worthy of attention. For he says that music cures many of the ills that affect the soul and the body, such as fainting, fright and prolonged disturbances of mind. For the playing of the aulos, he says, cures both sciatica and epilepsy, just as it is said that one who had been driven mad in Thebes by the sound of the trumpet went to Aristoxenus the musician – for he had consulted the oracle . . . –<sup>26</sup> and was restored. For he shouted so loudly when he heard it that he

<sup>24</sup> Ignoring the most recent scholarship on the subject and without providing any solid justifications, in his new edition of Aristoxenus’s fragments, Kaiser (2010: X and 224) placed this testimony on Aristoxenus among the “*incerta*” (fr. INC4.35). Aristoxenus’s fragments here quoted are taken from Wehrli’s edition. See also Fortenbaugh 2011a; 2011b: 287-97.

<sup>25</sup> I do not follow *FHS&G* translating the title Περὶ Ἐνθουσιασμῶν with *On (Types of) Inspiration*.

<sup>26</sup> “The text is corrupt. Reinach’s transposition gives the sense ‘just as it is said that

disgraced himself, and if anyone played with a salpinx a military tune, he suffered far more, being maddened. So (Aristoxenus) gradually introduced this man to the (sound of the) aulos, and, so to speak, as a result of (this) gradual introduction he made him able to endure even the sound of the trumpet. Trans. by FHS&G.]

2) Ath. *Deipn.* 14.18 624 A-B = Theophr. 726B FHS&G

ὅτι δὲ καὶ νόσους ἰᾶται μουσικῇ Θεόφραστος ἰστόρησεν ἐν τῷ Περὶ Ἐνθουσιασμοῦ, ἰσχυακοῦς φάσκων ἀνόσους διατελεῖν, εἰ καταυλήσοι τις τοῦ τόπου τῆ Φρυγιστὶ ἁρμονίᾳ.

[Theophrastus in his *On Enthusiasm*<sup>27</sup> recorded that music even cures diseases, saying that sufferers from sciatica were permanently freed from illness if somebody played the aulos over the place in the Phrygian harmonia. (Trans. by FHS&G)]

3) Gell. *NA* 4.13.1-2 = Theophr. 726C FHS&G

Creditum hoc a plerisque esse et memoriae mandatum, ischia cum maxime doleant, tum, si modulis lenibus tibicen incinat, minui dolores, ego nuperrime in libro Theophrasti scriptum inveni.

[It is believed by many and has been put on record, that when the pains of sciatica are greatest, if a piper plays over them with gentle melodies (*si modulis lenibus tibicen incinat*), the pains are diminished (*minui dolores*). (This) I very recently found written in a book of Theophrastus. (Trans. by FHS&G)]

It is worth anticipating here that in *On Music* Theophrastus presents enthusiasm as one of the three emotional sources of chant and music (719A-B FHS&G, see below § 3).

From such scant information we can only draw one conclusion as to the contents of *On enthusiasm(s)*: the text dealt with the therapeutic role of the aulos and of the Phrygian harmony for healing a physical debility (*leipothymia*, fainting), excited psychic diseases (fright / panic, *phoboi*, and epilepsy), prolonged disturbances of the mind (*hai ek dianoiās ekstaseis*) and inflammatory physical pains (*sciatica*). On account of the little information gathered from our sources, I prefer not to try to define too simplistically whether the character of this musical healing was “allopathic” or “homeopathic”.<sup>28</sup> Theophrastus probably offered both possibilities, as we might suppose from the fact that, in his reports, the aulos (that produced exciting melodies) might

Aristoxenus restored the man in Thebes who was maddened by the sound of the trumpet . . . So this man went to Aristoxenus the musician, who consulted the oracle of Pasiphae and at the same time the one at Delphi, and then gradually introduced (the man) to the sound of the aulos” (FHS&G: 2.581, n. 1 on 726A).

<sup>27</sup> FHS&G translates it as “*On (Types) of Inspiration*”.

<sup>28</sup> Provenza 2011: 94, n. 12 (with a *status quaestionis* on catharsis) and 122 (where she describes Aristoxenus’s healing as “allopathic”).

cure either fainting (an ailment caused by a lack of physical warmth) or pathologies due to inflammations and excessive excitements.

Four further observations may be added:

a. *Theophrastus Quoting Aristoxenus*

Theophrastus's information on Aristoxenus's musical healing through the aulos represents an important building block in the reconstruction here offered. I will return to Aristoxenus in the section devoted to Theophrastus's *On Music* and in the next paragraph b) devoted to the aulos (Aristoxenus wrote a work on musical instruments, where he devoted two books to the different kinds of aulos). According to the anecdote reported by Theophrastus, Aristoxenus analysed the opposed psychological effects of two wind-instruments, the salpinx and the aulos.

The salpinx was a wind instrument like the aulos and it was used not only in war, but also in other contexts (Matelli 2004a: 160-1). The salpinx that made the Theban man mad sounded a melody called *polemikon*, "military". We know also from Aristoxenus that military songs were generally in the Dorian harmony and the enharmonic genre (Aristox. fr. 82.3; fr. 84.2 Wehrli), and were meant to inspire courage and disciplined actions (Her. Pont. fr. 163 Wehrli; cf. Plat. *Resp.* 399a3-9). In order to understand what kind of healing techniques Aristoxenus employed, it is fundamental to remember that his musical theory was a complex system, with multiple factors interrelated in each practical application (Gibson 2005). Rocconi remarks about Aristoxenus's *On Music*:

Challenging the traditional theory according to which each distinguishable element of a musical composition (such as *harmoniai* or rhythms) is assigned an *ethos* of its own, Aristoxenus (or his epigone) proposes here [Aristox. *De mus.* 33.1142f-1143e] the alternative thesis that the character of a piece, instead, arises from the ways in which melodic and rhythmic elements are associated with each other by the musician in the *melopoia* (i.e. "musical composition"). . . . For Aristoxenus, the *ethos* of a musical composition arises from the way in which melodic and rhythmic elements are associated with each other, as well as from the performance and interpretation of the resulting blend by the musician. (Rocconi 2011: 77, 84)

Theophrastus was surely not unaware of the complexity inherent in this musical system, where any minimal change of one of the blended components had the effect of producing a different musical *ethos*:

The product of this blend is a musical composition whose 'character' will change if only one of its elements, for instance the rhythm – trochaic rather than paeonic – is modified. (ibid.: 80 and n. 54, commenting on Aristox. *De mus.* 33.1143b-c)

Fortenbaugh, glossing Apollonius (726A *FHS&G*), remarks that the sound of a salpinx frightened a man not because such was the nature of the instrument (see [Arist.] *On Things Heard* 803a25-7), but because, in the specific case, the Theban man probably connected the sound of the salpinx to the shock of a war (Fortenbaugh 2011a: 168).

Aristoxenus succeeded in making the Theban man able to endure even the sound of the trumpet not by means of a calming music, but by introducing him “gradually” (*kata mikron*) to the sounds of another military wind instrument, the aulos. This instrument had an important military tradition among the Dorians, as it was used in military parades, with regular rhythms, in a way that induced people to act in an orderly manner, without confusion and fear (Pol. *Hist.* 4.20; Plut. *Lyc.* 22.2-3; see Matelli 2004a; Fortenbaugh 2011: 168-9).

#### b. *Inquiries on the Aulos*

The aulos was a double-reeded wind instrument, technically constructed in such a way as to be able to produce particular vibrations that created enthusiasm and excitement in the audience. We have considered the effects induced by the aulos in military parades, when sounded in a certain way and with a studied blend of rhythms, harmony, and genus. The aulos, however, was also a well known orgiastic instrument. Aristotle had compared the strong emotions induced by the aulos to those of the Phrygian harmony:

Arist. *Pol.* 8.7, 1342b2-3

ἔχει γὰρ τὴν αὐτὴν δύναμιν ἢ φρυγιστὶ τῶν ἀρμονιῶν ἢνπερ αὐλὸς ἐν τοῖς ὀργάνοις· ἄμφω γὰρ ὀργιαστικά καὶ παθητικά.

[the Phrygian mode has the same effect among harmonies as the aulos among instruments: both are orgiastic and emotional.]

Aristoxenus had written a work *On musical instruments* which contained some books on the auloi (Wehrli 1967: 78-80):

*On musical instruments* (Περὶ ὀργάνων): fr. 94-5, 102 Wehrli.

*On auloi* (Περὶ αὐλῶν): fr. 96 Wehrli.

*On auletes* (Περὶ αὐλητῶν): fr. 100 Wehrli.

*On the boring of auloi* (Περὶ αὐλῶν τρήσεως): fr. 101 Wehrli.

Theophrastus reported that Andron of Catania was the first aulos-player to make rhythmical movements with his body when he played (718 *FHS&G*). We know that Aristoxenus also wrote on dances (fr. 103-12 Wehrli).

To understand the complexity of ancient musical therapy, suffice it to mention that the connection between music and dance seems to have been first stated by the musicologist Damon in the fifth century BC, who claimed

that the “motions of the soul” generate songs and dances (Ath. *Deipn.* 14.25.5 628C = Damon 37 B 6 *DK* and Plat. *Leg.* 7.790d-e on the catharsis induced by chants and dance). The notion of the original connection between catharsis and dance movements (Moutsopoulos 2002: 123-81) must be left aside here, but one must at least remember that this tradition still survives in the “tarantism” rites of the Italian Salentus (De Martino 2015): the few fragments of Theophrastus allow us to connect musical healing explicitly only to the motions of the voice and of the soul.

Theophrastus is remembered among the Peripatetics who dealt with problems concerning “auloi, rhythms, and harmonies” (715.15-17 *FHS&G*). In *HP* 4.11.1-9 Theophrastus meticulously studied the aulos also from the technical point of view of the kind of material used (reed) and of the methods of its constructions. He collected very detailed information on the auletic reed, presenting its physical characteristics (it is more turgid and fleshy than other canes, and is seemingly “female”, as it were), the best places for its cultivation and the timing of its maturation and harvesting. He even describes the construction technique of the double reed-tongue of the aulos: he is aware of a transformation in the art of building the instrument – which from simple became “flowery” – brought about by Antigenidas (fifth-fourth century BC), a change that coincided with a reform of the construction of the reeds. In the same period, precisely in the late fifth century BC, the construction of new instruments evolved in connection with the production of renewed musical compositions. Pronomos, the aulete depicted on the famous Attic red figured volute krater with the same name,<sup>29</sup> was the first to make *auloi* with features that allowed a full range of harmonies to be played. While previously the aulos could only play a single harmony, i.e. only Dorian, or Phrygian, or Lydian. This was a technical innovation that enhanced the pathetic effects of his “new music” (Matelli 2004a; Murray and Wilson 2004: 211-12; Hagel 2010: 327-51).

### c. *The Physical and Psychological Diseases Treated by Musical Therapy*

The physical and psychological diseases cured by music in *On Enthusiasm(s)* are also studied by Theophrastus in other works and from different healing perspectives.

Beside the madness procured by panic over war considered above, it is possible to include among the “prolonged disturbances of the mind” studied by Theophrastus a series of abnormal behaviours that he observed after the consumption of psychoactive drugs (*HP* 9.11.5-6, 9.19.1; see Preus 1988: 86-8), after drunkenness (Theophrastus also wrote a book *On drunkenness*, see 569, 579B *FHS&G*) or after the excitement of extreme emotions.

<sup>29</sup> Preserved at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples (H 3240).

Among the strong emotions treated by Theophrastus also religious frenzies are of course included (719B *FHS&G*; see Matelli 1998: 204-18; 2004a: 162-3). Aristotle had presented enthusiastic persons as ones whose behavioural and psychological state is “taken over” and “inspired” by the gods (*Eth. Eud.* 1.1214a23-4), so that they are urged to act “without rational thinking and calculation”:

[Arist.] *Magna Moralia* 2.8, 9.5

οἱ ἐνθουσιάζοντες ἄνευ λόγου ὄρμην ἔχουσι πρὸς τὸ πράττειν τι

[Enthusiastic people get, without *logos*, an impetus to act.]

As we have already seen, in *Pol.* 8.7, 1341b9-1342b35 Aristotle dealt with the issue of a “catharsis” and “healing” of the emotional negativities connected with fear, piety, and enthusiasm. All these emotions could be “more or less intense” and can enter some minds with great force, creating a state of “possession” requiring cure: whoever has a soul sensitive to music can be brought back into balance by listening to sacred hymns, as by being treated to medicine or purification. A little further on, Aristotle, carrying on the idea of the musical *ethos*, distinguishes the different effects on the behaviours produced by different harmonies, for example the *Mixolydia*, which leads to pain and meditation, the *Dorian*, which inspires composure and moderation, while “the *Phrygian* harmony seems to make people enthusiastic” (δοκεῖ ποιεῖν . . . ἐνθουσιαστικὸς δ’ ἡ φρυγιστί, *Arist. Pol.* 8.5, 1340b4-5). In a famous passage of the *Laws*, Plato had presented the same two methods for curing the sleeplessness of children and the Corybantic frenzy:

Plat. *Leg.* 7, 790d-e

τεκμαίρεσθαι δὲ χρὴ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶνδε, ὡς ἐξ ἐμπειρίας αὐτὸ εἰλήφασιν καὶ ἐγνώκασιν ὄν χρήσιμον αἱ τε τροφοὶ τῶν μικρῶν καὶ αἱ περὶ τὰ τῶν Κορυβάντων ἰάματα τελοῦσαι· ἠνίκα γὰρ ἄν που βουληθῶσιν κατακοιμίζειν τὰ δυσυπνοῦντα τῶν παιδίων αἱ μητέρες, οὐχ ἡσυχίαν αὐτοῖς προσφέρουσιν ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον κίνησιν, ἐν ταῖς ἀγκάλαις αἰεὶ σείουσαι, καὶ οὐ σιγὴν ἀλλὰ τινα μελωδίαν, καὶ ἀτεχνῶς οἷον καταυλοῦσι τῶν παιδίων, καθαπερὲ τῶν ἐκφρόνων βακχειῶν ἰάσει, ταύτῃ τῇ τῆς κινήσεως ἅμα χορεῖα καὶ μούση χρώμεναι.

[The evidence of this (i.e. the importance of motion) may be seen in the fact that this course is adopted and its usefulness is recognized both by those who nurse small children and by those who administer remedies in cases of Corybantism. Thus, when mothers have children suffering from sleeplessness and want to lull them to rest, the treatment they apply is to give them not rest, but motion, for they rock them constantly in their arms; and instead of silence, they use a kind of crooning noise; and, even if artlessly, we could say, it is as if they made the aulos sing over the children, like the therapy for the

victims of Bacchic frenzy, by employing the combined movements of dance and song as a remedy.]<sup>30</sup>

In a pamphlet attributed to Aristotle and devoted to “melancholy” (where this particular psychic disease is studied in relation to humoral physiology), enthusiasm and corybantic frenzy are also considered as diseases with a certain humoral mixture (*krasis*) and connected with a state of warmth in the seat of the intelligence, in the same way as proper pathologies are, even though their causes are different.

[Arist.] *Probl.* 30.1, 954a34-8

πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ διὰ τὸ ἐγγὺς εἶναι τοῦ νοεροῦ τόπου τὴν θερμότητα ταύτην νοσήμασιν ἀλίσκονται μανικοῖς ἢ ἐνθουσιαστικοῖς, ὅθεν Σίβυλλαι καὶ Βάκιδες καὶ οἱ ἔνθεοι γίνονται πάντες, ὅταν μὴ νοσήματι γένωνται ἀλλὰ φυσικῇ κράσει.

[Many owing to this heat being near the location of the intelligence, are affected by diseases of madness or inspiration, whence come Sibyls and Bakides and all the inspired persons, when (*the condition*) comes not through disease but through natural mixture. (Trans. by Mayhew 2011)]

Among Theophrastus’s works, D.L. *VP* 5.44 records a book entitled *Peri Melancholias* (1.130 *FHS&G*). Some scholars have therefore supposed that the pamphlet on melancholy quoted above might be attributed to the philosopher.<sup>31</sup>

Emotions and all behavioural affections are studied by Theophrastus according to the criterion of “the more and less” (*kata mallon kai hetton*) and in close connection with his biological research, which interrelates physical and psychological movements (dynamically considered as passages from a state of “tension” to one of “release” and *vice versa*, as we will also see in *On Music*). Theophrastus carried on and originally developed Aristotle’s research on these topics (see 438-47, 557, 559, 719A-B *FHS&G*; Fortenbaugh 2003b: esp. 74-84; Matelli 1998; 2004a):

*Fainting (leipopsychia)*.<sup>32</sup> Theophrastus assumedly wrote a work *On Fainting*. The testimonies to its existence report his physiological observations of the symptoms and his hypothesis about the possible causes of this ailment

<sup>30</sup> The manuscript text is corrupt and I follow the emendations of Bury and England adopted by Diès 2007 reading *καθαπερεί τῶν ἐκφρόνων βακχειῶν ἰάσει, ταύτη τῆ τῆς κινήσεως ἅμα χορεία καὶ μουση χρώμεναι* instead of *καταυλοῦσι τῶν παιδίων, καθάπερ ἢ τῶν ἐκφρόνων βακχειῶν ἰάσεις*. For Corybantic madness and its therapy in Plato, see Burkert 1985: 80, 378, n. 53; Wasmuth 2015.

<sup>31</sup> See van der Eijk 2005: 139 and n. 3, 167, n. 91 with discussion and bibliographic references.

<sup>32</sup> On the synonyms *leipopsychia* and *leipothymia*, see Fortenbaugh 2011a: 164, n. 33.



that he attributes to “a lack of those things in which there is natural heat, for example blood or natural moisture generally, as when we see people fainting from haemorrhages and rapid motions of the bowels, and fainting also occurs on account of weariness. . . . The great heat causes fainting both because it weakens the lesser (heat), and because it prevents breathing, and also because it does not allow what cools to enter” (345.10-19 *FHS&G*). Theophrastus connected fainting also to emotions: “[P]leasures and pains produce fainting, for both bring an abundance of moisture, pleasure through melting and liquefaction, pain through freezing. So when the moisture flows to the region where respiration occurs, it causes fainting” (345.30-33 *FHS&G*; see also Sharples 1995: 24-7).

*Sciatica*. Ath. *Deipn.* 14.18 624 A-B (= Theophr. 726B *FHS&G*) and Gell. *NA* 4.13.1-2 (= Theophr. 726C *FHS&G*) give more detailed information than 726A about the musical healing of sciatica, specifying that the aulos had to be played over the painful part of the body. According to Athenaeus (726.3B *FHS&G*), the healing harmony was the Phrygian one. Gellius introduced the idea of an aulos producing “sweet melodies”, which I think has to be intended as a metonymy (the sweet final effect in the place of the means to remove pain, i.e. the exciting sounds of a Phrygian harmony played by the aulos).<sup>33</sup>

It is worth remarking that Theophrastus, besides reporting what many others had said about the musical healing of sciatica, also spoke about a herbal remedy for it in *HP* 9.13.6.5:

Τὸ δὲ ἐρευθεδανὸν φύλλον ὁμοιον κιττῶ πλὴν στρογγυλότερον· φύεται δ' ἐπὶ γῆς ὡσπερ ἄγρωστις, φιλεῖ δὲ παλίσκια χωρία. οὐρητικὴ δέ, δι' ὃ καὶ χρῶνται πρὸς τὰ τῆς ὀσφύος ἀλγῆματα καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἰσχιάδας.

[Madder has a leaf like ivy, but it is rounder: it grows along the ground like dog's-tooth grass and loves shady spots. It has diuretic properties, wherefore it is used for pains in the loins or hip-disease.]

*Epilepsy*. Theophrastus also devoted an entire work to the study of epilepsy, the “sacred disease” with which, as we learn from the Hippocratic writings, “magicians, purifying and begging priests, and charlatans” were engaged (*On Sacred Disease* 1.4).

Four separate testimonies inform us that in his *Peri epilepseos* (1.101 *FHS&G*) Theophrastus argued that epileptics could be cured by the cast-off skins of the geckoes (362A-D *GHS&G*); however, this is the only piece of information we have on the contents of this work. We have already considered above how in *HP* 9.12.5.4 Theophrastus writes about the “cathartic” effect of the root of the variety of poppy called *Herakleia* for purging upwards and healing epilepsy.

<sup>33</sup> On this source, see Fortenbaugh 2011a: 165 and n. 36.

Theophrastus seems to have studied with different approaches, in at least three different works (*Inquiries on Plants*, *On Enthusiasm*, and *On Epilepsy*), three different kinds of therapy for the psychosomatic disease of epilepsy. When dealing with this disease, we have to take into account an ancient tradition of beliefs and the new approach introduced by the Hippocratic text *On the Sacred Disease*.<sup>34</sup> Theophrastus connected the pathological nature of epilepsy with the psychological excitement of enthusiasm, stating that both could be cured by music; however, Theophrastus's view on the healing of this pathology seems to have excluded any theory of a divine pollution.<sup>35</sup> It can therefore be inferred that he probably believed that an excess of black bile should affect the circuits of the head, like Plato<sup>36</sup> and the author of *The Sacred Disease*<sup>37</sup> did (about Theophrastus's theory on the four humors and their blendings, see 331A-336C *FHS&G*).

d. "iatreuein" versus "kathairein"

All the sources relating to Theophrastus's *On Enthusiasm(s)* use the verb *iatreuein*, "to heal" in contexts that closely recall the section of Aristotle's *Pol.* 8.7.1342a4-8, where the terms *iatreia* and *katharsis* are used together. One might wonder whether the absence of the word "catharsis" in the texts relating to Theophrastus's description of music therapy is due to chance or rather depends on a will to keep his philosophical theory separate from magical practices that were still in use in his day (see his report on the traditions of magical chants and incantations used in the cathartic rite of Melampus with the hellebore in *HP* 9.10.4.9).

### 3. Theophrastus's *On Music* and the Purpose of This Art

I have left to the end the references to music therapy in the books *On Music* not because they are of secondary importance. On the contrary, they have a fundamental meaning within the philosophical framework I have sketched above and may even help understand Theophrastus's original approach to musical therapy in relation to Aristotle's theory.

Scholars acknowledge that Aristotle himself did not carry out analytic musical research, but that his two pupils Aristoxenus and Theophrastus did so. *Suida* s.v. "Aristoxenos" (Aristox. fr. 1 Wehrli) tells of a rivalry between

<sup>34</sup> See van der Eijk 2005: 45-73; Gregory 2013: 69-83.

<sup>35</sup> See the polemic against this hypothesis by the author of *The Sacred Disease* 1.1-13; 2.1 (Jouanna 2003). "Theophrastus and our author (scil. of *On The Sacred Disease*) seem to share the same basic attitude towards older traditions" (Laskaris 2002: 44).

<sup>36</sup> Plat. *Tim.* 85a-b; see Laskaris 2002: 60-1.

<sup>37</sup> Laskaris 2002: 141-6.

Aristoxenus and Theophrastus over the succession as leader of the Lyceum won by Theophrastus. The contrast between the two has probably been exaggerated by modern scholars: their musical doctrines, even if quite different, had also points of contact (both opposed the Pythagorean identification of numbers as a cause of music, even if Aristoxenus identified it with intervals and Theophrastus with the motions of the soul, *kineseis tes psyches*; both believed that emotions can give “movements” to the voice (Sicking 1998: 107-8, 128-9, 135, 138-40); Theophrastus observed and described with care Aristoxenus’s musical healing method by means of the aulos, as we have seen).

It seems that Theophrastus wrote three books *On Music* (714.1 *FHS&G*), one book *On Musicians* (714.2 *FHS&G*), and one book *On Harmonics* (714.1 *FHS&G*).

Porphy. *In Harm.* 1.3 (Düring 61.16-65.15) = 716 *FHS&G* is the fundamental source for reconstructing some parts of Theophrastus’s lost second book *On Music*, but we get information also from other sporadic sources (715, 718, 719A-D, 720-725 *FHS&G*).

As far as it can be reconstructed, the thrust of his interest was to dispute the Pythagorean assumption that pitch is a quantitative property of sound, arguing that differences of pitch are instead qualitative. We cannot dwell here on the many critical issues arising from this doctrine, where Aristoxenus’s researches on harmony are also taken into account (Barker 1989: 110-118; Sicking 1998: 128-9, 135, 138-40). We may draw a few ideas on his musical theory from Porphyry’s paraphrase, in which emotions, intended as physiological phenomena and movements of the soul, inflected the voice originating music:

Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* I.5. 623A = 719A<sup>38</sup>

‘καὶ γὰρ ἔναγχος’ ἔφη ‘τὸ βιβλίον ἀνέγνω. λέγει δὲ (fr. 90) μουσικῆς ἀρχὰς τρεῖς εἶναι, λύπην, ἡδονήν, ἐνθουσιασμόν, ὡς ἐκάστου τῶν . . . αὐτῶν παρατρέ<ποντος> ἐκ τοῦ συνήθους <καὶ παρ>εγκλίνοντος τὴν φωνήν.’

[(Sossius) said: “For I recently read the book and he (i.e. Theophrastus) says that three are the sources of music: pain, pleasure and enthusiasm, because each of these emotions turns the voice aside and deflects it from its usual (inflection)”. (Trans. by *FHS&G*)]<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See Fortenbaugh’s commentary (2011b: 284-7).

<sup>39</sup> In his *De metris* 4.2 (partially quoted in 719B *FHS&G*), and probably through the intermediation of Varro (Kassel 1981: 27, n. 17, 20), the Latin grammarian Aelius Festus Aphthonius ascribed to Theophrastus the idea that strong passions like lust, anger, and enthusiasm are like the instinct of a sacred fury capable of inspiring verses and songs; see Matelli 1998: 208-18; Fortenbaugh 2011b: 285-6.

Porph. *In Harm.* 1.3 (Düring 61.22-4 and 65.13-5) = 716.7-9 and 716.130-2  
*FHS&G*

ἔστι γὰρ τὸ γινόμενον κίνημα μελωδικὸν περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν σφόδρα ἀκριβὲς ὁπόταν φωνῇ ἐθελήσῃ ἐρμηνεύειν αὐτὸ, τρέπει μὲν τήνδε, τρέπει δὲ ἐφ' ὅσον οἷα τέ ἐστι τὴν ἄλογον τρέψαι καθὸ ἐθέλει . . . μία δὲ φύσις τῆς μουσικῆς, κίνησις τῆς ψυχῆς ἢ κατὰ ἀπόλυσιν γιγνομένη τῶν διὰ τὰ πάθη κακῶν, ἢ εἰ μὴ ἦν, οὐδ' ἂν ἢ τῆς μουσικῆς φύσις ἦν.

[For *the movement productive of melody*, when it occurs in the soul, *is very accurate*, when it (the soul) wishes to express it (the movement) with the voice. It (the soul) turns it (the voice), *and turns it just as it wishes*, to the extent that it (the soul) is able *to turn the wordless voice*.<sup>40</sup> . . . The *nature of music is one*. It is the movement of the soul that occurs *in correspondence with*<sup>41</sup> its release from the evils due to the emotions; and if there were not this, neither would it be the nature of music. (Trans. by *FHS&G*)

We have already seen that in *Pol.* 8.7, 1341b9-1342b35 Aristotle had presented different degrees of passions after the principle of “the more and the less”, and described enthusiastic people as “taken” by a “movement” (of their souls).

In *On Enthusiasm(s)*, *On Music* and *On Motion* Theophrastus elaborates with originality this topic giving it an increased speculative importance:

Simp. *In Ph.* 6.4 234b10-20 (CAG 10: 964.29-965.6 Diels) = 271 *FHS&G*

ταῦτα δὲ καὶ τὸν κορυφαῖον ἀρέσκει τῶν Ἀριστοτέλους ἐταίρων τὸν Θεόφραστον ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν Περὶ κινήσεως αὐτοῦ λέγοντα, ὅτι ‘αἱ μὲν ὀρέξεις καὶ ἐπιθυμίαι καὶ ὄργαι σωματικαὶ κινήσεις εἰσὶ καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχουσι’.

[These views also find favour with the chief of Aristotle’s colleagues, Theophrastus, who says, in the first book *On Motion*, that “desires, appetites and feelings of anger are bodily motions, and have their starting point in this”. (Trans. by *FHS&G*)

<sup>40</sup> I have suggested here a translation of the wording οἷα τέ ἐστι τὴν ἄλογον τρέψαι which differs from the ones of *FHS&G* and Barker (1989: 111) who translated the passage as “to the extent that it is able *to turn that which is non-rational*”; Barker (1989: 111, n. 2) observes more correctly: “Just possibly the adjective should be rendered as ‘wordless’, rather ‘non rational’”. Sickings 1998: 101 translates “to the extent that it is able *to direct that which is without logos*”.

<sup>41</sup> Sickings 1998: 106 translates “with a view to . . .”, expressing the purpose of music; Fortenbaugh 2011b: 286 considers the two possible translations “in correspondence with” and “for the sake of”, remarking how “the latter is stronger in that release from the evils of emotion would be the function of song, essential to its very nature. The former recognizes the result without making the release a function essential to song. For our purposes, the important point is that song is conceived of as having cathartic effect”.

In *On Emotions* (438 FHS&G) Theophrastus explains the difference between emotions in respect of “the more and the less”, showing that fault-finding, anger and rage, or friendship and goodwill are not identical in kind. An emotion differs from another when it is “intensified” (*epiteinetai*) or “relaxed” (*anietai*): these two verbs are key-words which express the dynamic of two correlated opposite kinds of motion, the “tension” (*tonos*) and the “relaxation” (*apolysis*), that always occur and, when they are “more” or “less”, make the difference between health and illness and between vices (evils) and virtues.

Theophrastus also explains *eros* through the key-terms *hyperbole* (“excess”) and *apolysis* (“release”):

Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 4.20.64 (4.468.4-7 Hense) = 557 FHS&G

Ἔρως δὲ ἐστὶν ἀλογίστου τινὸς ἐπιθυμίας ὑπερβολὴ ταχεῖαν μὲν ἔχουσα τὴν πρόσοδον, βραδεῖαν δὲ τὴν ἀπόλυσιν.

[Love is an excess of a certain irrational desire, whose coming is sudden but whose release is slow.]

The physiological connections between motions of the soul and motions of the body represent a theory strictly correlated with Theophrastus’s musical system. Thanks to this connection, Theophrastus can argue for the ethical purpose of music and demonstrate (against all the other writers on music) his original idea of a “qualitative” nature of music.

What is the original import of Theophrastus’s theory on the correlations between motions of the body and motions of the soul in relation to music? He has a great deal of earlier material to work with, but even his few fragments and testimonies show that he evolved significantly and with originality an idea first attributed to Damon (Ath. *Deipn.* 14.25.5 628C = 37 B 6 DK),<sup>42</sup> then re-used by Plato,<sup>43</sup> passed into the philosophical system of Aristotle, and also developed by Aristoxenus.

Aristotle connected music to pleasure (*An. Pr.* 1.24, 41b9-10, *Pol.* 7.3, 1337b27-9, 7.5.1339b20 and 1340a3-4), and pleasure to a certain motion and release of the soul:<sup>44</sup>

Arist. *Pol.* 8.2, 1337b.42-1338a1

ἄνεσις γὰρ ἢ τοιαύτη κίνησις τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀνάπαυσις.

[Because the activity of play is a relaxation of the soul, and serves as recreation because of its pleasantness. (Trans. by Rackham 1932)]

<sup>42</sup> Lasserre 1954: 53-79; Barker 1985: 319; 1989: 118, n. 44; Moutsopoulos 2002: 124-9. See also Barker 2005: 71.

<sup>43</sup> Moutsopoulos 2002: 50-70, 102-3, n. 4, 127-31, 134-5, n. 10.

<sup>44</sup> He expresses a contrary opinion speaking of the perfect unity of pleasure (therefore without movements) in *Eth. Nic.* 10.3, 1173a.30 and 10.4, 1174b.10.

Arist. *Rhet.* 1.11, 1369b33-35

‘Υποκείσθω δὴ ἡμῖν εἶναι τὴν ἡδονὴν κίνησιν τινα τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ κατάστασιν ἀθρόαν καὶ αἰσθητὴν εἰς τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν φύσιν, λύπην δὲ τοῦναντίον.

[Let it to be assumed by us that pleasure is a certain movement of the soul, a sudden and perceptible settling down into its natural state, and pain the opposite. (Trans. by Freese 1926)]

According to Theophrastus’s master, the relief achieved through music is only one of its three purposes, generically described in connection with pleasure: it is not yet the precise physiological phenomenon functional to catharsis, as it is in Theophrastus.

In Theophr. 716.130 *FHS&G*, the phrase *apolysis ton kakon* is particularly significant because it is used in substitution for the term *catharsis* for describing the nature and the purpose of music.<sup>45</sup> When Theophrastus states that the movement productive of melody which occurs in the soul “is very accurate” and “produces a certain movement in the voice” (716.7-9 *FHS&G*), he means that music is produced by precise physical motions responding to precise physiological correlations.<sup>46</sup>

The term *apolysis* (“release”) used instead of catharsis in *On Music* is semantically close to the sense of the verb *anietai* (“is relaxed”) used in *On Emotions* (438.9 *FHS&G*), where the verb is opposed to *epiteinetai* (“is intensified”): Theophrastus says that the same emotion can be “relaxed”, thus becoming a virtue, or become a vice if “intensified”: the different outcome is all a question of the “more” or “less”.

The words devoted by Theophrastus to both the listener’s and the singer’s catharsis in *On Music* are particularly worthy of attention. The same idea seems to me to emerge from a rhetorical source that reports Theophrastus’s theory on the art of delivery (he wrote a lost *Περὶ ὑποκρίσεως*, *On acting*: D.L. *VP* 5.48), applied to orators (but scholars are allowed to suspect that the work basically treated stage acting).

I present this text, following the concordant manuscript tradition that does not need to be emended:

Athanasius, *Prolegomena in Hermogenis De Statibus* (Matelli 1999: 56-7; 2004b: 21)

καὶ Θεόφραστος ὁ φιλόσοφος ὁμοίως φησὶν εἶναι μέγιστον ῥητορικῆ πρὸς τὸ πείσαι τὴν ὑπόκρισιν, εἰς τὰς ἀρχὰς ἀναφέρων καὶ τὰ πάθη τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τὴν κατανόησιν τούτων, ὡς καὶ τῆ ὅλη ἐπιστήμη σύμφωνον εἶναι τὴν κίνησιν τοῦ σώματος καὶ τὸν τόνον τῆς ψυχῆς.

<sup>45</sup> See Plat. *Crat.* 405a8-c2, where Apollo’s name is etymologically connected to the verb *apolyein* (Anceschi 2007: 116-20).

<sup>46</sup> On the interpretation of the adverb *akribos* (“very accurate”), see Barker 1985: 316; Sickings 1998: 108-9.

[Also the philosopher Theophrastus says in like manner that delivery is a great help to rhetoric for persuading, *referring to principles regarding the emotions of the soul and their reception*, for he thought that the *movement of the body and the tension of the soul are in concord with the entire science.*]

Fortenbaugh (712 *FHS&G*) followed the correction of the manuscript reading τὸν τόνον τῆς ψυχῆς (*tension of the soul*) to τὸν τόνον τῆς φωνῆς (*tension of the voice*) printed by Rabe (*RhGr*, 14.177.3-8) without declaring his emendation in the apparatus. This last reading makes much less sense in connection to the “entire science”, depriving us of an important element in Theophrastus’s philosophical system. Walz (1932-36: 35.16-36.4) correctly printed τὸν τόνον τῆς ψυχῆς and I think it is advisable to return to the original text.

Inside the framework so far reconstructed, the words are quite lucid and have a clear sense related to the entire Theophrastean philosophical system within which we are prompted to consider the strict connection between the “motions of the body” and the “tension of the soul” of an actor or an orator when delivering his words.

Within this philosophical framework we understand the sense of unity between the “motions of the body” and the “tension of the soul” (ἡ κίνησις τοῦ σώματος καὶ ὁ τόνος τῆς ψυχῆς) in experiencing emotions, any breakdown of which can be healed by the art of delivery, as well as of singing, an experience valid not only for the audience but – as Theophrastus precisely theorizes – first of all for the actor and the orator who, by acting, embodies the motions or, better, the “tensions” of many souls. This is a good performing method that still has a recognized validity on the stage, when actors try to impress and get a reaction from the spectators (see on this Matelli 1999 and 2004b).

The analogy between the structure of a literary composition and the physical structure of an animal body put forth by Plato (*Phaedr.* 264c) had been fully developed by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, who conceived the structure and the dynamics of any poetic work in analogy with those of animal bodies.<sup>47</sup> With reference to our theme, it is worth observing that Aristotle described the dynamics of a dramatic plot (conceived as a *mimesis tou biou*, see *Poet.* 6, 1450a17-18) with the terms *desis* / *ploke* and *lysis* (*Poet.* 15, 1454a37, 18, 1455b.24-9), “complication” and “release”. And these are two kinds of “tension” which stand very close to the physiological and psychical dynamics of catharsis described by Theophrastus. These last remarks, however, open new problems that would need to be considered under a different perspective.

<sup>47</sup> On this analogy, see *Poetics* 4, 1449a2-15, 7, 1450b34-36-1451a7, 23, 1459a17-26 and *Rhetoric* 3.9, 1409.29-34, 3.14, 1415b.6-8, 3.19, 1419b.19-23 (Matelli 2011: 646-7; 2012: 749-50; 2015: 297-8).

## Conclusion

I hope to have shown that even the indirect and sporadic information about Theophrastus's cathartic theory on emotions is meaningful if we consider these traces in connection to the complexity of his entire philosophical system.

He appears to have reached new notions about catharsis and in particular musical catharsis, by definitively superseding the magical approach that was still alive at his time and delineating in new terms an Aristotelian idea. I will try to synthesize his method and the main results achieved: Theophrastus has a systematic approach to the problem of catharsis, through different fields of knowledge. We have followed a thread that connects botanical researches, medical physiology, psychology, ethics, acting, music, religion.

With regard to his research topics he appears to be a keen and unprejudiced observer and collector of the largest possible number of experiences that illustrate them. However, at a speculative level, he proceeds autonomously, even going against his teacher's opinions.

He extends the Aristotelian method of studying in detail even the parts as discrete entities (without forgetting the connections of the parts with the whole, as we have seen in his botanical, physiological, ethical, and musical researches): this method contributes also to his inquiry.

He further develops the Aristotelian ideas that:

1. *hedone* (pleasure) has to do with motions of the soul and is possible only when the passional negativities of the soul are mitigated,
2. ethical catharsis can be compared with physical purgations,
3. ritual melodies can effect the catharsis of the singer's soul.

He also goes beyond Aristotle in addressing:

1. the study of the physiological aspects of physical movements (the object of special enquiries in *Peri kineseos*) and the connection between them and the movements of the soul,
2. concerning music, the idea of the "qualitative" nature of music: consequently, he affirms that music has a unique purpose, the ethical *apolyxis ton kakon* (i.e catharsis) (against the Aristotelian assumption of three distinct purposes of music in the *Politics*).

Important building blocks in constructing his cathartic theory are:

1. the development of the Aristotelian method by the criterion of "the more and the less", that becomes his leading principle applied to physiological enquiries into humours and warmth,
2. the correlation of physiological motions to motions of the soul, both explained in terms of a dynamic between different degrees of "tension"



and “relaxation” (two key-terms),  
 3. the different degrees of “tension” or “relaxation” of the motions of the soul connected to the emotions, two psychological and physiological principles that Theophrastus also uses to explain ethical vices and virtues (e.g. courage, rashness, cowardice or liberality, prodigality, meanness, etc., see 449A *FHS&G*).

Enthusiasm and musical catharsis are studied by Theophrastus within the framework of his entire philosophical system.

Concerning terminology, *katharsis* is a term used by Theophrastus to describe purifications from medical and environmental contamination, botanical purging and pruning, and acts of religious and superstitious purifications.

The locution *apolyxis ton kakon* (“release from evils”) seems to be a substitute for the term “catharsis” in the ethical contexts where Theophrastus elaborates his original take on this theme.

The cathartic effect of the physiological and psychological “release from evils” through precise modulations of the human voice in music and in the performing arts involves both the performer and the audience.

In his original view, religious piety does not consist in animal sacrifice or in traditional rites, but rather in the ethical purification before the gods (*katharsis ton kakon*) that the devotee can achieve. This religious issue might be considered the starting and ending point of Theophrastus’s philosophical theory of catharsis, a theory in which the whole range of his human science is involved.

## Abbreviations

- DK* Diels, Hermann and Walther Kranz (eds) [1903] (1985), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin: Weidmann.
- FHS&G* Fortenbaugh, William W., Pamela M. Huby, Robert W. Sharples and Dimitri Gutas (eds) (1992), *Theophrastus of Eresus: Sources for His Life, Writings, Thought and Influence*, Leiden: Brill.
- LSJ* Liddel, Henry George, Robert Scott and Henry Stuart Jones (eds) (1968), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- SEG* (1923-) *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Leiden: Brill.

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