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Massimo Raffa, *Theophrastus of Eresus: Commentary Volume 9.1. Philosophia antiqua, 149.* Leiden: Brill, 2018. Pp. x, 135. ISBN 9789004362277. €149.00.

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This book comes as a part of the series of commentaries which were planned to serve as exegetical tools for all the Theophrastean texts included in *FHSG*, the two-volume, and now standard, collection edited by W. W. Fortenbaugh, P. M. Huby, R. W. Sharples and D. Gutas, together with other scholars, in 1992.¹ It is dedicated to the sources on music, which in *FHSG* had been edited by Andrew Barker,² and can be regarded not only as a critical synthesis and remarkable completion of the subsequent research on different aspects of Theophrastus' musical thought,³ but also as a new starting point in the study of it. In fact, Massimo Raffa gives here a number of original contributions that cannot be properly discussed or even catalogued in a brief review, while they will be highly appreciated by learned readers. The volume consists of four chapters; the first is the 'Introduction'; the other three, according to the editorial custom of the series, are: 'The Sources', 'Titles of Books', 'The Texts'; there follow a rich and up-to-date Bibliography and three useful Indexes. In general, the material has been studied with extreme thoroughness, and in particular the discussion on specific technical issues reflects Raffa's great competence in the field and his breadth and depth of understanding of the sources and the secondary literature.⁴

Though deeply interested in music, Theophrastus can hardly be considered as a specialist in the field. While he shows a remarkable competence on some technical details,⁵ from the list of his works compiled by Diogenes Laertius (V.42-50), which includes as many

as 224 items, we know of only three closely connected to music: a *Περὶ μουσικῆς* in three books, and an *Ἀρμονικά* and a *Περὶ τῶν μουσικῶν* in one book each; some important considerations on music are to be found in a work whose title, depending on the sources, is *Περὶ ἐνθουσιασμοῦ* or *Περὶ ἐνθουσιασμῶν*. Unfortunately, apart from one long excerpt from the second book of the *Περὶ μουσικῆς*, due to ‘the unpredictability of the manuscript tradition or the fact that after him harmonic science would take such a direction as to render his approach somehow peripheral to mainstream conceptions – or perhaps both’ (p. 1), we have only a handful of short and very problematic fragments from his works on the topic. But however scanty, this material suffices to make us realize ‘how outstanding and, in hindsight, extremely modern his contribution was, if compared not only to ancient musical thought, but also to Western reflection as a whole on music, its origin, nature and aims, as well its relation to the human soul, passions, and states of mind’ (p. 1).

Chapter 1 outlines lucidly the debate on music in Theophrastus’ time and gives background information for understanding the texts; intended also for non-specialist readers, it is divided into three sections. In the first, Raffa explains briefly the main subjects, the methods and aims of ancient harmonics (*harmonikē*), taking into account the results of the most recent and authoritative studies in the field. He underlines the fact that the mathematical and the empirical approaches to the discipline, with all their differences, were both firmly grounded in the observation of sonorous reality, and makes clear how it was that Plato played a crucial role in distancing the one from the other, and in creating the conditions for the former to prevail over the latter. Raffa also explains briefly the basics of the ancient theories on the nature of sound, its attributes such as pitch and volume, and its production and propagation, giving convincing reasons why timbre, one of the most important characteristics of sound, was disregarded by the ancient musical theorists; emphasis is given to the fact that Theophrastus radically criticised any quantitative approach to acoustics, and in particular to the nature of pitch. The second section ‘covers the intriguing territory between psychology and rhetoric, perhaps reaching as far as the theory of acting and healing’ (pp. 1-2). The piece is well set out, and the readers will certainly appreciate the succinct account of the theories regarding the relationship between music and the soul. What in my opinion deserves a special mention here is the discussion aiming to show that not only can the idea that music can affect the soul, notoriously picked up by Plato, be traced back to Damon in the first part of fifth century BCE, but so can the view that music can be affected by the soul of those who

produce/compose/perform it. In his brilliant analysis of Damon Test. C 1 Wallace (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 14, 628c), Raffa rightly considers Athenaeus' testimony reliable,⁶ and resolves convincingly the alleged syntactical ambiguities of the passage. Thus, Athenaeus' text should be construed in the sense that the soul affects the music it produces, not the other way round, and on this basis Raffa develops acute considerations on musical composition and performance in order to interpret texts of Theophrastus such as 718 and 721B in a line of thought originating with Damon; he also explains convincingly why Plato does not say a single word on this idea (pp. 11-15). In the third section, Raffa emphasizes the relationship between Theophrastus' musical thought and the early, pre-Socratic stages of Pythagoreanism (pp. 16-17), as well as the points of contact with the doctrine of Aristoxenus (pp. 20-1).

Chapter 2 deals with the sources for the extant Theophrastean texts on music. A concise account is given of each author in whose work each text is quoted, and the material is arranged in chronological order; the information provided is up to date throughout, and appropriate references are given when further details on the same sources can be found in other volumes in the series. The importance of these pages can hardly be overestimated by any reader of the book, who will certainly keep them at hand while using the commentary in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3 contains a critical assessment of the *testimonia* for the three titles of Theophrastus' works connected to music (*FHSG* 714). After an overview of the sources and the arrangement of Diogenes Laertius' catalogue, Raffa resolves the alleged ambiguity of the title Ἀρμονικῶν α', arguing that the work must have been a treatise on harmonics, not on musical theorists, and discusses the attractive hypothesis that Περὶ μουσικῆς is the cumulative title of three individual monographs (Περὶ μέτρων, Ἀρμονικῶν, Περὶ ὀυθμῶν), giving good reasons to consider it untenable (pp. 33-4). After all, our sources assign only three texts to a specific work (716 to book 2 of the Περὶ μουσικῆς, 726A and 726B to his Περὶ ἐνθουσιασμοῦ/ἐνθουσιασμῶν). Thus Raffa, well aware that every decision on which (unattributed) text one should assign to which work can only be highly speculative, points out that the uncertainties about the attribution of texts such as 715 and 717 to a work on music or on harmonics can hardly be removed, and cautiously proposes, mainly on the basis of their content, to read 719A, 719B and 721B as parts of the Περὶ μουσικῆς. He might have added here that it is very probable that 726C too belong to the Περὶ ἐνθουσιασμοῦ/ἐνθουσιασμῶν, as he implies on p. 107. As

for texts 722-725, handed down through the devious routes of the Arabic tradition, Raffa expresses serious doubts that they can have conveyed genuine elements of Theophrastus' thought, while he looks more confident in attributing 718 to the Περὶ (τῶν) μουσικῶν, without ruling out other possibilities and, above all, wisely recalling that 'in such cases, a profession of ignorance appears sensible' (p. 36).

Chapter 4, arranged under four headings, which mirror the disposition of the material in *FHSG*, contains a rich, clear and well-grounded commentary. As there is no room for a full discussion here, I will make only a few notes on specific points. Raffa analyses the source contexts and the *loci paralleli* given in *FHSG* in detail; on occasion, other passages not included in *FHSG* are added and commented on, and this proves extremely useful, as for 715 and 717 (pp. 41-3, 67-70); for 715, Raffa observes that Plutarch borrowed also from Theophrastus' *CP* 6.4.7 and 6.5 (pp. 40 n. 9, 41 n. 10). The discussion of texts 716 and 717, quoted by Porphyry, is founded on the critical edition recently produced by Raffa himself, while texts 720 and 721A, handed down by Philodemus, are printed according to the Delattre's critical edition, which supersedes that in *FHSG*.⁷ Now, while Raffa's conjecture at 717.2 (τῆ διὰ πασῶν) is convincingly motivated, his suggestions for 720.4-5 (τινα] κολακίαν and συνερ[γεῖν ἄιδο]ντας) remain unexplained. As for 716.35, again from Porphyry, expunging ἡ φωνή would produce an awkward position for the δέ at the very beginning of the clause. Other textual problems are usually taken into consideration and discussed, except for the thorny one at 715.17, concerning the received reading δι' αὐλῶν.

As a remarkable piece of scholarship, this book should be read from cover to cover not only by scholars interested in the musical side of the Theophrastean thought, but also by those interested in ancient Greek music in much broader sense. [8](#)

Notes:

[1.](#) W. W. Fortenbaugh, P. Huby, R. W. Sharples and D. Gutas, *Theophrastus of Eresus, Sources for his Life, Thought and Influence*, Leiden: Brill, 1992.

[2.](#) Cf. *FHSG* 2, 714-726C, pp. 560-83; *FHSG* 1, p. 4.

[3.](#) Cf. mainly A. Barker, *The Science of Harmonics in Classical Greece*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 411-36; A. Barker, *Psicomusicologia nella Grecia antica*, Napoli:

Guida, 2005, pp. 131-41.

4. Cf. e.g. the discussions on the names of the concords and the structures of the ancient ἄρμονίαι (pp. 16-17), and on the structure of the chromatic and enharmonic genera (p. 42 and n. 19); the explanation of the allegedly corrupt participle δοκοῦσα, based on considerations of the relationship between tension and thickness of the strings (pp. 63-4); the notes on Ismenias (p. 39 n. 7), on the capacity of articulation of the instruments compared to the voice (p. 94 n. 166) and on the expressive use of the reeds regarding *HP* 4.11 (p. 113 n. 234).

5. Cf. the famous passage regarding the fabrication of the *aulos* reeds (*HP* 4.11.1-7), and the two passing references to musical contexts (*ibid.* 5.10, 19.10).

6. Contrary to Barker, *Psicomusicologia*, p. 71.

7. Full references to these editions are given in the Bibliography, pp. 121 and 117 respectively.

8. Although the book is very well produced, I have come across the following misprints and inaccuracies: p. 10.14, delete ‘are’; last line, read ‘songs’; p. 11.2, read ‘become’, ‘to’; n. 43, last line, read ‘Herodotus’ *Histories*’; p. 19.8, read πανουργικὸν; n. 73, last line, read ‘2010’; p. 33.11, delete ‘on’; 33.15, read ‘as a sort’; 33.29, read ‘text 1.213’; p. 36 n. 19. 2, read ‘text 1.260’; p. 37.10, read ‘qualitative’ instead of ‘quantitative’; p. 41 n. 15.2, read ‘φθέγγεται “why of pipes of equal length does the narrower’; p. 42 n. 16, penultimate line, delete ‘to’; p. 44.17, read ‘on the list’; p. 46 n. 37.6, read ‘philosophers’; p. 53.7, read ‘πορρωτέρω’ (for ‘πορρωτέρω’); n. 52.17, read ‘in [Aristotle]’; n. 54.1, read ‘69-72’; p. 55.6, read ‘It is’; p. 57 n. 62.16, read ‘variation, such as tongues and mouths,’; p. 62.1, read ‘every note’; p. 63.18, delete ‘or’; 63.24, read ‘θάτερον’; p. 64.12, read ‘πορρωτέρω’; 64.28, read ‘1969’; p. 66.7, delete ‘6’; p. 69 n. 79, read ‘Hagel (2010)’; p. 72 n. 86, read ‘τε τίθενται’; p. 73 n. 95.1, read ‘Jan’; p. 77, last line, read ‘as it seems’; p. 84 n. 139.3, read ‘the ears’; p. 87 n. 147.3, read ‘*numeros*’; n. 148.2, read ‘*congruos*’; p. 89 n. 156, read ‘2016’; p. 92.8, read ‘δὲ’; 92.13, read ‘εἰπ]όντος’; p. 107 n. 210.1, read ‘*cantilenas*’; p. 112 n. 232.2, read ‘p. 74, n. 99’; p. 113 n. 234.7, read ‘perhaps’; last line, delete ‘the’; p. 117, add the reference to I. Düring, *Ptolemaios und Porphyrios über die Musik*, Göteborg: Elanders 1934, which is quoted on p. 66.23; p. 118, last line, read ‘2010’; p. 133, at the end of the Theophrastus passages, add ‘712, 77n117’.

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