

Pythagorean Curriculum Reconsidered -Archytas B1 and Plato's five mathemata-

Chiye IZUMI

One of the most important pieces of evidence concerning the background to Plato's framework of mathemata is Archytas B1. This piece seems to parallel Plato's description of the mathemata in the Republic. Some suggest this indicates that Plato's framework of mathemata given in the Republic might owe certain debts to Archytas while others deny this, questioning the philological authenticity of Archytas B1. These two interpretations of Archytas B1 can be construed as representing the two differing views of the relationship between Archytas and Plato, namely, the Neopythagorean view and the anti-Pythagorean view. From the Neopythagorean point of view, it is claimed that Plato was indebted to Pythagoreans represented by "Archytas". On the contrary, from the anti-Pythagorean point of view, it is claimed that Plato is absolutely original and independent of Archytas. The two kinds of views of the relationship between Plato and the Pythagoreans represented by "Archytas" can also be seen in other ancient testimonies. Why are there such conflicting views of the relationship between Archytas and Plato? The answer, I think, lies in the tension which originally existed between Plato and Archytas: the tension seems already to be manifest, for example, in Plato's description of mathemata in the Republic, where both his approval and his criticism of mathemata are apparent. The points mentioned above are crucial for interpreting Archytas B1. We should not immediately take this apparent parallel to substantiate the Neoplatonic claim that Plato's framework of the mathemata might have certain debts to Archytas, nor the anti-Pythagorean claim that Archytas B1 is a forgery biased by the Neopythagorean claim. I will not commit myself to either view, but concentrate, rather, on examining the information Archytas B1 provides and try to elucidate more fully each sentence and each term constituting the fragment. In the light of this analysis, we will be better able to understand not only the background to Plato's framework of the mathemata for the philosophical dialectic, but also the development of Pythagorean curriculum before Plato.