

Wallace, R. W.

Reconstructing Damon: Music, Wisdom Teaching and Politics in Perikles' Athens, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, xxiii, 223 pp. £55 (hb). ISBN: 9780199685738

Wallace's *Reconstructing Damon* represents a welcome addition to the growing literature on ancient Greek music as it fills a long-standing desideratum: an updated and comprehensive collection of testimonia about the crucial but elusive character of Damon of Oa. Until now, scholars interested in investigating the life and activities of this key musical theorist, intellectual and political figure had to rely on incomplete and otherwise inadequate collections of texts produced in the 1950s (Diels–Kranz 1952 and Lasserre 1954).

Wallace's collection represents a substantial improvement on his predecessors, as it includes '51 passages mentioning Damon by name, of which 28 do not appear in earlier collections; three additional passages mention[ing] Damon's followers, in two cases by name; three more passages show[ing] his direct influence' (ix).¹ For each of these, Wallace provides a revised Greek text with minimal apparatus as well as an English translation and commentary of variable length and scope. This valuable material is accompanied by four introductory chapters which aim to identify the key features of Damon's work and situate them within the intellectual and political milieu of Classical Athens, as well as four appendices that tackle individual interpretative questions.

This brief overview clarifies, I hope, that Wallace's book marks a critical step in Damonian scholarship and is destined to have a major influence on the future debate on Damon's shadowy but intriguing figure. Exactly for this reason, however, I believe it is important to discuss in some detail Wallace's problematic treatment of Damon's views on musical ethics and their technical counterparts – notions that are clearly crucial for the study of ancient Greek music.

Borrowing an expression coined by Abert (1899), Wallace labels Damon's interest in the 'psychological, behavioural, and hence social and political affects of music and poetry' (24) as 'the *ethos* theory'. This definition recurs frequently throughout this study but we are nowhere told what this 'theory' entailed exactly in Wallace's view. Of course, it is hard to pin down the details of this question given the scanty evidence at our disposal; nevertheless, using such a definite expression so pervasively without clarifying its implications might give uninitiated readers the misleading impression that there was a recognised, coherent body of knowledge on these matters in the first place. But this is a far cry from the picture outlined by the extant sources which, rather than detailing such a comprehensive 'system' or 'theory', present us with a wide variety of questions related to musical ethics. Just to name a few: does music itself have ethical attributes? Is it capable of reproducing different moral characters aesthetically and engendering them in the soul? Does it 'cure' undesirable psychological dispositions or even physical ailments? Does it achieve these effects by means of specific intervals, rhythms, modes and instruments?

¹ It is not clear, however, what the author includes exactly in each of these categories. The *Conspectus of Testimonia* provided on pp.207–8 shows a total of 50 numbered items, comprising 42 passages that mention Damon by name (A1–25 and B1–18), two passages on his followers (C1–2), three 'possibly reflecting Damon's influence' (172, D1–3) and two 'of alleged Damonian influence' (178, E1–2). Some of these items are split into groups (e.g. the ostraca bearing Damon's name are listed as 22a–d) but counting them as separate elements leads to a total of 54 passages mentioning Damon, not 51. The arguments deployed to demonstrate Damon's 'direct' or 'possible' influence on other sources are not always persuasive, especially in the case of Pap. Hibeh 1.13 (=D2) and Virgil's *Eclogue* 8 (=D3).

These are quite separate questions and have received an array of conflicting and sometimes bewildering answers by poets, philosophers and other intellectuals since the earliest stages of Greek literature. For these reasons, Damon can hardly be described as the ‘first’ to have addressed these issues² and it would be useful to understand better what theoretical and technical achievements should be identified as ‘particularly his’.³ If ‘Damon’s *êthos* theory depended on the *realia* of perception’ (48), did he examine them from a qualitative perspective, a quantitative one or both? Did he focus exclusively on rhythms, as is suggested in *Republic* 3, or did he investigate also the ethical effects of different instruments and modes? Wallace provides conflicting answers to these key questions. On the one hand, in several passages he seems to assume tacitly that Damon’s ‘theory’ did not concern only the ethical effects of rhythms but also that of different modes.⁴ On the other, Wallace rightly observes that in *Republic* 3 ‘Plato does not attribute his interpretation of the *harmoniai* to Damon’ (37)⁵ but then argues that Damon ‘could not have categorized the *êthos* of individual *harmoniai* because that varied from song to song’ (37);⁶ therefore, he concludes, Damon’s theories must have focussed on ‘the other, more variable qualities of music, sometimes called the *poikilia*, which might include many different things such as pitch and tempo’ (37). In Wallace’s view, this reading is confirmed by Plato’s later reference to Damon’s famous pronouncement on the correlation between changes to musical *trópoi* and to political laws⁷ since, according to him, the term *trópos* indicated a musical ‘style’ in general and definitely did not refer to technical features such as the intervallic structure of a scale.⁸ This categorical judgement, however, is unwarranted. Even though it is true that the term *trópos* could indicate a musical style broadly defined, many sources – both technical and not – show that it could also refer to the harmonic organisation of a musical piece;⁹ and precisely this aspect is often described as one of the crucial components that determine the overall ethical effect of a given musical composition, in conjunction with specific melodic idioms and instrumental accompaniments.¹⁰ Furthermore, differently from what Wallace claims, Plato’s contextual

² P.101: ‘Damon first studied the emotional, behavioural, and hence social and political affects of music and poetic metre’; p.108: ‘Much other evidence could be adduced, especially on the *êthos* theory of music which he first developed’.

³ P.30: ‘Although the Greeks had always known the affective power of music [...] Damon studied music affect formally and scientifically. Did he “invent”—that is, first formulate and investigate—the *êthos* theory of music? [...] Certainly the theory was particularly his’.

⁴ E.g. p.201–2: ‘Plato’s Protagoras applies the *êthos* theory to schoolchildren, his *kitharistês* “forces the boys’ souls to become familiar with rhythms and *harmoniai*, that they be more gentle and, becoming more rhythmic and more harmonized, useful in whatever they say or do” (*Prt.* 326b). The theory is Damon’s, although we know nothing of his ethical stance’.

⁵ P.181: ‘these lines need not reproduce Damon’s views’ since ‘Plato was capable of having his own thoughts’. Apparently, though, the same charitable concession should not be made to Euripides and the *harmonikoí* attacked in Pap. Hibeh I.13, whose discussions of the ethical effects of music are straightforwardly identified as ‘Damonian’ (25–6). On harmonic *epideixeis* and their cultural background, see e.g. Barker 2007, 68–104.

⁶ This is not the place to argue this point in detail but this conclusion is far from being as uncontroversial as Wallace implies; elsewhere he himself seems to defend the opposite view, namely that ‘[Damon’s] approach was not negative, sceptical, or relativist. The *êthos* consequences of music and metre were the same for all’ (101). Similarly, scholars do not actually agree that ‘on a seven-stringed lyre, [the two] tetrachords shared one note’, as claimed on p.33: see most forcefully Hagel 2010 (esp. 112–6), who appears in Wallace’s rather selective bibliography but is not taken into account here.

⁷ *Resp.* 4.424c: ‘the *trópoi* of music are never changed without changing the most important political laws, as Damon says and I believe too’.

⁸ P.148: ‘the common translation “mode” is incorrect’.

⁹ E.g. Aristox. *El. Harm.* 29.14–30.1, Gaud. *Harm.* 338.16, Plut. *An. Seni* 793a, Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 19.

¹⁰ In this connection, the Aristoxenian discussion of the so-called *spondeíazōn trópos* (‘libation style/mode’) is particularly illuminating, as its ethical effect is associated with its harmonic structure as well as the use or avoidance of specific notes in the vocal melody and the aulos accompaniment: cf. Ps.-Plut. *De Mus.* 1137b–c, 1134f–1135b. Furthermore, the ‘Lydian *trópos*’ (P. *Ol.* 14.17) mentioned by Wallace on p.35 to illustrate the broader meaning of

reference to a new musical ‘form’ (*eîdos kainòn mousikês*, *Resp.* 4.424c3–4) may well point to a technical usage of the term on Damon’s part. In fact, the same term was employed in a technical sense in *Republic* 3, precisely in the course of a discussion of the basic models employed to produce different modes and rhythms and their ethical effects – a discussion that is significantly drawn to a close by Socrates’ proposal to ‘consult with Damon on these issues’.¹¹

Similar problems affect Wallace’s discussion of the technicalities of Damon’s research into rhythm and metre. On p.143, Wallace rightly states that the enoplian rhythm is characterised as ‘composite’ in Plato’s account of Damon’s work and then adds that this rhythm ‘joins measures with a relationship of 1:2 (short long), such as iambics, with 2:2 measures, in this case anapaests’. This may well be what Damon had in mind but this is far from clear from the artfully confused depiction offered by Socrates; more importantly, we are not told where Wallace’s resolute definition of enoplian as combination of ‘anapaests and iambs’ stems from, and this term has notoriously been employed in starkly different ways by rhythmicians and metricians, both ancient and modern.¹²

On p.173, however, we find a different but equally confident definition: ‘The “composite enoplion” was the feminine *hemiepes* formed of two dactyls and one spondee, — u u — u u — , the acephalous form of the archilochian enoplion, or two feminine *hemiepe*, — u u — u u — — u u — u u — ’. This second definition is puzzling not only because it differs significantly from the previous but especially because the metrical sequences provided do not correspond to the labels attached to them. The sequence printed by Wallace (— — — — —) is known as masculine, not feminine, *hēmíepes*; a feminine *hēmíepes* was not necessarily formed by two dactyls and one spondee, as the last syllable could be either short or long — — — — — x;¹³ and the Archilochian enoplion, as defined by Wallace’s authority Gentili, corresponds to yet another metrical sequence: x — — — — — x.¹⁴

To be fair, in the introduction Wallace forewarned the readers that ‘local experts may well find my brief discussions of various topics deficient [...] Some tangential areas I cannot pretend to have mastered [...] Greek music itself is notoriously obscure’ (x-xi). Such intellectual honesty is laudable and rare but would suggest greater caution and restraint from taking bold stances on controversial technical issues: after all, Socrates too did not venture

this term is paralleled in Pindar by an equally loose use of the expression ‘Lydian *harmonía*’ (*Nem.* 4.45) and, as far as we can tell, the same interaction of different musical components (harmonic structure, pitch ranges, musical idioms, instrumental preferences, etc.) characterised also the notion of *harmonía*.

¹¹ *Resp.* 3.400a: ‘there are three basic forms (εἶδη) from which the steps are woven together, just as in notes there are four, from which come all the modes [...] but let’s consult with Damon on these issues’. In later technical literature, the term *eîdos* is consistently used to identify different species of the fourth, fifth and especially the octave: e.g. Aristox. *El Harm.* 74.18, Arist. Quint. *De Mus.* 15.10–20 (cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1290a20–1). A specific correlation between a *tropê* of the *êthos* of a musical piece and harmonic modulations is outlined by Ptolemy (*Harm.* 99.11–25). This passage is quoted on p.35 but is rapidly dismissed on the grounds that ‘the evidence, while slim, does not suggest’ that the ‘*harmoniai* were fixed at different pitches’. However, Hagel 2010 (esp. 34–8, 380–95) has clearly shown that the ‘ancient *harmoniai*’ preserved by Aristides Quintilianus were indeed set at different pitches and these pitch differences formed the background for the later systematisation of *tónoi*.

¹² Cf. West 1982, 195, Martinelli 1995, 329, Gentili-Lomiento 2003, 197–219. The categories of ‘rhythm’ and ‘metre’ are often used interchangeably by Wallace (e.g. 143: ‘Whether [Damon] dealt with other aspects of rhythm, such as caesura or diaeresis or patterns of word endings, is unknown’) but this was far from the norm in ancient musical theory: cf. West 1992, 242–5, 129–59.

¹³ Indeed, the final syllable of this sequence must have originally been short, as it derives from the trochaic caesura of a dactylic hexameter.

¹⁴ Gentili 1950, 52–6, on the basis of Archil. fr. 168.1 West (Ἐρασμῶνι δὲ Χαρίλαε) quoted by Hephaestion (*Ench.* 27.10, 47.10, 48.19). Gentili is acknowledged as the author of this definition but the reference to his publication is missing.

into such technicalities and deferred them to Damon's expertise, choosing to focus on more substantial philosophical questions.

It is precisely on this broader cultural and historical level that Wallace's book provides many important and lasting contributions to Damonian scholarship and I hope that my technical criticisms will not give readers the misleading impression that they reflect the value of the book as a whole. On the contrary, in addition to providing an excellent and sorely needed collection of the extant testimonia on Damon, Wallace's book offers some key insights into a number of crucial issues for the study of Damon's intellectual and political figure.

Among the strongest results is Wallace's forceful dismissal of the long-lived notion that Damon was a conservative musical theorist with strong Pythagorean leanings. By contrast, as Wallace shows lucidly in Chapter 2, Damon's intellectual profile was akin to that of other 5th-century theorists known as the 'sophists', such as Protagoras, Prodicus and Hippias.¹⁵ A related and equally important achievement of this book is showing how Damon was a 'progressive, consciously ideological democrat like Perikles' (52–4; 148) and that precisely these traits help us understand why a musical theorist became the target of political attacks and was eventually ostracised.¹⁶ Furthermore, Chapter 4 presents a fuller version of an argument persuasively advanced by Wallace in previous publications, namely that Damon never delivered a speech 'in which [he] recommended that the Areopagites learn music' (53). In Wallace's view, Damon's alleged 'Areopagiticus' was in fact 'a fourth-century fantasy' (97), which may have stemmed from a philosophical dialogue written by Heraclides of Pontus. To support this interesting hypothesis, Wallace presents a thorough discussion of the relevant passages of Philodemus' *De Musica* and offers many new readings based on his fresh examination of several Herculaneum papyri.¹⁷

In conclusion, Wallace has done the scholarly community a good service in sharing the results of his 30-year's work on Damon and his book will shape the image of this important Athenian intellectual for many generations.¹⁸ This is not to say that the debate on some key aspects of Damon's work is definitively settled, but Wallace's book certainly represents the best tool currently available to make further progress in understanding the legacy of this wondrous 'sophist in disguise'.

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¹⁵ See esp. pp.3–21, 198–200.

¹⁶ See pp.51–75, 135–6, 186–93.

¹⁷ Pp.77–97, 157–65.

¹⁸ The book is handsomely done and I noticed only a few typos: p.25 *eidon* for *eidos*; p.59 the word 'notes' and not 'phthongoi' should be underlined; p.78, missing ' after δ; p.86, the reference should be B10, not B11; p.17, the reference in the apparatus should be to line 6, not 7; p.119, a space is missing between 'recht' and 'witziges'; p.124, the first vowel in *Dēmōn* should be marked long; p.134, the reference should be A19, not A18; p.173 'enoplion' for 'enoplios' and 'archilochian' for 'Archilochian'. The style is lively and engaging but sometimes Wallace overstates his cases to achieve this end: e.g. p.104 'Among fifth-century intellectuals, only he [i.e. Damon] and Socrates had successors who worked in their names down through antiquity'.

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