I take my text from Matthew ix 37: 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.' For scholars willing and competent to work on Greek science are fairly rare birds. University syllabuses do not generally encourage their emergence; and in any case the daunting combination of skills, energies, enthusiasms and sympathies required for the task is something few of us are capable of commanding. But the scope for productive scholarly activity is enormous, and nowhere more than in the fundamental work of editing, translating and writing commentaries. It follows that when work of this kind does appear it is liable to advance its subject more solidly and decisively than all but the most distinguished contributions to the study of ancient philosophy further ours.

The book which prompts these reflections is Andrew Barker's fat collection of original translations of Greek writings on harmonic and acoustic theory. For the past dozen or so years studies of particular topics or texts in Greek musical theory have poured from Barker's pen. In 1984 came a first volume of translations, now paperbacked, illustrating Greek views on the place of the musician and his art in society and education.¹ The present volume² makes a fitting culmination to this sequence of publications. There are, of course, good editions and sound translations of some of the texts Barker presents. But the one existing translation into English of Aristides Quintilianus (for example) is adjudged by him 'quite unreliable'; and there was no previous English version of Ptolemy's Harmonics, even though 'only Ptolemy . . . offered an intellectually convincing way of coordinating a mathematically rigorous form of analysis, close to that of the Pythagoreans, with a realistic sensitivity to the complexity and variability of actual musical structures, preserving some of the musical richness of Aristoxenian accounts while wholly rejecting their framework of

concepts and methods' Barker has performed valiant service simply by supplying what was hitherto lacking, and making Ptolemy, Aristides and others available to a wide readership.

Yet this is a case where the sum is much greater than its parts. It has always been possible for a scholar with ready access to a good library to get to grips with ancient musical theory, just as before Diels people studied the Presocratics, or again the Stoics before von Arnim. But Diels' and von Arnim's collections — whatever their drawbacks — made it much easier to see these fields as complex wholes in all the rich and varied detail of the textual evidence. This is likely to be Barker's principal contribution to the study of Greek musical theory. For his assemblage of texts gives readers an immediate sense of the whole field of musical theory. The book begins with selections of passages representing first Pythagorean speculations about music and then the suggestive but unsystematic contributions of Plato and Aristotle. Next come the relevant chapters of Books XI and XIX of the Aristotelian Problemata, the early Peripatetic De Audibilibus (which Barker thinks might well be by Aristotle himself, as Porphyry held), and the extract from Theophrastus' On Music preserved in Porphyry (easily one of the most intellectually energetic bits of Theophrastus to survive). Then follow the full-blown theories of Aristoxenus and the Sectio Canonis; minor authors quoted by Theon and Porphyry; and finally the major treatises of the Roman era: Nicomachus, Ptolemy, Aristides. Prefaces are supplied to every work presented, as well as a substantial general introduction written with Barker's customary lucidity and authority. The translations are generously and vigorously annotated. A large selective bibliography of about 250 items and excellent analytical indexes of names and of words and topics complete the volume. All this supplementary matter helps to make it a working tool for the study of the subject such as has simply not existed before now.

There is plenty of direct interest to the philosopher, as a brief extract from Ptolemaïs, Barker's sole female theorist, will show:

Pythagoras and his successors wish to accept perception as a guide for reason at the outset, to provide reason with a spark, as it were; but they treat reason, when it has set out from these beginnings, as working on its own in separation from perception. Hence if the systēma discovered by reason in its investigation no longer accords [synaidei] with perception, they do not retrace their steps, but level accusations, saying that perception is going astray, while reason by itself has discovered what is correct, and refutes perception.

An opposite position to this is held by some of the mousikoi who follow Aristoxenus, those who applied themselves to a theoretical science based in thought, while nevertheless setting out from expertise on instruments. For they treated perception as authoritative, and reason as attending on it, for use only when needed. According to these people, to be sure, it is only to be expected that the rational postulates of the kanōn are not always concordant with the perceptions.