

## The Fragments of Xenophanes

- B1** For now indeed [the] floor [is] pure<sup>1</sup> and the hands of all  
and [the] cups. And you set around<sup>2</sup> [your head the] woven crown.  
But another extends (παρατείνει) sweet-smelling (εὐώδες) myrrh in [a] bowl.  
And [a/the] mixing bowl stands full of merriment (ἐυφροσύνης).  
5 And another wine [is] ready,<sup>3</sup> which refuses to give up,  
smelling of [a] soothing blossom in [the] jars (κεράμοισ').  
In the middle [parts], frankincense casts [a] holy smell,  
and cold [is the] water, and sweet and pure.  
There lie beside [us/them] yellow cakes and [a] revered (γεραρή) table  
10 loaded with cheese and rich<sup>4</sup> honey.  
An altar in the middle has been covered everywhere with blossoms  
and dance and cheer hold around [the] halls (δῶματα).  
It is necessary (χρῆ) for mindful (εὐφρονας) men first to hymn [the/a] god  
with reverent (εὐφήμοις) stories and pure speeches.  
15 And with them having poured libations and prayed (εὐξαμένους)<sup>5</sup> to be able to do  
the just things<sup>6</sup> (for these things are indeed<sup>7</sup> easier<sup>8</sup>),  
[it is] not hubris to drink to that extent that, holding [it], one could come  
homeward without [an] attendant, not very old (γηραλέος).  
And praise that one among men, who brings to appearance (ἀναφαίνει) worthy things (ἔσθλα),  
20 in the manner of his memory and [the] struggle (τόνος) for (ἀμφ') virtue,  
not conducting battles of Titans, nor of Giants,  
nor of Centaurs, of the prior fictions,<sup>9</sup>  
or violent civil wars (στάσιας), in which there is nothing useful (χρηστὸν).  
But always to have consideration (προμηθεῖν) of the gods [is] good.
- B2** But whether, on the one hand, someone were to take victory by quickness of feet  
or pentathlizing at Zeus' shrine (τέμενος)  
beside Pisa's streams (ροῆις') in Olympia, whether wrestling  
or even having [a] grievous boxing match (πυκτοσύνην),  
5 whether that terrible (δεινὸν) contest (ἄεθλον) that they call παγκράτιον,  
he would be more glorious for [his fellow] citizens (ἄστοῖσιν) to look upon (προσορᾶν)  
and he would take [a] conspicuous front-row seat (προεδρίην) in [the] games

<sup>1</sup> Or, "clean."

<sup>2</sup> Reading ἀμφιτιθεῖς with the mss. Editors propose ἀμφιτιθεῖ, which would read "And he sets around..."

<sup>3</sup> Reading οἶνος ἔτοιμος with the correction. The manuscripts have ἔστιν instead of οἶνος, which would read "And another [person] is ready, who says he never gives up."

<sup>4</sup> Lit., "fat."

<sup>5</sup> Both these participles are in the aorist, and thus occur in simple time and without tense.

<sup>6</sup> To keep the word order, the end of line 15 into 16 would read "to be capable of just things | of doing [them]."

<sup>7</sup> ὦν: contracted form of οὖν.

<sup>8</sup> προχειρότερον.

<sup>9</sup> Reading πλασμάτων προτέρων with the mss. Editors change πλασμάτων to πλάσματα τῶν to make the line fit elegiac meter. But Xenophanes does not always keep to his pentameter (e.g. 1.24).

and there would be food from [the] public assets (δημοσίων κτεάνων)  
from [the] city and [a] gift that would be [a] treasure (κειμήλιον)—

10 whether by horses, too, he would obtain [by lot] all these things—  
though he is not worthy as *I* [am worthy]. For better than [the] strength  
of men and horses [is] our wisdom.

But very much in vain is this thing upheld (νομίζεται), and [it is] not just  
to choose strength before (προκρίνειν) the good wisdom.

15 For neither if there is [a] good boxer among<sup>10</sup> [the] people (λαοῖσι)  
nor if pentathlizing nor wrestling,  
nor if, on the one hand, by quickness of feet, which is indeed [the] most honored (πρότιμον)  
of strength, as many deeds as there are (πέλει) among men in contests (ἀγῶνι),  
because of this would [a/the] city be more in εὐνομία.

20 But some small delight (χάρμα) would come to be for [a/the] city upon this,  
if someone competing (ἀεθλεύων) should win beside [the] banks of Pisa.  
For these things do not fatten [the] granaries<sup>11</sup> of [a/the] city.

**B3** Learning useless (ἀνωφελέα) follies<sup>12</sup> from beside [the] Lydians  
while they were without hateful tyranny,  
they would go into [the] agora having all purple clothes,  
not less than a thousand, as it were, in all,  
5 boastful, exalting themselves with seemingly (εὐπρεπέεσσιν), flowing hair  
steeping themselves in [the] smell of fashioned (ἀσκητοῖς) oils.

**B4** Whether Phaedon the Argive first cut coins...or [the] “Lydians,” in accordance with the things  
Xenophanes says.

**B5** Nor should anyone mix (κεράσειέ) in a cup by first wine (οἶνον)  
pouring in, but water and down from above wine (μέθυ).

**B6** For sending [the] thigh of [a] kid, you took [the] fat  
of [a] fatted (λαρινοῦ) bull, [a] thing of honor for [a] man to obtain [by lot],  
whose renown will come to<sup>13</sup> all of Greece and not leave off (ἀπολήξει)  
so long as [the] race of Greek songs should be.

**B7** Now, in turn, I come upon another speech, and I will show [the] way

...

And once, when he was passing (παριόντα) [a] puppy being beaten,  
they say indeed he took pity on [it] and said this word (ἔπος) here,

5 “Stop from striking, since surely it is [a] friendly man’s

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<sup>10</sup> Instead of μετεῖη, the mss. have ἔτ’ εἴη, which would read “For neither is there yet a good boxer for the people.”

<sup>11</sup> Or, “innermost parts.”

<sup>12</sup> Reading ἀπροσύναξ with the mss., instead of the emendation ἀβροσύναξ, “luxuries.”

<sup>13</sup> Reading ἀφίξεται with the mss., against the emendation ἐφίξεται, “come upon.”

soul that I recognized when hearing [it] uttering [a cry].”

- B8** And already seven and sixty are [the] years  
that tossing my thinking throughout Greek earth (γῆν),  
and from birth then there were twenty and five in addition to these,  
if indeed *I* know how to speak truly (ἐτύμοϛ) about these things here.
- B9** Much more feeble than [an] old (γηρέντοϛ) man.
- B10** From [the] beginning since, all have learned in accordance with Homer.
- B11** Homer and Hesiod have attributed (ἀνέθηκαν) to the gods all things,  
as many as are disgraces and flaws among human beings,  
to steal, to commit adultery, and to deceive one another.
- B12** He uttered very many (πλεῖστ’) lawless (ἄθεμίστια) deeds among [the] gods,  
to steal, to commit adultery, and to deceive one another.
- B13** [That Xenophanes held Homer to be older than Hesiod.]
- B14** But mortals suppose (δοκέουσι) gods to have been born/be born from themselves,  
and to have their clothing and voice and bodily frame (δέμαϛ).
- B15** But if cattle[, horses,] or lions had hands,  
or were to write/draw with hands and to complete deeds, such as men [do],  
on the one hand, horses like horses and, on the other hand, cattle [like] cattle,  
would draw [the] forms of [the] gods and would make bodies (σώματ’)  
of such sorts as [the] sort of bodily frame (δέμαϛ) they themselves also have.<sup>14</sup>
- B16** Africans [say their gods are] flat-nosed and black, Thracians grey [eyed] and fiery [haired].
- B17** And pine [bacchants] stand around [the] compact house.
- B18** These gods did not show all things to mortals from [the] beginning,  
but with time they, seeking, find out better.
- B19** [That Xenophanes was wondrous of Thales for the his study of the stars (*astologia*) and prediction of  
eclipses of the sun.]
- B20** [Xenophanes says that Epimenides died at the age of 154.]

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<sup>14</sup> Editors sometimes supply ἕκαστοι, which would read “they themselves severally also have.” This would fix the apparent tension between the singular “bodily frame” and the plural “they,” unless, of course, Xenophanes means the plural “horses” or “cattle,” each group sharing one “bodily frame.” The addition is not necessary, then.

- B21** [Xenophanes calls Simonides “skinflint” (κίμβιξ).]
- B21a** [That Xenophanes used the word “Erykos” in reference to the town Eryx in Sicily.]
- B22** Beside [a] fire in [the] season of winter it is necessary to speak such things  
 lying down on [a] soft couch, being filled up [with food],  
 drinking sweet wine, snacking on chickpeas,  
 “Who, from whom are you among men? How many are your years, oh bravest one (φέρτιστε)?  
 5 How old were you, when the Mede came?”
- B23** One god, one greatest for both gods and men,  
 in no way like mortals in bodily frame, nor in thought.
- B24** Whole, he sees; and whole, he thinks; and whole, he hears.
- B25** And away from toil/work/pain/trouble (πόνου), he agitates all things νόου φρενί.<sup>15</sup>
- B26** And always in the same [thing/place] he remains, in no way moving,<sup>16</sup>  
 nor is it fitting (ἐπιπρέπει)<sup>17</sup> for him to come upon another place at another time.
- B27** For from earth [are] all things and into earth all things die (τελευτᾷ).
- B28** This upper limit here of earth, on the one hand, is seen beside [one’s] feet,  
 touching (προσπλάζον) air, but [the] lower [limit], on the other hand, reaches limitlessly (ἄπειρον).
- B29** Earth and water are all things, as many as come to be and grow.<sup>18</sup>
- B30** Sea (θάλασσα) is [the] font (πηγή) of water, and [the] font of wind,  
 for neither [would there be wind] without [the] great sea (πόντου),  
 nor [the] flowings of rivers, nor [the] rainy waters,  
 but [the] great sea (πόντος) [is the] generator of clouds, winds,  
 5 and rivers.
- B31** [The] sun going over and warming [the surface of the] earth.
- B32** Whom they call Iris, this [is] also by nature cloud,  
 purple and crimson and green-yellow to be seen.
- B33** For we all are born from both earth and water.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Aeschylus *Suppliant Maidens* 96-104 (from Kirk and Raven 168).

<sup>16</sup> Or “moving nothing.”

<sup>17</sup> The mss. read, implausibly, ἐπιπρέπει and, nonsensically, μὴν ἐπεὶ πρέπει.

<sup>18</sup> Simplicius: “come to be and grow”; Philoponus: “grow and come to be.”

- B34** And so, on the one hand, what is clear (τὸ σαφές) not any man has seen (ἴδεν), nor will any, knowing (εἰδὼς) both about (ἄμφι) [the] gods and the things I speak concerning (περι) all things. For even if he were to happen to say to the utmost (τὰ μάλιστα) what has brought itself to completion (τετελεσμένον) all the same he himself does not know. But opinion, on the other hand, is wrought over all.
- B35** Let these things have been opined, on the one hand, as likenesses to realities (ἔοικότα τοῖς ἐτύμοισι).
- B36** As many things as they have brought to appearance for mortals to look on.
- B37** And, on the one hand, in some caves water drips down.
- B38** If [a] god did not grow [green-]yellow honey, they would assert much sweeter are figs.
- B39** [Xenophanes refers to a “cherry tree” (κέρασον) in his work *On Nature*.]
- B40** [As with the Ionians, Xenophanes calls the frog βάτραχος instead of βρόταχος.]
- B42** And [a] young [man] would desire [a] young handmaiden (ἄμφιπόλοιο).
- B45** Carrying myself city from city, *I* was tossing about.