

ΠΑΡΟΥΣΙΑΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΚΡΙΤΙΚΗ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΥ

Θέμα τῶν ἀνακοινώσεων αὐτῶν εἶναι πολιτική φιλοσοφία τοῦ Πλάτωνος, τίς ἀρχές τίς ὁποίας ὁ συγγραφέας ἀναλύει μέ τήν δεξιότητά του ἔμπειρου ἐρευνητῆ τῆς πολιτικῆς φιλοσοφίας ἀπό τήν ἀρχαιότητα μέχρι σήμερα (εἰσαγωγή, σ. 2). Παράλληλα ἀσχολεῖται μέ τήν προβληματική τῆς πειθοῦς στό σύνολο τοῦ πλατωνικοῦ ἔργου, ἐνῶ συγχρόνως ἐπεξηγεῖ καί ἀναλύει ἔννοιες τῆς πλατωνικῆς φιλοσοφίας, ὅπως: ἡ δικαιοσύνη, ὡς ἐκδήλωση τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων θέσεων· τὸ πάθος θεωρούμενο ὡς διαταρακτική ἀντίδραση στήν καλή λειτουργία τῆς πόλης καί στήν κοινωνική ἰσορροπία· ἡ ἐπιστήμη ὡς προϊόν ἀρμονικῆς συνεργασίας τῆς λογικῆς —πνευματικῆς λειτουργίας— καί τῶν προσωπικῶν τάσεων τοῦ πολίτη· ἡ μνήμη, θεωρούμενη ἡ σταθερή διάρκεια ἢ ὡς μετατροπή τῶν πραγμάτων στόν χῶρο τῆς πραγματικότητας: ὁ ἀνθρώπινος στοχασμός καί οἱ πνευματικές διεργασίες τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· ἡ παιδεία στό ἐπίπεδο τῆς κοινωνικῆς ζωῆς ἢ ὁποία εἶναι σέ θέση νά ὀλοκληρώσει ὡς φυσικές ἐπίσης τάσεις καί ὡς ἀνθρώπινες διεθέσεις μέσα σέ κανόνες οἱ ὅποιοι νά ἐγγυῶνται τή σταθερότητα τῆς πόλεως· ὁ διάλογος, «ὑπὸ τὸ σχῆμα μιᾶς ἀμοιβαίας ὁμιλίας ἀνάμεσα σέ δύο ὁμιλοῦντες, οἱ ὅποιοι συζητοῦν γιά τὸ παρελθόν» (σ. 151)· ἡ σοφία, ἡ ὁποία ἐμφανίζεται «ὡς σύλληψη τῆς ἐπιστήμης ἀπὸ τῆ συνείδηση, ὡς κατάφαση μιᾶς ἀρχῆς ποὺ διατάσσει ἐκ τῶν προτέρων καί δίνει τέλος στήν συνείδηση» (σ. 203). Διαπραγματεύεται ἐπίσης θέματα, ὅπως ἡ τρέλλα, τὸ προαίσθημα, ἡ ἀμφιβολία. Ὁ συγγραφέας προτείνει μιᾶ ἀνθρωπολογική καί κοινωνική σύλληψη τῆς δικαιοσύνης (πρόλογος, σ. 11) καί ἀναλύει τὰ θέματα ποὺ ἐπιλέγει στηριζόμενος στήν ἀντίδραση τοῦ πολίτη ἀπέναντι στήν «πολιτεία» καί «ἀντιστροφή». Πίσω ἀπὸ τίς ἀναλύσεις τῶν ἐννοιῶν ὑπάρχει ὁ Σωκράτης, ὁ ὁποῖος μέ τήν βοήθεια τοῦ Δαίμονός του, ὁδηγεῖ τοὺς συνομιλητές του στήν κατάκτηση τοῦ ἀληθοῦς καί τῆς σοφίας. Τὸ βιβλίο τελειώνει μέ πίνακα ὀνομάτων (σσ. 221-222).

Μαρία Πρωτοπαπα

James H. LESHER, *Xenophanes of Colophon: Fragments. A text and translation with a commentary*, Toronto/Buffalo/London, University of Toronto Press (*Phoenix Presocratics*, vol. iv), 1992, xvi+266 pp.

This book appears in the *Phoenix Presocratics* series, which is co-edited by David Gallop and T. M. Robinson, and is of interest from two points of view — first, for the arrangement and commentary on the fragments and testimonia, and second, for the over-all interpretation of Xenophanes' doctrines and the assessment of his historical-philosophical position and importance. After the Preface and the Introduction the book is divided into three parts as follows: Part 1: Fragments (pp. 9-43). Part 2: Interpretation (pp. 47-186). Part 3: Ancient testimonia and imitations (pp. 189-222). The book includes «Sources and Authorities» (pp. 225-233), a «Select Bibliography» (pp. 235-242) and Indexes (pp. 245-264).

A question often raised by scholars who study Xenophanes is whether he ought to be included among the philosophers. This question is apparently raised mistakenly, since «poetic form is no bar to philosophy», as Guthrie rightly observes¹; moreover, «with him (sc. Xenophanes) philosophy breaks new ground in more than one direction, and sows new seed, from which a fruitful crop was soon to be reaped»². Modern research has fully recognized Xenophanes' contributions as a philosopher³. Thus

1. W. K. C. GUTHRIE, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. I. *The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans*, Cambridge 1962, ⁵1978, p. 361.

2. *op. cit.*, p. 402.

3. J. BARNES, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, (rev. edition in one vol.) London 1982, ²1986, p. 82, characterizes Xenophanes as «a considerable philosopher». Furthermore, he writes, *ibid.*: «The range of his accomplishments, and his unflinching devotion to the gods of reason, make him a paradigm of the Presocratic genius». G. S. KIRK - J. E. RAVEN - M. SCHOFIELD, *The Presocratic Philosophers. A Critical*



Leshner rightly announces that his study «will fully warrant a positive assessment of Xenophanes as philosopher: outspoken critic of common opinion and the leading poets of Greece, advocate for inquiry into natural causes, proto-epistemologist, and innovator in both religion and morality» (p. xiii).

In the introduction the author offers his conclusions on Xenophanes' dates and life, evaluates his poems, recounts his association with Elea and describes his 'teaching style'. He also expounds the basic claims of the philosophy of Xenophanes, his influence on other contemporaries and later thinkers, provides a brief history of the preservation of his verse and opinions, and sketches the scholarly debate about the relation between the fragments and the testimonia. According to Leshner «the Xenophanes who emerges from the fragments (as well as from many testimonia) is an Ionian *physiologos* or 'natural philosopher', imbued with the spirit of Ionian *historiê* or 'inquiry'» (p. 4). Leshner describes the efforts to interpret the fragments from the point of view of the Eleatic theory embedded in the testimonia as generally unconvincing, and shares the widespread suspicion that «later theories were retroactively attributed to him as the putative founder of Eleatic philosophy» (p. 7). Yet he notices that «Xenophanes might have had his 'Eleatic period' and the fragments we know might all stem from other portions of his life» (*ibid.*).

The first part of the book contains the fragments of Xenophanes. The Greek text is accompanied by an English translation. The text presented here follows that in Edmonds' edition⁴, except where noted to the contrary. Leshner keeps the numbering of the fragments in the edition of Diels-Kranz (fragments 43 and 44 are omitted; there are no fragments bearing 43 and 44 in Diels-Kranz's listing). Many of the fragments are followed by a short *apparatus criticus*, based on the readings of the fragments by other editors or on the mss. Leshner has also taken a major part of older or recent editions of the fragments of Xenophanes, including the most recent separate edition of the fragments by Heitsch⁵, into account. However, in accordance with the aims of the *Phoenix* Presocratics series he does not attempt to establish a new text for the fragments.

The second and largest part of the book contains notes, commentary and essays on the fragments. Leshner groups the fragments for discussion in this part according to subject-matter, as follows: Chapter 1, On Men and Morals: frgs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 22. Chapter 2, On the Divine: frgs. 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 23, 24, 25, and 26. Chapter 3, On Nature: frgs. 19, 27, 28, 29, and 33, 30, 31, 32, and 37. Chapter 4, On Human Understanding: frgs. 18, 34, 35, 36, and 38. Leshner summarizes (p. 5) the four basic claims, on which the philosophy of Xenophanes rests, thus: 1. The measures of personal excellence are piety in thought and deed, service to the city, and a life of moderation, avoiding the pursuit of unlimited wealth and useless luxuries. 2. There is one divine being of exceptional goodness, power, and cognitive capacity who affects the cosmos as a whole through the exercise of his thought alone; but this is not well

History with a Selection of Texts, Cambridge 1983, ⁵1988, p. 168, talk about «Xenophanes' rational intellectualism» and write, *ibid.*: «He was a critic, primarily, with an original and often idiosyncratic approach; not a specialist but a true σοφιστής or sage, prepared to turn his intelligence upon almost any problem». For others Xenophanes is primarily a theologian. See H. FRÄNKEL, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums*, (3. corr. edition) Munich 1962, ²1976, pp. 376ff.; W. RÖD, *Geschichte der Philosophie*. Bd. I. *Die Philosophie der Antike 1. Von Thales bis Demokrit*, Munich ²1988, p. 82; *Les Présocratiques*. Édition établie par J. - P. DUMONT avec la collaboration de D. DELATTRE et J. - L. DE POIRIER, Paris 1988, pp. 1215f. E. HEITSCH, *Xenophanes. Die Fragmente*. Herausgegeben, übersetzt und erläutert, Munich and Zurich 1983, treats Xenophanes as a poet, philosopher, and theologian (p. 7), as a «Mann zwischen den Zeiten» (p. 12). Cf. J. MANSFELD, *Die Vorsokratiker I. Milesier, Pythagoreer, Xenophanes, Heraklit, Parmenides*. Griechisch/Deutsch, Stuttgart ²1988, pp. 204ff.

4. J. EDMONDS, *Greek Elegy and Iambus*, vol. I, Cambridge, Mass. and London 1931 (*Xenophanes*, pp. 182-215).

5. See above note 3.

understood by believers and the poets from whom they get their ideas on such matters. 3. The whole natural cosmos should be understood as a product of the operations of earth and water, with all natural processes starting from and ending in the earth, especially in the sea. 4. Certain truth about the gods and the basic principles of nature cannot be known by anyone, but the accounts we have of them should be accepted as true opinion about how things really are. Furthermore, our way of inquiring into nature has resulted in a number of discoveries – even if human opinion is shaped by the events experienced during the brief span of a lifetime.

Leshner's notes and commentary on each fragment are of great value, since he explains key or difficult to understand words from the fragments in reference to the readings of the *apparatus criticus* and to parallels from other poetic texts (e.g. Homer) and also because he discusses textual problems where they have a bearing on philosophical questions. In his interpretation of the fragments, Leshner takes the positions of the various scholars into consideration. Modern assessments have gone through a series of stages, and these are clearly outlined by Leshner. He attempts to incorporate all the main opinions, theses and interpretations that have been put forward, before he expresses his own personal reading of Xenophanes. In each of the four chapters, following the notes and the commentary, there is a conclusion, where the author summarizes the matters discussed in the chapter.

The author argues for the philosophical significance of Xenophanes' remarks about men and morals in his own time. Xenophanes' didactic poetry⁶ «probes beneath the surface, or beyond custom, and recommends a new understanding through persuasion on rational grounds» (p. 76). We must agree with Leshner that because of these affinities with the teachings and techniques of subsequent philosophers, it is appropriate to think of Xenophanes as a kindred spirit to Heraclitus and Parmenides, rather than to lump him together with contemporaries such as Ibycus, Anacreon and Simonides. Leshner concludes that considered simply as a moralist Xenophanes may be regarded as both a revisionist and a revolutionary, «imbued with existing moral sentiments across a wide range of topics, but prepared to challenge conventional wisdom and social practice in order to satisfy more fully the demands of justice or excellence rightly understood» (*ibid.*).

Regarding the Divine, Leshner concludes first that in his various remarks on current religious beliefs and practices Xenophanes called for fundamental reforms; and second that «the centrepiece of his reformed view was a novel and historically important concept of a single greatest god, unlike men in either body or thought, who without moving at all imparts motion to all things by the exercise of the thought of his mind. But a novel conception of the divine does not a philosopher make» (p. 114). Furthermore he notices (p. 115) that Xenophanes' teaching lacked one feature that has commonly characterized philosophical accounts of religious belief: a *defence* of theism. We may (and should) conjecture, Leshner remarks (p. 116), that Xenophanes linked together, in his own mind, god's absolute perfection with his moral excellence and supremacy in power, although we lack a single instance among his express remarks to confirm that Xenophanes realized that one or more of these attributes could be *used to establish* the reality of the others. According to Leshner, in sharp contrast to the picture of an inference-sensitive Xenophanes, the Xenophanes of frgs. 23-26 is all dogma and flat assertion. Xenophanes' «most remarkable accomplishment, unique among his ancient philosophical cohort, was to provide an exhaustive critique of claims to religious *knowledge*» (p. 117).

On topics of natural philosophy, several features of Xenophanes' account of atmospheric phenomena show, Leshner rightly notices, the influence of his predecessor Anaximenes, while his comments on earth and water confirm the seriousness of his interest in the Ionian dispute about the *arche* or *archai* of things. However, the particular objects of his inquiries suggest that Xenophanes «practised Ionian science in order to displace an existing, predominantly religious outlook on the natural world» (p.

6. On the 'didactic' attitude of the poetry of Xenophanes see also G. WÖHRLE, Xenophanes als didaktischer Dichter, *Elenchos*, 14, 1993, pp. 5-18.



145). We must agree with the author that there are in fact several indications that Xenophanes' discussions of topics of nature stemmed not from a desire for a convenient weapon with which to attack religious belief, but from a desire for an accurate and comprehensive understanding. Leshner's conclusion is that «we are free to regard Xenophanes' value-free conception of nature, his rejection of circular heavenly motions, and his assumption of the presence of common causes for earthly and celestial phenomena as just a few of his many progressive ideas» (p. 148).

On topics of human understanding, Leshner makes a valuable classification of the existing interpretive accounts under six main headings: Xenophanes as (1) Sceptic, (2) Empiricist, (3) Rationalist, (4) Fallibilist, (5) Critical Philosopher and (6) Natural Epistemologist and then offers a summary of each of these approaches (pp. 161ff.). He himself regards a variant of (6) as the most plausible interpretation of Xenophanes' fr. 34 and is inclined to believe that the 'naturalist' interpretation of fragment 34 proposed by Heitsch is probably the best approach to take for fr. 34. According to Leshner, both fr. 34 and fr. 35 were «pioneering reflections on the nature, limits, and varieties of human understanding» (p. 176). Fragment 18 may not have been the exercise in a priori sociology it has often been taken for, but rather was «the rejection of an older, inadequate approach to the understanding of natural marvels through myth, legend, or simple superstition — and a call, in so many words, to natural science» (p. 155). In the conclusion of this chapter Leshner focuses on similarities between Xenophanes' greatest god and Parmenides' motionless and uniform being as well as the teaching of other Presocratics.

Part 3 of the volume examines the ancient testimonia and imitations. It consists of an introduction and English translation of all the ancient testimonia included in section A of Diels-Kranz (life, writings, and teaching). In the introduction (pp. 189ff.) Leshner discusses the testimonia, dividing them into six main groups: (1) the criticism of Xenophanes by Heraclitus and Empedocles; (2) the imitations of and borrowings from Xenophanes' teachings contained in the writings of Plato, Euripides and Aristotle; (3) Theophrastus' *Opinions of the Inquirers into Nature* and the many later accounts deriving from it (that is, those of Cicero, Aëtius, Pseudo-Plutarch, Galen, Hippolytus, Eusebius, Theodoretus, Stobaeus, Pseudo-Galen, and Simplicius); (4) the philosophical critique and derivative summary of Xenophanes' account of god and/or 'the one' in the anonymously written treatise *On Melissus, Xenophanes, Gorgias (MXG)*; (5) the accounts by Timon and later writers of Xenophanes as a 'sceptic'; and (6) the doctrinal summary and biography by Diogenes Laertius. After examining the Xenophanes' section in the treatise *MXG* (977a14-979a9 [=Diels-Kranz 21A28]), Leshner finds Diels' suggestion that the *MXG* was of Peripatetic provenance convincing. Leshner's conclusion runs: «The author of the *MXG* was a minor Peripatetic thinker conversant with eleatic debates who lived and wrote sometime after the third century BC (or at least far enough removed in place and time from Theophrastus to allow for uncorrected errors to enter into his account of Xenophanes' philosophical views)» (pp. 193-4)⁸. There follows a very careful English translation of the ancient Xenophanes testimonia contained in Diels-Kranz with notes on problems of the Greek text and the translation.

The next part of the volume (pp. 225ff.) is devoted to very useful notes on the ancient sources and

7. H. DIELS, *Aristotelis qui fertur de Melisso Xenophane Gorgia libellus*, Berlin 1900.

8. Cf. J. WIESNER, *Ps.-Aristoteles, MXG: Der historische Wert des Xenophanesreferats. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Eleatismus*, Amsterdam 1974, p. 323. For an exhaustive examination of the proposed interpretations (by M. UNTERSTEINER, P. STEINMETZ, and K. VON FRITZ) of the Xenophanes' part of the *MXG* see WIESNER, *op. cit.*, pp. 173ff. For a new discussion of the *MXG* see B. CASSIN, *Si Parménide. Le traité anonyme «De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia»*. Édition critique et commentaire, Lille 1980. See also J. MANSFELD, *De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia. Pyrrhonizing Aristotelianism*, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, N.F., 131, 1988, pp. 239-76. For a summary of modern opinions concerning the value of the 'Xenophanes' section of the *MXG* see I. G. KALOGERAKOS, *Seele und Unsterblichkeit. Untersuchungen zur Vorsokratik bis Empedokles*, Stuttgart and Leipzig 1996, pp. 184ff.



ΠΑΡΟΥΣΙΑΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΚΡΙΤΙΚΗ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΥ

authorities, which are meant to serve as brief identifying descriptions of the authorities cited and the standard editions of their works. This is followed by a select up-to-date bibliography on Xenophanes, which lists the titles of works utilized in the chapters of the book. Lesher's selective bibliography contains all main editions, commentaries, monographs and treatises written about Xenophanes, and is thus a valuable guide for the study of his philosophy⁹. The book is completed by a series of indexes (index of names and subjects, of passages from ancient authors cited, and of Greek words discussed).

This book is an outstanding study of Xenophanes, characterized by extraordinary scholarly thoroughness and care. Lesher's contribution consists not only in the critical evaluation and interpretation of all the fragments and evidence for Xenophanes, but also marks an important beginning for a reevaluation of the philosophy of Xenophanes. In short, this book is an ideal introduction to Xenophanes, while those already steeped in his philosophy will no doubt benefit greatly from it.

Ioannis G. KALOGERAKOS

ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑ



ΑΘΗΝΩΝ

9. See also my up-to-date Xenophanes-Bibliography in: Α. ΚΕΛΕΣΙΔΟΥ, *Ἡ φιλοσοφία τοῦ Ξενοφάνη*, edited by the Research Center for Greek Philosophy at the Academy of Athens, Athens 1996, pp. 163-84.

