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Hayyam Celilzade

XENOPHANES AT THE CROSSROADS OF POLITICS AND THEOLOGY

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In this article, an attempt is made to approach the figure of Xenophanes, a seminal figure in the early phase of Greek thought, from a novel perspective. Traditionally, studies focusing on Xenophanes' views have centred on his critics of myths, particularly those attributed to Homer and Hesiod, then Greeks customs and the Olympic games. However, the principles guiding this critics remained largely unrevealed. Consequently, in the extant literature, the question of the sources of Xenophanes' influence is either overlooked or addressed without substantiation. Yet, this is a fundamental issue in the evaluation of Xenophanes' thought, and the absence of a satisfactory response to it results in propositions that are devoid of content and are more akin to mental training, though Xenophanes' opinions and critical judgements were developed consciously and for specific purposes. If they were not rooted in Greek theological tradition or natural philosophy, a question arises, what influenced Xenophanes – the question which we have addressed in our article and sought to answer. We believe that the conclusions we have reached will contribute to a more accurate understanding of Xenophanes' views.

Keywords: theology, politics, myth, Persia, prophecy

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Introduction

Studing pre-Socratic philosophers is challenging due to the paucity of surviving material. A small number of verses are attributed to Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes[1]. The corpus of Xenophanes, the subject of this study, has been largely destroyed, lomited to only a few fragments[2]. However, fragments of those

[1] Tablan, F.E. "The Genesis of Philosophy in the West and the Presocratic Search for the Arche", *Unitas*, 2000, Vol. 73, No. 2, p. 248; Pierce, D. *Thales of Miletus: Sources and Interpretations*. Istanbul, 2016, p. 10; Wheelwright, P. *The Presocratics*. New York, 1966, p. 44.

[2] Vorlander, K. *İlkçağ Yunan Felsefesi Tarihi* [A History of Philosophy]. Istanbul, 2001, p. 58.

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who wrote about him and those who quoted him form a compilation entitled *Fragments*[3]. This compilation has also been translated into Turkish.

Not much is known about Xenophanes' life. It is estimated that he was born in 570 BC[4]. According to Diogenes Laertius[5], he hailed from Colophon[6] and some scholars suggested that he founded the Elea School and was the teacher of Parmenides. In Plato's *Sophist*, for instance, it is stated that "the lineage of the Eleans, which derives from us, Xenophanes and the ancients, sees nothing but unity in what is called the Whole and continues the narration of their myths in this direction"[7]. Similarly, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* states: "As for Xenophanes, it is said that Parmenides was his pupil"[8]. Wilhelm Capelle also makes the following observation about Xenophanes: "According to Theophrast, he listened to Anaximandros and was a teacher of Parmenides"[9]. Ancient sources attribute to him works *On Nature* (*Peri Physeos*), *The Founding of Colophon* and *The Settlement of Elea* in Italy[10], as well as one poem on prayers and repast[11]. As demonstrated by historical records, the place of his birth was attacked by Persia, and Xenophanes became a refugee[12]. It is also known that Ionia fell in 545 BC[13]. It is then documented that Xenophanes visited many Greek colonies during his lifetime[14]. As asserted by Rohde "the torch of philosophical enquiry was carried from the shores of Ionia to the West by Xenophanes of Colophon, who drifted as far as Southern Italy and Sicily in an adventurous life"[15]. Xenophanes' lifespan was extensive, and it was during his advanced years that he settled in the Greek colony of Elea in southern Italy, where he finally passed away[16].

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3 Pierce, D. *Thales of Miletus*, p. 10.

4 Vorlander, K. *İlkçağ Yunan Felsefesi Tarihi* [A History of Philosophy], p. 58.

5 The historical study of ancient philosophy, entitled "Lives and Opinions of the Famous Philosophers", has exerted a significant influence on the modern world. Diogenes' work is notable for its emulation of Sotion of Alexandria (200 BC), who, in turn, had adopted Theophrastos' purely chronological organisation with a slight modification. He categorised philosophers into "schools" and disregarded chronological relationships.

6 Laertius, D. *Ünlü Filozofların Yaşamları ve Öğretileri* [Lives of Eminent Philosophers]. Istanbul, 2003, p. 428.

7 Plato. *Sofist* [Sophist]. Istanbul, 2000, p. 70.

8 Aristotle. *Metafizik* [Metaphysics]. Istanbul, 2010, p. 105.

9 Capelle, W. *Sokrates'ten Önce Felsefe* [The Pre-Socratics: The Fragments]. Istanbul, 1994, p. 100.

10 Guthrie, W.K.C. *Yunan Felsefe Tarihi* [A History of Greek Philosophy], Vol. I. Istanbul, 2011, pp. 370–371; Jaeger, W. *İlk Yunan Filozoflarında Tanrı Düşüncesi* [The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers]. Istanbul, 2011, p. 70.

11 Adam, J. *Antik Yunan'ın Din Öğretmenleri* [The Religious Teachers of Greece]. Istanbul, 2019, pp. 222–223; Marcovich, M. "Xenophanes on Drinking-Parties and Olympic Games", *Illinois Classical Studies*, 1978, Vol. 3, pp. 1–26.

12 Adam, J. *Antik Yunan'ın Din Öğretmenleri* [The Religious Teachers Of Greece], p. 210; Vorlander, K. *İlkçağ Yunan Felsefesi Tarihi* [A History of Philosophy], p. 58; Attfield, R. "Popper and Xenophanes", 2014 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328749053_Popper_and_Xenophanes, accessed on 05.08.2024], p. 4; Parmenides. *Fragmanlar* [Fragments]. Istanbul, 2019, p. 9.

13 Arslan, A. *İlkçağ Felsefe Tarihi* [History of Ancient Philosophy], Vol. I. İstanbul, 2009, p. 167.

14 Adam, J. *Antik Yunan'ın Din Öğretmenleri* [The Religious Teachers of Greece], 2019, p. 210; Zeller, E. *Grek Felsefesi Tarihi* [Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy]. Istanbul, 2008, p. 71.

15 Rohde, E. *Psykhe-Yunanlarda Ruhlar kültü ve Ölümsüzlük İnancı* [Psyche-The Cult of Souls and the Belief in Immortality among the Greeks]. İstanbul, 2020, p. 339.

16 Vorlander, K. *İlkçağ Yunan Felsefesi Tarihi* [A History of Philosophy], p. 58.

Was Xenophanes a Philosopher?

Historically, three Milesian thinkers preceded Xenophanes: Thales, Anaximandros and Anaximenes. These philosophers are known for their research into the *arche*[17], with a focus on nature. However, according to surviving verses, Xenophanes[18] did not pursue the *arche*, but rather focused on theological issues. As Kenny observes, "Of all the pre-Socratics, he was the most interested in theology"[19]. The difference from his Milesian predecessors in the form of his works led to questions concerning categorization of his work as philosophy; more so since there is an evidence that Xenophanes travelled alone throughout Greece, reciting his own poetry and the poetry of other poets[20]. Guthrie contends that Xenophanes was not a philosopher but a bard[21]. In contrast, Arslan regards him as essentially a poet[22]. Bonelli, on the other hand, characterises him as both a poet and a philosopher[23]. Vorlander also supports the view that his poetic aspect is significant, stating that Xenophanes moved from poetry to reflection and philosophy, not from natural science. He was and remained a poet[24].

In the context of Milesian philosophy, the exclusion of Xenophanes from the annals of philosophy is questionable. If philosophy were to be constrained to the norms stated by Milesian philosophers, mnay other figures, not only Xenophanes, would fall apart. Nevertheless, this does not imply that Xenophanes should be regarded as a philosopher without controversy. He differs not only from the Milesian thinkers who preceded him but also from the those who came after him. For instance, Parmenides, a philosopher who came after Xenophanes and was said[25] to be his student, made the subject of his thought the Being and what exists. It is evident that Leucippus and Democritus, known as atomists, sought the origins of existence. It is noteworthy that Xenophanes advanced theological perspectives that diverged from the prevailing Greek religious traditions. Consequently, his interest and theological views he developed moved him away

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17 The term under discussion may be defined as the initial point of departure, the fundamental principle, or the ultimate main substance. The quest for the primary "matter", from which all else emanates, constitutes the most fundamental inquiry in the domain of ancient Greek philosophy. Concurrently, this pursuit is accompanied by the related enquiry into the process by which secondary entities emerge from the primary or what is. The term "arche" is believed to have been employed for the first time in a technical sense by Anaximander (Petters, F.E. *Antik Yunan Felsefe Terimleri Sözlüğü* [Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon]. Istanbul, 2004, p. 50).

18 Whilst Simplicius ("Commentary on Physics") and Sextus Empiricus ("Against the Scholars") assert that Xenophanes theorised that all things originate from and return to earth and water, this does not imply that he sought the arche as did the Milesian thinkers. Indeed, researchers concur that the subject of his thought is not congruent with that of the Milesians (Adamson, P. *Kesintisiz Felsefe Tarihi* [History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps], Vol. I. Istanbul, 2020, p. 44; Arslan, A. *İlkçağ Felsefe Tarihi* [History of Ancient Philosophy], Vol. I, p. 165; Kenny, A. *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy*. New Jersey, 2019, p. 5.

19 Kenny, A. *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy*, p. 33.

20 Kenny, A. *Antik Felsefe Batı Felsefesinin Yeni Tarihi* [*A New History of Western Philosophy*], Vol. I. Istanbul, 2011, p. 32.

21 Guthrie, W.K.C. *Yunan Felsefe Tarihi* [*A History of Greek Philosophy*], Vol. I, p. 366.

22 Arslan, A. *İlkçağ Felsefe Tarihi* [History of Ancient Philosophy], Vol. I, p. 167.

23 Bonelli, M. "Parmenides ve Zenon" [Parmenides and Zeno], *Antik Yunan* [Ancient Greece]. Istanbul, 2020, p. 56.

24 Vorlander, K. *İlkçağ Yunan Felsefesi Tarihi* [A History of Philosophy], p. 58.

25 Laertius, D. *Ünlü Filozofların Yaşamları ve Öğretileri* [Lives of Eminent Philosophers], p. 429.

from philosophers and traditional Greek theology. For what purposes then did Xenophanes develop his theological theses? Who and why nfluenced Xenophanes in his theological theses? In addressing these questions, this study will begin by examining Xenophanes' life, followed by an analysis of his writings.

Xenophanes and politics

It is evident that historical circumstances, particularly the Persian invasion, influenced philosophical thinkingt of Xenophanes. During his lifetime, the Persian empire was achieving a higher level of organisational structure in comparison to its surrounding regions. It is important to underline that Achaemenid religion[26] was chosen as the official state religion by Persians during this period. In the sixth century BC, in the eastern regions of the inhabited world, at the other end of the Mesopotamia, another religious movement gained great importance: the reform movement in Persian religion, which appeared under the name of Achaemenid religion[27]. The rise of the Persians and their invasion of neighbouring countries may have prompted people like Xenophanes to reflect on these phenomena. Xenophanes' fragments offer a critique of the gods[28] as depicted by Homer and Hesiod.

> Homer and Hesiod attributed it all to the gods
> Whatever shame and disgrace there is among men,
> Theft, adultery and deceiving each other[29].

Homer and Hesiod are recognised as the primary chroniclers of the religious doctrines of the Greeks, with their understanding of the divine being most distinctly articulated within the poetic compositions of Homer and Hesiod. These poems were regarded by the Greeks almost as sacred texts[30] thus they explained the nature of the gods[31]. These poems became, at an early date, the foundation of religious and moral education[32]. By means of myths people were told about the place they lived in and actions they were to comit for survival. Myths also ensured the socialisation of people, as Dumezil argues in his work on "ideology". By "ideology", he refers to a comprehension and appraisal of the profound forces that govern the natural and supernatural realms, human beings, society, and shape their collective identity[33].

However, it appears that Xenophanes believed that this socialisation, or coming together around myths, was not sufficient to provide adequate resistance

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[26] In the Achaemenid religion, the king was identified with the image of the god Ahura Mazda, and this religion had some other political rather than theological characteristics. For more information: Shannon, A.R. "The Achaemenid Kings and the Worship of Ahura Mazda: Proto-Zoroastrianism in the Persian Empire", *Studia Antiqua*, 2007, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 79–85.

[27] McNeill, W.H. *Dünya Tarihi* [A World History]. Ankara, 2008, p. 105–107.

[28] I will examine the debate surrounding the religious beliefs of Xenophanes, specifically as to whether he was a polytheist or a monotheist. The discussion of this debate will be elaborated upon in the following pages.

[29] Xenophanes. *Fragmanlar* [Fragments]. Istanbul, 2019, p. 23.

[30] Adamson, P. *Kesintisiz Felsefe Tarihi* [History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps], Vol. I, p. 40.

[31] Guthrie, W.K.C. *Yunan Felsefe Tarihi* [A History of Greek Philosophy], Vol. I, p. 376.

[32] Adamson, P. *Kesintisiz Felsefe Tarihi* [History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps], Vol. I, p. 40.

[33] Vernant, J.P. *Antik Yunan'da Mit ve Din* [Myth and Religion in Ancient Greece]. Istanbul, 2016, p. 29.

to the Persian invasion. Consequently, he sought a new method of socialisation that was not based on knowledge about the gods that he thought was false. A new doctrine about the gods could potentially serve a unifying factor among the Greeks, enhancing their effectiveness. The Persians had achieved socialisation around the Achaemenid religion and had been able to build a stronger political unity than by their neighbours, especially Greek polis'. Xenophanes' perspective on the significance of mythological integration, or socialisation, within the Greek polis might have been perceived as a potential impediment to the future development of the community. This perspective is particularly noteworthy in the context of the search for the arche of Miletus and the research of Pythagoras on the soul, which suggests a possible link between theological concerns and the socio-political climate of the time. Bonelli's analysis explores the ethical dimensions of competition and war. It was important to value the wisdom of a human being who seeked the good of society that would ensure its political and economic prosperity (eunomia) in accordance with just laws over the power of an athlete or a warrior[34]. Should we remind that Diogenes Laertius authored to Xenophanes two additional works: *The Founding of Colophon* and *The Settlement of Elea in Italy*[35], and their titles imply that they encompass historical and social subjects[36].

It is plausible that Xenophanes critical attitude to the Olympic Games can also be evaluated in a political context. In the relevant verses, it is evident that he is against the Olympic Games, which played an important role in police life. Therefore, it is possible to find a political context in his criticisms.

> But this tradition is sloppy and unfair,
> To favour strength over good wisdom.
> For when there is a good fist-fighter among men,
> The city (the police) will not be better governed because of this person.
> The city will have little satisfaction with him,
> As a result, the city's treasury will not be enriched[37].

It is evident that Xenophanes demonstrated a degree of political engagement. His critique of the Olympic Games, an aristocratic tradition established in the Polis, cannot be solely attributed to aesthetic and sporting motivations. It appears that Xenophanes' criticism was directed against factors that would cause political disadvantages to the Greeks, particularly with regard to religious beliefs.

> Having learnt from the Lydians about useless pomp,
> When they are freed from abominable tyranny,
> They went to the marketplace wearing red-coloured clothes[38].

For instance, in the series, the author criticises the influence that the neighbouring country of Lydia had on the Greeks with regard to their consumption patterns. In the context of this verse, the fact that the Persians destroyed the independence of the Lydian state in 547 BC[39] also becomes significant. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that a Greek recipient of these lines would have been privy

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34 Bonelli, M. "Parmenides ve Zenon" [Parmenides and Zeno], p. 56.

35 Laertius, D. *Ünlü Filozofların Yaşamları ve Öğretileri* [Lives of Eminent Philosophers], p. 429.

36 Jaeger, W. *İlk Yunan Filozoflarında Tanrı Düşüncesi* [The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers], pp. 69–70.

37 Xenophanes. *Fragmanlar* [Fragments], p. 39.

38 Ibid.

39 Wiesehöfer, J. *Antik Pers Tarihi* [Ancient Persia]. Istanbul, 2003, p. 20.

to the eventual downfall of the Lydians. Consequently, Xenophanes' discourse appears to be a cautionary tale, suggesting measures that should be taken to avoid a similar fate. Consequently, as asserted by Jaeger "Xenophanes was thinking of his refined conception of God in relation to the problem of the polis and legal order"[40].

Xenophanes' Theological Politics

Xenophanes' escape from the Persian invasion led him to visit Greek colonies and possibly neighbouring countries[41]. The information he gained from these travels may have contributed to the development of his theses on theological issues[42]. As Arslan observes, "this shows that the source of his critical attitude is his travels throughout his life and his observations that different peoples had different beliefs"[43]. Indeed, in the relevant verses, Xenophanes hints that the conception of God varies in connection to the general physiognomic and anthropological characteristics of peoples, drawing parallels between the Abyssinians and the Thracians.

> The Abyssinians described their gods as snub-nosed and black-skinned,
> The Thracians say he had blue eyes and red hair.
> But if they had hands, bulls, horses and lions,
> Or if they could draw with their hands and finish work like humans,
> Horses are like horses and bulls are like bulls
> They drew god shapes and made bodies,
> Each similar to his own body[44].

While acknowledging the tendency of the Abyssinians and Thracians to create gods with characteristics similar to themselves, Xenophanes also offers a perspective on similarities between the Greek and Thracians conceptions of the divine. He asserts that Homer and Hesiod, like the Abyssinians and Thracians, depicted gods according to the physical characteristics of the Greeks. Xenophanes' reaction against the Homeric world of joyful-naive gods and the dark myths of the Ancient Greek that haunted Hesiod is well-documented. However, it is evident that he did not limit his critique to this. His extensive ethnological knowledge enabled him to conclude that gods of a nation are nothing but a reflection of its essence, and from this he deduced that a nation's view of God is an anthropomorphic construct born of its fantasies[45].

Xenophanes posits the hypothesis that such mythological narratives about deities do not serve to bind people together, but rather act as a cause of division, leading to the formation of disparate groups. In fact, the deities depicted by

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40 Jaeger, W. *İlk Yunan Filozoflarında Tanrı Düşüncesi* [The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers], p. 79.

41 Cornford, F.M. *Yunan Dini Düşüncesi Homeros'tan İskender'in Çağına* [Greek Religious Thought from Homer to the Age of Alexander]. Istanbul, 2021, p. 99; Hadot, P. *İlkçağ Felsefesi Nedir?* [What is Ancient Philosophy]. Ankara, 2011, p. 21; Adamson, P. *Kesintisiz Felsefe Tarihi* [History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps], Vol. I, p. 44.

42 Zeller, E. *Grek Felsefesi Tarihi* [Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy], p. 71.

43 Arslan, A. *İlkçağ Felsefe Tarihi* [History of Ancient Philosophy], Vol. I, p. 169.

44 Xenophanes. *Fragmanlar* [Fragments], p. 25.

45 Capelle, W. *Sokrates'ten Önce Felsefe* [The Pre-Socratics: The Fragments], pp. 98–99.

Homer and Hesiod were not characterised by a sense of unity; rather, they were depicted as producers of chaos.

> Homer and Hesiod murmured many illegitimate deeds of the gods,
> Theft, adultery and deceiving each other[46].

However, according to Xenophanes, the characteristics attributed to the gods by Homer and Hesiod are those of human beings, though god(s) characteristics are far from that of humans. Moreover, chaos does not reign among the gods because, according to him, "there is only one God who is the greatest among both gods and men"[47]. It suggests that Xenophanes' concept of God is monotheistic, and that he saw a hierarchical structure among the divine beings. In contrast, Homer and Hesiod portray Olympus, the residence of the gods, as a domain of disaster. However, Xenophanes challenges this perception, suggesting that the divine realm is not necessarily characterised by disorder.

> Even if they were equal, they could not have a God nature,
> Because this nature requires being the most dominant.
> An equal could be neither better nor worse than his equal[48].

If the hypothesis proposed by Xenophanes is to be accepted as valid, it may be possible to eliminate the disorganisation that existed among the Greek polis and establish an alliance under a single authority. In other words, an examination of Olympus, as described by Xenophanes, suggests the presence of order and hierarchy. However, the Olympus depicted by Homer and Hesiod is chaotic. The question therefore arises as to how the gods, who were at war with each other, who cheated and stole from each other, could be regarded as models for those who believed in them. Moreover, the chaos of Olympus does not constitute a political prototype for the Greek polis. Xenophanes may have thought that the political unity of the Greek polis depended on the establishment of order in Olympus. Perhaps the unity that would be formed around the belief that a single god was the greatest among the other gods could be the solution. The Greeks who would take this belief would be able to establish a hierarchical system based on the divine order, which may have strengthened their unity in the face of the Persian threat. It is important to note that this threat bothered the Greeks not only during the lifetime of Xenophanes but also until the campaign of Alexander of Macedon in the east. The Persian invasion as threat remained a recurring theme in Greek history and literature, as evidenced by the extensive research conducted by scholars such as Bauer[49].

Therefore, it can be assumed that Xenophanes took the Persian invasion and the Persian threat seriously and sought solutions to this situation.

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46 Xenophanes. *Fragmanlar* [Fragments], p. 25.

47 Ibid., p. 25.

48 Ibid., p. 47.

49 Bauer, S.W. *Dünya Tarihi 1 İlkçağ* [The Story of the World], Vol. I. Istanbul, 2014, pp. 153–155; Bauer, S.W. *Antik Dünya & İlk Kayıtlardan Roma'nın Dağılmasına* [The History of the Ancient World: From the Earliest Accounts to the Fall of Rome]. Istanbul, 2013, pp. 540–560; Garthwaite, G.R. *İran Tarihi* [History of Iran]. Istanbul, 2011, pp. 33–36. In addition to Aeschylus' play "Persia", Herodotus' account of the Greco-Persian War is renowned, and a decree of the Council of Five Hundred on the Greco-Persian war has survived to the present day. Xenophon's "Anabasis" also provides a description of the Persian campaigns.

> Sixty-seven years I've been carrying it,
> From place to place, my anxieties in the Greek land[50].

It appears probable that the concerns expressed by Xenophanes in this verse, which he disseminated throughout the Greek realm, pertained to the necessity of unity and solidarity in the face of the Persian threat. In this context, it is deemed appropriate to assess his views. It has been suggested that the indulgence of his fellow Ionians in luxury and comfort, as well as the easy submission of many neighbouring colonies to the Persian yoke, led Xenophanes to examine the religious and moral foundations of Greek life. This spirit, thus formed, grew stronger and more intense as he learned more about contemporary norms and ideals during his travels in Greece[51].

Xenophanes' Method

Xenophanes' criticisms of Homer and Hesiod are characterised by a discernible method. The philosopher's initial premise is the assertion that "man cannot fully know the truth". This position is subsequently articulated with notable clarity.

> The man who knows the obvious has never been nor will ever be
> Neither their gods, nor anything I've said about the universe.
> Even if someone accidentally says something wonderful.
> He would not know it personally, his blood has infected them all[52].

Xenophanes' critique of the bards' claim to possess divine knowledge and ability to communicate events from the Olympian realm to humans is fundamental to an understanding of his philosophical standpoint. Contrary to Homer and Hesiod, who are often portrayed as intermediaries between humans and the divine, Xenophanes does not assert any form of divine or metahuman communication. In his conception of the universe, the gods do not engage in communication with any entity[53]. Accordingly, Xenophanes' perspectives on deities are predominantly negative, and his theological approach is characterised by a focus on the absence of attributes rather than their presence[54]. This perspective can be interpreted as a manifestation of negative theology. This approach entails a discernment between mere belief and genuine knowledge, thereby endeavouring to differentiate that which is knowable from that which is merely believed in. As Adamson asserts, "We may not know that God thinks and can shake all things by thinking, we must believe it"[55]. However, although he asserts that certain knowledge cannot be obtained, he is of the opinion that what is reasonable or not can be revealed[56].

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50 Xenophanes. *Fragmanlar* [Fragments], p. 47.

51 Gomperz, 1905, p. 157, cited in Adam, J. *Antik Yunan'ın Din Öğretmenleri* [The Religious Teachers of Greece], p. 210.

52 Xenophanes. *Fragmanlar* [Fragments], p. 35.

53 Smith, D.H. *Xenophanes, The Gods, and The Reinvention of Poetic Authority*. Chapel Hill, 2007, p. 66.

54 Kenny, A. *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy*, p. 324.

55 Adamson, P. *Kesintisiz Felsefe Tarihi* [History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps], Vol. I, p. 48.

56 Mogyoródi, E. "Xenophanes' Epistemology and Parmenides' Quest for Knowledge", *La costruzione del discorso filosofico nell'età dei Presocratici*. Pisa, 2006, p. 128.

In sum, while adhering to the position that the divine essence remains unknowable, Xenophanes proposes a methodological approach for the attribution of qualities to the gods. It is evident that his philosophy does not align with that of an atheist[57]. However, the question remains as to whether he embraced the belief in a singular deity. The fact that not all of his writings have survived to the present day is the main factor that hinders progress in resolving this issue. Opinions split wether he was or was not a monotheist, based on the verses we have access to. Guthrie accepts him as a monotheist[58]. In contrast, Zeller asserts that Xenophanes's views are indicative of pantheism[59]. Adam, however, challenges this perspective, contending that if Xenophanes were indeed a polytheist, his views would be indistinguishable from those of Homer. He is a proponent of the doctrine of a single deity, and thus does not subscribe to the belief in other gods[60]. This standpoint is in alignment with the assertions put forth by Aristotle concerning Xenophanes. In his work *Rhetoric*, Aristotle writes: "Xenophanes says, to assert that the gods are born is as much a sign of disbelief as saying that they are dead. Both statements reveal an acknowledgement of a period preceding the existence of the gods' existence"[61]. This perspective stands in direct opposition to the prevailing Greek religious doctrine, which asserts that the gods were born. Sextus Empiricus further reinforces Adam's perspective with the assertion that "Xenophanes, the satirist of Homeric subterfuge, created a God far from man"[62].

It has been observed that Xenophanes attributes some of the verbs related to the one God of the monotheist religion to the God he describes, whether directly or indirectly. For example, he does not directly attribute the attribute of creator to God, but such a conclusion can be drawn from some of his verses:

> If God hadn't created straw-coloured honey, they would say
> Figs are much sweeter[63].

For instance, this line of Xenophanes alludes to the conception of honey by God. In other words, it can be posited that, by implication, creativity is ascribed to God indirectly. Furthermore, it is posited that the existence of multiple gods will engender chaos.

> For if (God) were two or more,
> He could no longer be all-powerful or the best.
> Because each of this multiplicity is God, it would be like him.
> After all, this was God and God's power:
> To rule but not to be ruled, to dominate everything[64].

Xenophanes (fr. 25) insisted that God must be a being who realises his purposes by the power of his mind alone[65]. Whether Xenophanes believed in one

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57 Adamson, P. *Kesintisiz Felsefe Tarihi* [History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps], Vol. I, p. 45; Arslan, A. *İlkçağ Felsefe Tarihi* [History of Ancient Philosophy], Vol. I, p. 169.

58 Guthrie, W.K.C. *Yunan Felsefe Tarihi* [A History of Greek Philosophy], Vol. I, p. 381.

59 Zeller, E. *Grek Felsefesi Tarihi* [Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy], p. 73.

60 Adam, J. *Antik Yunan'ın Din Öğretmenleri* [The Religious Teachers of Greece], pp. 215–216.

61 Aristotle. *Retorik* [Rhetoric]. Istanbul, 2019, p. 152.

62 Xenophanes. *Fragmanlar* [Fragments], p. 55.

63 Ibid., p. 35.

64 Ibid., p. 47.

65 Petters, F.E. *Antik Yunan Felsefe Terimleri Sözlüğü* [Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon], p. 246.

God or in a supreme God among the gods is not known, but in either case, the roots of his belief cannot be found in Greek traditional religious thought. Consequently, the question arises as which factors influenced the development of Xenophanes' theological thought.

Who was Xenophanes influenced by?

Pseudo-Aristotle[66] states that Xenophanes' conception of God was not formed on the basis of the prevailing opinion, as evidenced by the following citation: "He did not form this idea of God on the basis of the agreed opinion"[67]. Sextus Empiricus, in his work *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, concurs with this assessment, stating that Xenophanes formed a view that diverged from the prevailing ideas and that it is straightforward to demonstrate the distinction between them[68]. Vorlander, a renowned expert on Ancient Greece, shares this perspective, asserting that Xenophanes' views were un-Greek in nature. As Vorlander observes, "Xenophanes' preserved verses have a remarkable quality of "un-Greekness"[69]. Similarly, Zeller concludes his chapter on Xenophanes' theology with the assertion that "Xenophanes seems to be the founder of a new tendency in Greek philosophy"[70]. In sum, according to Zeller, Xenophanes represents a novel tendency in philosophy, exhibiting an innovative character in his views. The present study sets out to explore the question of whether Xenophanes, the first Greek thinker to adopt a revolutionary theological perspective[71], was also the first philosopher of religion[72]. The argument is be made that, given his itinerant lifestyle and travels to Greek colonies and neighbouring regions[73] it is not inconceivable that he was influenced by prophetic teachings. It is possible that he encountered prophetic teachings during these travels, which might have influenced his thought. In his work *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, Shahrastani asserts that ancient Greek thinkers, including Xenophanes, drew inspiration from prophetic teachings[74]. According to Shahrastani, Xenophanes is known to have defended the doctrine of monotheism, stating: "He is He and there is nothing with Him". According

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66 Throughout the history of philosophy, the problem of the existence of many works whose authorship is either unknown or disputed continues to be a problem that is relevant to the present day. Irrespective of its sufficiency as a justification, the primary rationale frequently invoked by historians of philosophy may be to benefit from the authority of these philosophers in the history of philosophy. It is notable that these pseudo-Aristotelian works, when translated contemporaneously with the original Aristotelian texts by the same translation team, have been found to generate a level of interest that is comparable to that of the authentic Aristotelian works (Şahin, E. "The Role of the Pseudo-Aristotelian Works in the Transmission of Aristotle's Philosophy: An Analysis on Uthūlūjiyā Arisṭūṭālīs and al-Khayr al-Maḥḍ", *Journal of Islamic Research*, 2019, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 25–26).

67 Xenophanes. *Fragmanlar* [Fragments], p. 51.

68 Ibid., p. 57.

69 Vorlander, K. *İlkçağ Yunan Felsefesi Tarihi* [A History of Philosophy], p. 59.

70 Zeller, E. *Grek Felsefesi Tarihi* [Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy], p. 74.

71 Patzia, M. "Xenophanes", *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2019 [https://iep.utm.edu/xenoph/, accessed on 07.08.2024].

72 Kenny, A. *Antik Felsefe Batı Felsefesinin Yeni Tarihi* [A New History of Western Philosophy], Vol. I, p. 323.

73 Patzia, M. "Xenophanes, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy", 2019.

74 Shahrastani. *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* [Book of Religious and Philosophical Sects]. Istanbul, 2014, pp. 278, 281–282 and 286.

to him, what he (Xenophanes) said about the Creator, "He is He, and there is nothing simple and ink with Him", answers all that we demand in the name of knowledge"[75]. Assuming the veracity of Shahrastani's statement, an analysis of Xenophanes' discourse on both the monotheistic deity and polytheistic deities can be conducted as follows. Further, it is possible that the term "gods" was used by the author in reference to angels. Indeed, in the context of ancient Greek philosophy, the term "gods" was used, while in Islamic philosophy, it was translated as "angels". For instance, Averroes translated the term "gods" in the *Politeia*, an expression of polytheism, as "angels"[76]. This suggests that, according to Islamic philosophers, the majority of Greek philosophers were monotheists and the term "gods" in their works was used to refer to angels. For instance, Farabi interpreted the term "gods" in Aristotle's works as the immaterial intellects, while Ibn Sina interpreted it as angels[77].

It is important to note that Shahrastani's statement regarding Xenophanes should be regarded as a possible explanation, rather than something definitive. Indeed, an analysis of the extant verses of Xenophanes reveals an absence of any explicit information regarding this matter. Moreover, the ancient writers who commented on Xenophanes do not establish any connection between the doctrine of prophethood and the thought of Xenophanes in their works. However, there are references that allow us to consider the possibility of such a connection. For instance, the Assembly of Philosophers 9.82.1–8 states: "Eximenus or Xenophanes said: God created all things by word. He said to them, "Be! and they became"[78]. Philo of Alexandria, in his work entitled *The Divine Foresight*, states that Xenophanes was a theologian[79]. Furthermore, Clement of Alexandria (215 A.D.) asserts that Xenophanes' authenticity is attributed to the Jewish prophets. In this context, Xenophanes is regarded as a pivotal figure in establishing a connection between Jerusalem and Athens[80].

Conclusion

There is no consensus regarding the factors that influenced Xenophanes in forming his views, whether in ancient or modern interpretations. The points of departure to reach a common conception on this issue are the people, customs and ideas that Xenophanes criticises. He criticised Homer and Hesiod, who were regarded as the most prominent figures in the Greek religious tradition, as well as natural philosophers, then social habits and sporting activities. The purpose of these criticisms is not immediately apparent. The scope of this critics encompasses a wide range of areas of social life. It is plausible that his critics, which extend from theology to politics, from economics to sports, seeked to construct while simultaneously was deconstructing. It is highly probable that Xenophanes' views were shaped by the fact that he lived during the period of the Persian-

75 Ibid., p. 307.

76 Ibn Rushd. *Siyasete Dair Temel Bilgiler* [Commentary on Plato's Republic]. Istanbul, 2020, pp. 89–90.

77 Corbin, H. *İslam Felsefesi Tarihi* [History of Islamic Philosophy], Vol. I. Istanbul, 2013, p. 290.

78 Xenophanes. *Fragmanlar* [Fragments], p. 61.

79 Ibid.

80 Clem. Al. Strom. 5.14. cited in Altman, W.H. "Clement of Alexandria and the Eleatization of Xenophanes", *Eleatic Ontology from the Hellenistic Period to Late Antiquity*, Napoli, 2021, p. 83.

Greek wars, the Persian occupation of his homeland, his life as a refugee and traveler, and the loss of independence of neighboring Lydia. It is conceivable that Xenophanes engaged in introspection regarding the reasons behind the Greeks' defeats at the hands of the Persians, and the underlying factors that enabled these losses to occur. It is hypothesized that Xenophanes sought solutions that addressed these fundamental questions. The prevailing belief in God constituted the most significant challenge to the processes of socialisation and political unity. Consequently, it was imperative to purge the concept of God of its erroneous elements prior to any attempt at social integration. It appeared that Xenophanes endeavoured to achieve this objective. This approach can be understood as an early example of the intersection of theology and politics in the history of thought. As previously mentioned, the Persian state underwent a theological reform during the lifetime of Xenophanes[81]. In this context, it is reasonable to hypothesise that Xenophanes believed that a robust political unity would be contingent upon the purification of theological discourse from erroneous knowledge and conceptions. It is conceivable that he drew upon the corpus of prophetic teachings that had reached the Greek colonies. It is evident that the Greeks were well-acquainted with Egypt and Mesopotamia, where prophetic teachings were prevalent, and that they had trade relations with these regions. Indeed, the presence of philosophers such as Thales, Pythagoras, Democritus and Plato in these regions had been well documented[82]. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that Xenophanes was also cognisant of the prophetic teachings that were widespread or at least a known phenomenon in these regions. On the basis of these prophetic teachings, it is this author's opinion that, while criticising the Greek religious traditions on the one hand, he also sought to ensure Greek unity around a new theology, on the other. It is important to note that this is not intended to assert this as an absolute truth. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this opinion will be regarded as a potential explanation for Xenophanes' thought.

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Ксенофан: на перекрестье политики и теологии

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В данной статье предпринята попытка подойти к фигуре Ксенофана, одной из важнейших фигур раннего этапа развития греческой мысли, с новой точки зрения. Традиционно исследования, посвященные взглядам Ксенофана, сосредоточены на его критике мифов, особенно тех, которые приписываются Гомеру и Гесиоду, обычаев греков и Олимпийских игр. Однако основные причины этой критики остаются практически непроясненными. В существующей литературе вопрос об источниках влияния на Ксенофана либо упускается из виду, либо рассматривается без достаточных доказательств. А ведь это фундаментальный вопрос в оценке мысли Ксенофана, и отсутствие удовлетворительного ответа на него приводит к тому, что его критика превращается в бессодержательные высказывания и выглядит скорее как тренировка ума, тогда как Ксенофанова критика вырабатывалась сознательно и для определенных целей. Автор статьи полагает, что взгляды Ксенофана расходятся с греческой теологической традицией или тезисами натурфилософов. Такое положение дел заставляет задаться вопросом об источниках влияния на Ксенофана, который автор рассмотрел в данной статье и попытался ответить на него в совокупности с другими выделенными им вопросами. Предполагается, что сделанные в статье выводы будут способствовать более точному пониманию взглядов Ксенофана.

Ключевые слова: теология, политика, миф, Персия, пророчество

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