ἀrchαί

AS ORIGENS DO PENSAMENTO OCIDENTAL

THE ORIGINS OF WESTERN THOUGHT

DOSSIÊ: ESTILO E FUNDAMENTO NA FILOSOFIA PRÉSOCRÁTICA | DOSSIER: STYLE MATTERS IN PRESOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY

Xenophanes' Metres

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MACKENZIE, T. (2024). Xenophanes' Metres. *Archai* 34, e-03405.

Abstract: Perhaps the most obvious and, for us, the most surprising stylistic feature of Xenophanes' surviving fragments is the fact that they were written in verse. Whilst this general feature has received much comment and explanation, a more fine-grained analysis of his use of metre has been somewhat lacking. There are at least two factors which have contributed to this lack: first, the primarily philosophical focus of most modern scholarship on Xenophanes, which has been more interested in content than form; and second, the dominance of New Historicism in archaic Greek literary scholarship

of recent decades, which, with its emphasis on the ideological force and social role of early Greek hexameter and elegy, has also tended to eschew an analysis of precise formal features. When we do find detailed discussion of metre, it tends to be in the service of uncovering the composition-processes of poets, rather than elucidating the effects they aimed to generate. Consequently, the present contribution aims to fill a gap in Xenophanean scholarship by enriching our appreciation of his sometimes-maligned metrical artistry (M. L. West described him and Euenus as "the clumsiest versifiers" out of the elegists and iambicists). It thus joins two trends in recent Greek literary scholarship: the renewed attempt to appreciate archaic texts as literature – rather than merely as documents for social history or historical anthropology; and the exploration of the significance of non-semantic formal features, which can convey as much ideological content as the claims, narratives and imagery of the text.

Keywords: Xenophanes, Metres, Verse, Presocratics, Style.

Introduction

When considering the style of the Presocratic philosophers, the most salient feature to strike modern readers is that some of them wrote in verse. Verse is today, at least in societies with a high degree of literacy, a hallmark of literature and the literary. In English, the term is almost coterminous with poetry. Whilst poetry may be able to inform its readers of true propositional claims, few would argue that this is its primary function.[1] Didactic poetry seems quaint, for factual, "non-fiction" writing is almost always in the more utilitarian medium of prose. Verse may seem especially inimical to philosophy: Iris Murdoch, for example, claimed that "philosophy aims to clarify"

[1] Goethe, for instance, in *über das Lehrgedicht* (1827) regarded didactic poetry as really a hybrid between poetry and rhetoric, thus presupposing that poetry *per se* is not didactic. For recent discussion of the relationship between poetry/literature and propositional truths, see e.g., Lamarque (2008, p. 220-254); Gibson (2009); and the collection Gibson (2015).

whereas literature "is full of tricks and magic and deliberate mystification."[2] It is for considerations such as this that scholars have occasionally expressed embarrassment that some of the reputed forefathers of philosophy wrote in verse.[3] Consequently, the verse form tends either to be ignored altogether, or explained away as incidental to the essential purpose of these authors. Thus, they chose verse as a mnemonic, or to reach a wider audience, or because this was the characteristically Western Greek way of doing things, or to challenge the authority of Homer and Hesiod.[4] Accordingly, one commentator has concluded that "Verse… was not essential to Xenophanes' message" (Granger, (2007, p. 430). In my 2021 monograph, *Poetry and Poetics in the Presocratic Philosophers: Reading Xenophanes, Parmenides and Empedocles as Literature*, I argued against this view and tried to show that the verse form of the three authors was indeed essential to their message in at least three respects: 1. it implied claims not made explicitly; 2. it contributed to the emotional effect of their work, facilitating an audience's immersion into the imagined world of the text; and 3. it invited a symbolic interpretation. The Xenophanes chapter offered close readings of the surviving fragments informed by their cultural and literary contexts, which included the hexameter and elegiac genres. However, one area to which I could have devoted greater attention is the more detailed, technical study of metre. The present essay is therefore intended to supplement my earlier work by exploring the

[2] In an interview with Bryan Magee, originally broadcast in 1978 and published as Magee (1979, p. 262).

[3] E.g., Kranz (1916, p. 1163); Barnes (1982, p. 155); Guthrie (1965, p. 12). As Most (1999, p. 350) puts it: "One of the most grievous scandals of early Greek philosophy is the fact that, even after the invention of philosophical prose, some of the greatest thinkers returned to poetry as the medium in which to publicize their philosophical message."

[4] Verse as a mnemonic or function of oral culture: Havelock (1963, p. 294-295); Havelock (1983); Toohey (1996, p. 7; 44-48); as the Western way of doing things: Wöhrle (1993, p. 176-179); subverting the authority of earlier poets: Jaeger (1947, p. 3); Wright (1998, p. 6); Nightingale (2007, p. 190); Lesher (2008, p. 475-476).

ways in which this feature, in Xenophanes,[5] can be regarded as meaningful and effective.

To many literary critics, the very contention that Xenophanes' metre could be meaningful and effective may seem either an obvious point or an assumed premise on which a literary analysis ought to be based.[6] Yet as recently as 2011 a scholar of Latin literature could complain that, "when I argue that metres are more than the inert form of a poetic composition and carry their own meaning, I have the impression that many classicists think I am suffering from some kind of critical synaesthesia, asking questions of the metre of a poem which are only appropriate to its language." (Morgan, 2011, p. 16) Reading archaic Greek metre in this way may be even more prone to attract such a diagnosis, since the feature is so often studied in isolation from meaning, whether for its own intrinsic interest, or as evidence for performative or compositional practices, or indeed for pre-historic Greek and Indo-European verse.[7]

Worse still, an attempt to read Xenophanes' metres in this way may seem particularly inauspicious, since those who have investigated the topic in detail have tended to have some fairly scathing things to say. West, in his invaluable study of Elegy and Iambus, categorised Xenophanes along with Euenus as "the clumsiest versifiers of our poets" (West, 1974, p. 116). Marlein Van

[5] I am gratified that Berruecos Frank, in the present volume, supplements my work with a study of Parmenides' meaningful use of metre.

[6] For the notion that verse is meaningful as an axiom of poetics, see e.g., Jakobson (1960). It is arguably already recognised in Plato's brief comments on the characters of different metres at *Rep.* 3.399e-400c, a topic which the interlocutors reserve for Damon.

[7] E.g., for its own intrinsic interest in the handbooks of Maas (1962), West (1984), Sicking (1993) and Martinelli (1995); for evidence for pre-historic Greek and Indo-European verse, e.g., West (1973); Nagy (1974); Hoekstra (1981); the contributions collected in vol. 2 of Fantuzzi and Pretagostini (1995). There are, however, recent exceptions to this trend that treat archaic and classical Greek verse as meaningful: see, for example, on violations of Hermann's Bridge in Homer, Schein (2016, p. 93-116) and Ward (2021, p. 229-236); on Empedocles, note Gheerbrant (2017, p. 245-270), and on Parmenides, Berruecos Frank in the present volume.

Raalte, in an important analysis of elegiac verse rhythm, has described him as "deservedly notorious for the awkwardness of his versification" (Van Raalte, 1988, p. 157, n.26). And A. W. H. Adkins was sufficiently cruel to include, in his monograph on the early Greek elegists, an index entry for "Xenophanes, clumsiness in."[8] Yet the ancient remarks on the quality of Xenophanes' verse offer a more ambivalent verdict. True, Cicero may describe Xenophanes, along with Parmenides, as composing in "less good verses" (*minus bonis… versibus*, Cic. *Acad.* 2.74 = R27<A25) than Empedocles, but that is a very high bar. More damning is Philo, who describes all three poets as "good men, but not gifted poets," but the Jewish philosopher's criticism seems to be religiously motivated, as he proceeds, "they would have had to receive inspiration from above, grace from Heaven, metres, harmony, divine and heavenly dactyls if they were to leave behind real poems" (*Prov.* ed. Aucher 2.39, p. 74.31-75.2 = R28).[9] In any case, these comments refer to the poetry in general without specifically singling out Xenophanes' versification – his technical deployment of metre – for criticism, and so provide only very limited evidence that this feature was regarded as awkward or clumsy in antiquity. On the other hand, Athenaeus is more complimentary and even compares him favourably to Homer. The latter is described as "thoughtlessly" (ἀφροντιστί) making "many verses that have a short syllable instead of a long one at the beginning of the first foot… By contrast, Xenophanes, Solon, Theognis, Phocylides, and also Periander of Corinth, the elegiac poet, and all those who do not add a melody to their poems, polish off their verses in conformity with the numbers and order of the metrical feet and take care that none of them is irregularly shortened at either the beginning, the middle, or the end" (*Deipn.* 14.32 632C = R29). There is, then, not much surviving ancient precedent for the negative modern appraisal of Xenophanes' versification. On the other hand, in

[8] Adkins (1985, index, *s. v.*). For a less evaluative overview of Xenophanes' use of metre, see Reibaud (2012, p. 36-47).

[9] This passage only survives in Armenian translation, of which I quote the English translation by Irene Tinti which is found in Laks and Most (2016, Vol. 3, p. 111-113).

addition to Athenaeus' verdict, a different strand in Xenophanes' ancient reception may provide further evidence for a distinguished literary reputation: his imitation by later poets. Parmenides' hexameter poem outlining the true nature of being contains verbal echoes of Xenophanes' hexameters that describe his non-anthropomorphic deity.[10] More explicitly, Timon of Phlius composed his own *Silloi* an updated Hellenistic version of Xenophanes' lampoons of other thinkers.[11] Xenophanes' work, then, was not *only* valued and (partially) preserved for its philosophical content.

Of course, every reader will have their own tastes and preferences, but the scathing comments of modern scholars will naturally provoke a more charitable critic to consider whether Xenophanes was really so incompetent after all. I hope to show that some of the purportedly "clumsy" features of Xenophanes' verse, when read in combination with both the semantic meaning of the language and other formal aspects, can seem purposeful and need not be attributed to a mere lack of skill. Indeed, in two instances (D59=B1.17 and D12=B14.2), I shall suggest that the clumsiness may be intentional, an illustration of clumsy motion or mortal imperfection. Elsewhere, however, deviations from expected patterns create particular emphases, stressing novel aspects of Xenophanes' thought and highlighting his ironic re-purposing of traditional hexameter forms and phrases.

Underpinning my approach is an assumption that the form of these fragments should not be entirely divorced from our interpretation of their meaning. The present endeavour therefore joins a renewed interest in the politics and ideology of form on the part of classical scholars.[12] The approach may attract the charge of circularity, as it assumes from the start the hypothesis that

[10] For a list of correspondences, see Mackenzie (2021, p. 56, n. 119).

[11] For Timon's work as an imitation of Xenophanes note Diog. Laert. 9.111 = Xenophanes R15, S. E. *Pyrrh. Hyp.* 1.224 = Xenophanes R16. di Marco (1989) provides an edition and commentary of Timon's fragments, which can also be found in Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (1983, frg. 775-840).

[12] See e.g., Wohl (2015), Goldhill (2020) and the collection Vasunia (2021).

Xenophanes' metres are effective and explores how that hypothesis might explain various features of the surviving fragments in order to strengthen its credibility. But this sort of circularity is not necessarily vicious and is applicable to most forms of literary analysis: the overall argument will stand or fall on whether the close readings convince.[13]

By contrast, West and Van Raalte's technical studies focus on numerical, statistical analyses, with little recourse to actual meaning. It is not always easy to identify from their dismissive asides precisely what it is about Xenophanes' versification that they find so objectionable, but two features in particular come in for criticism: the lack of "necessary enjambment" between couplets in the surviving elegies (i.e. enjambment where the preceding couplet would not make sense on its own), and the large number of hexameters with no third-foot caesura (i.e., they have fourth-foot, hephthemimeral caesura).[14] The first of these criticisms – an argument from absence – seems a little harsh when we are dealing with such a small sample-size. Rather than attacking Xenophanes what he does not include, it seems fairer, and more illuminating, to focus on what he actually composed. It is true that a large proportion of the lines have hephthemimeral caesuras: 5 out of 73 surviving hexameter lines (including the hexameter lines from the elegies) or roughly 7%. By contrast, hephthemimeral lines account for about 1.4% of the *Iliad*, 0.9% of the *Odyssey* and 2.2% of Hesiod.[15] Or, to draw comparison with the elegists, 1.16% of hexameters from the Theognidean corpus lacks a third-foot caesura and none of the fragments of Solon, Archilochus, Tyrtaeus or Callinus do.[16]

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[13] For discussion and overview of the prior history of this issue, see de Man (1983, p. 28-32). Currie (2016, p. 32-33) argues that literary criticism understood in this way is not in fact circular.

[14] Lack of necessary enjambment: West (1974, p. 116), Adkins (1985, p. 174); large number of lines lacking a third-foot caesura: Van Raalte (1988, p. 157-158, n. 26).

[15] These figures are from West (1984, p. 36).

[16] Figures from Van Raalte (1988) Table III. Of the elegists, only Critias has a comparable number to Xenophanes, with 8.7% of his hexameters lacking caesuras in the third foot.

Additionally, Xenophanes is distinctive for his violations of Hermann's bridge, which, for some, may be taken as a sign of clumsiness (West, 1974, p. 113, 189.). This principle dictates that, in the hexameter, a fourth-foot dactyl cannot have a caesura between the two short syllables. Homer violates the rule only about once every 550 lines, a figure that amounts to about 0.2%, whereas Xenophanes does so in 3 of the surviving 73 hexameters, or just over 4%.[17]

Yet we need not treat these figures as deficiencies. The assumption that any deviation from metrical norms identified through meticulous counting by modern scholars should be regarded as clumsy is highly questionable. Deviation from expected patterns is a fundamental means by which poets generate meaning through verse.[18] It is also doubtful whether metrical "rules" such as "Hermann's bridge" which have been identified by modern scholars would have been regarded as such in antiquity. Hermann's Bridge does not appear to have any basis in the hotchpotch of surviving ancient comments on metre, whatever their value may be.[19]

If we turn to the internal evidence for Xenophanes' metrical choices, there are, *prima facie*, good reasons for supposing that his deviations from the norms of hexameter and elegiac practice were deliberate. He was, after all, famous for criticising the archetypal hexameter poets, Homer and Hesiod for attributing immoral behaviour to the gods (B11=D8, B12=D9, B10=D10), and for attacking poets and philosophers in general (A22>D3; B21>D68; D64=B7). It may be unsurprising that an author who presents his work as being so iconoclastic should diverge from traditional metrical practices. The "rules" governing the position of bridges and caesurae in early Greek hexameter derive from the principles of oral-

[17] West (1984, p. 38, n. 18) provides the figure for Homeric exceptions. Hermann (1805, p. 692) first identified it. For a recent discussion of the feature, see Schein (2016, p. 93-116).

[18] See e.g., Richards (2001, p. 128); Fussell (1979, p. 12); Morgan (2011, p. 6-7); Schein (2016, p. 93-116).

[19] For a concise overview of ancient theories of metre, see Pretagostini (1993, p. 369-392).

formulaic composition,[20] and are part and parcel of the Homeric *Kunstsprache*, the distinctive, artificial language which was typically presented as being divinely inspired.[21] A poet who denied the possibility of such divine inspiration (D53=B18; cf. D15=A52) would have good reason to depart from the metrical and phraseological norms of previous hexameter practice. In other words, his novel form may reflect and convey his novel thought. It is with this possibility in mind that I turn to the fragments themselves. An overview of the Xenophanean corpus and its metres may provide some initial orientation.

Xenophanes' Poems and Metres

The fragments, with one exception, are either hexameters or elegiac couplets. The hexameters tend to be on more "philosophical" topics: that is to say, the fragments concerning epistemology, the nature of the gods and the celestial bodies are almost all in hexameters (D7-D53, apart from D12=B14), but there are also hexameters on appropriate dinner-party conversation (D54=B22). The elegiac fragments (D59-69) are more heterogenous, but generally concern more earthly matters, including: the appropriate behaviour at the symposium (D59=B1, D60=B5), the superiority of wisdom over athletic prowess (D61=B2), the behaviour of the Colophonians since the invasion of the Lydians (D62=B3), the absurdity of Pythagoras (D64=B7) and the author's own biography and activities (D66=B8; perhaps D67=B9; D69=B6). The exceptional fragment, D12=B14, is a couplet consisting of an iambic

[20] Fränkel (1927), revised and expanded in Fränkel (1955, p. 100-155), is the ground-breaking study that showed that the Homeric line is not merely divided into 6 feet, but into four cola, which account for Hermann's bridge. The formulae fit into these cola, as e.g., Edwards (1997, p. 266) observes. The findings are helpfully summarised at Fränkel (1975, p. 30-34). For more recent accounts of the early hexameter see West (1997), Gainsford (2015, p. 63-66) and Nünlist (2015).

[21] Most obviously in the form of Muse-inspiration scenes, but also in the epithet *thespis*, used of bardic performance within the poems themselves, (e.g., *Od.* 1.328, 8.498; Hes. *Theog.* 31-32; cf. *Il.* 2.599). See Ford (1992, p. 180-197); Halliwell (2012, p. 67).

trimeter followed by a hexameter and describes the mortal belief that the gods are born and have human body, voice and clothing.

In the vast majority of these cases, we cannot identify beyond reasonable doubt that any two fragments come from the same poem, or what poem any given fragment comes from. The two lengthy elegiac fragments, D59=B1 and D61=B2 may be complete poems.[22] At any rate, it is likely that these and some of the other fragments[23] either formed or come from shorter pieces that would have been performed at symposia.

In addition to these shorter pieces, the testimonia provide grounds for identifying, broadly, three bodies of work – one hesitates to call them "poems" for reasons that will become obvious. First, we learn from Diogenes Laertius that Xenophanes "composed poetry on the foundation of Colophon and on the colonization of Elea in Italy, two thousand verses" (ἐποίησε δὲ καὶ Κολοφῶνος κτίσιν καὶ τὸν εἰς Ἐλέαν τῆς Ἰταλίας ἀποικισμὸν ἔπη δισχίλια 9.20=D1<A1).[24] The phrasing preserved in Diogenes leaves it unclear whether he (or his source, Lobon) thought of these verses as a single poem, or two separate poems, or indeed an assorted collection of different poems on the two topics. Equally unclear is what metre these verses were in – ἔπη could be used of elegies or "lines of writing" as well as hexameters - although Ewen Bowie has influentially argued that they were lengthy elegiac poems, from which one fragment could plausibly derive (D62=B3).[25]

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[22] Thus Faraone (2008, p. 116-127).

[23] Likely candidates include: D60=B5; perhaps also D54=B22, D66=B8, and D69=B6, given their sympotic content or the wide range of potentially relevant contexts for performance.

[24] Translation here from Laks and Most (2016).

[25] Bowie (1986, p. 32). His hypothesis that there existed a genre of historical elegy was given support by the discovery of Simonides' Plataea elegy in 1992. For criticisms, see Sider (2006) and Grethlein (2010, p. 291-296), though neither denies that Xenophanes' poem(s) on Colophon and Elea could have fitted the bill. For ἔπη as "lines of writing" note Lucian *de hist. conscr.*28. See Bowie (1986, p. 32, n. 100) citing West (1974, p. 7).

Second, various sources mention Xenophanes' *Silloi* or "mockeries," a work which satirized other thinkers and which provided the inspiration for Timon of Phlius' work of the same name in the early Hellenistic period.[26] D56=B21a, from a Homeric scholiast (*P.Oxy.*1087.40), claims that the word *Erykos* occurred in the fifth book of Xenophanes' *Silloi* suggesting that the work ran to some length. Athenaeus quotes D54=B22 (*Epit.*2.54E) as coming from Xenophanes' "parodies" (ἐν Παρωιδίαις) which most likely refers to the same text. This fragment is in hexameters, as are Timon's *Silloi*, so we might assume that Xenophanes' *Silloi* was a hexameter poem, but there are also reasons for suspecting that it contained a variety of metres. The surviving fragment which most obviously fits the content of the work is in elegiacs: D64=B7 lampoons Pythagoras' doctrine of metempsychosis. Diogenes Laertius reports that Xenophanes "wrote in dactylic hexameters, elegiac couplets, and iambics against Hesiod and Homer, deriding what they said about the gods" (9.18=D1<A1, γέγραφε δὲ ἐν ἔπεσι καὶ ἐλεγείας καὶ ἰάμβους καθ' Ἡσιόδου καὶ Ὁμήρου, ἐπικόπτων αὐτῶν τὰ περὶ θεῶν εἰρημένα): the combative nature of this polymetric material makes it plausible that Diogenes is here referring to the *Silloi*. It is far from certain whether we should think of this work as a single discrete poem or a collection of his shorter pieces, or perhaps a combination of the two, a longer work featuring distinctive shorter sections, designed in such a manner as to facilitate their separate performance.[27] Certainly, ancient audiences during Xenophanes' lifetime, in a performance culture and a period of incipient literacy, are unlikely to have shared modern expectations concerning the textual fixity and integrity of each individual poem. In any case, the notion of a work in a variety of metres of a parodic

[26] The title is mentioned by Strabo 14.1.28=D2<A20, Proclus (in a testimony which goes back to Plutarch) *In Hes. Op.* 286=D3<A22 and Schol. ABT *ad Il.* 2.212b=D4=A23. For Timon of Phlius's imitation, note D. L. 9.111=R15 and Sextus Empiricus *Pyrrh. Hyp.* 1.224=R16<A35. For Timon's fragments, see di Marco (1989) and Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (1983, frg. 775-848).

[27] Canevaro (2015) argues that Hesiod's *Works and Days* should be thought of in this way.

nature, whilst unusual, would not be unparalleled. The pseudo-Homeric *Margites* – as we shall see, an especially important *comparandum* for D12=B14 – contained hexameters and iambic lines alternating irregularly. In the fourth century, Chaeremon's *Centaur* combined various metres, seemingly to amusing effect (Arist. *Poet.* 1447b20-24, 1460a2). A variety of metres would appear, then, to suit a work of comic intent such as Xenophanes' *Silloi*.

Third, we learn from later sources of a Περὶ Φύσεως.[28] This title is hardly likely to have been original, since it is a standard Alexandrian label given to the works of those labelled φυσικοί by Aristotle.[29] However, the label may suggest that there circulated a single work which primarily outlined Xenophanes' natural doctrines. Since the fragments on these topics are all in hexameters and do not have the satirical character we might expect were they to come from the *Silloi*, it seems reasonable to speculate that they came from a separate poem on the nature of the gods and the physical world.[30]

In sum: the evidence provides grounds for thinking that any given fragment may come from a lengthy historical poem (quite possibly, but by no means certainly, in elegiacs), from the *Silloi* (which may have been a single continuous hexameter poem, a polymetric poem, or a collection of shorter pieces), from a hexameter poem on the physical world, or from a shorter piece, perhaps designed for sympotic performance. This may seem like a sorry state of affairs and some of the challenges for analysing Xenophanes' metrical style will have become clear. We cannot provide statistics for particular poems from a large data-set as we can with Homer or Callimachus. Many of the fragments are single-line hexameters which theoretically could come from larger hexameter or elegiac poems or even the combined iambic and hexameter poem attested by

[28] The Geneva scholiast on *Iliad* 21.196 (D6a<B30), Pollux *Onom.* 6.46 (D6b<D57=B39) and Stobaeus 1.10.12 (D6c<A36).

[29] See Schmalzriedt (1970).

[30] I see no reason for the doubts expressed by Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983, 166), "[t]hat Xenophanes wrote a formal work on physical matters is highly improbable."

D12=B14. Nevertheless, from this overview of his work, Xenophanes appears notable for the variety of metres in which he composed and for the variety of topics on which he composed them. The main generic exemplars for hexameters – Homer, Hesiod and the authors of the *Homeric Hymns* – were known first and foremost for hexameter works (a few apocryphal fragments notwithstanding, in Homer's case). Archilochus and Solon were known for both their elegies and iambics, while Simonides composed distinguished elegies as well as poems in lyric metres, but Xenophanes is unparalleled in his particular variety, composing ribald fragments in hexameters, elegiacs, and iambics too, as well as hexameters on natural philosophy, shorter sympotic pieces and lengthier historical works. By contrast, his imitators – Parmenides and Empedocles for philosophical hexameters and Timon for the *Silloi* – would restrict themselves to just one of the genres he attempted. He seems, then, to have been an innovative, experimental writer, not only in his novel epistemological, theological, and physical theories, but also in his literary forms.[31]

One might object that this eclecticism led Xenophanes to become a "Jack of all trades, master of none" and that such an impression is confirmed by his metrical anomalies. But this is to treat the metres (and putative biography) in isolation from semantic content, an approach that is clearly limited in its usefulness for providing an adequate account of how a competent[32] audience-member might have responded to Xenophanes' poetry. By contrast, a fine-grained analysis of specific fragments that takes both form and content into account shall lend support to a more charitable view of those anomalies as functional innovations. I begin with the lengthy

[31] As Celso Vieira points out to me, this notion of Xenophanes as an experimental writer fits nicely with his apparent acquaintance with different cultures and his cultural relativism, since he seems to have been acutely aware that there was not only one way of doing things; although it should be noted that he need not actually have travelled to Thrace and Ethiopia to have come up with his stereotypical accounts of those peoples (D13=B16).

[32] For the helpful notion of "literary competence" see Culler (1975, p. 113-130).

sympotic elegy, D59=B1, since it is both the longest surviving fragment and the one whose metre has elicited the greatest criticism:

D59=B1:

νῦν γὰρ δὴ ζάπεδον καθαρὸν καὶ χεῖρες ἁπάντων
καὶ κύλικες· πλεκτοὺς δ’ ἀμφιτιθεῖ στεφάνους,
ἄλλος δ’ εὐῶδες μύρον ἐν φιάληι παρατείνει·
κρητὴρ δ’ ἕστηκεν μεστὸς εὐφροσύνης·
ἄλλος δ’ οἶνος ἑτοῖμος, ὃς οὔποτέ φησι προδώσειν,
μείλιχος ἐν κεράμοις, ἄνθεος ὀζόμενος·
ἐν δὲ μέσοις ἁγνὴν ὀδμὴν λιβανωτὸς ἵησιν,
ψυχρὸν δ’ ἐστὶν ὕδωρ καὶ γλυκὺ καὶ καθαρόν·
παρκέαται δ’ ἄρτοι ξανθοὶ γεραρή τε τράπεζα
τυροῦ καὶ μέλιτος πίονος ἀχθομένη·
βωμὸς δ’ ἄνθεσιν ἂν τὸ μέσον πάντηι πεπύκασται,
μολπὴ δ’ ἀμφὶς ἔχει δώματα καὶ θαλίη.
χρὴ δὲ πρῶτον μὲν θεὸν ὑμνεῖν εὔφρονας ἄνδρας
εὐφήμοις μύθοις καὶ καθαροῖσι λόγοις,
σπείσαντάς τε καὶ εὐξαμένους τὰ δίκαια δύνασθαι
πρήσσειν· ταῦτα γὰρ ὧν ἐστι προχειρότερον,
οὐχ ὕβρεις· πίνειν δ’ ὁπόσον κεν ἔχων ἀφίκοιο
οἴκαδ’ ἄνευ προπόλου μὴ πάνυ γηραλέος.
ἀνδρῶν δ’ αἰνεῖν τοῦτον ὃς ἐσθλὰ πιὼν ἀναφαίνει,
ὡς ἦι μνημοσύνη καὶ τόνος ἀμφ’ ἀρετῆς,
οὔ τι μάχας διέπειν Τιτήνων οὐδὲ Γιγάντων
οὐδὲ < > Κενταύρων, πλάσμα<τα> τῶν προτέρων,
ἢ στάσιας σφεδανάς· τοῖς οὐδὲν χρηστὸν ἔνεστιν·
θεῶν <δὲ> προμηθείην αἰὲν ἔχειν ἀγαθήν.

For now indeed the floor is pure and the hands of all
And the cups; one person puts on woven garlands,
And another proffers the sweet-smelling unguent into the saucer;
The mixing-bowl stands full of good cheer,
And another wine is ready, which says it will never betray us,
A soothing one in the clay jars, smelling of flowers;
And in the midst incense sends forth its holy smell;
And the water is cool and sweet and pure;
And yellow loaves lie nearby and the table is majestic
Loaded with cheese and fat honey;
And the altar, in the middle, is covered thickly with flowers,
And song and celebration surround the house.
And it is necessary first for well-minded men to sing of the god
With auspicious speeches and pure words;

> And having poured libations and having prayed to be able to accomplish
> just things,
> For these are more appropriate,
> Not insolent behaviour; but drink so much that, being in such a state, you can
> still come
> Home without a guide, if you are not completely old.
> And, of men, praise the one who, when drinking, reveals noble thoughts
> So that there is a recollection and strain about his virtue. 20
> And do not go through the fights of Titans or Giants
> Or Centaurs, fabrications of earlier generations,
> Or violent civic strife, in which there is no use at all.
> But always have good forethought about the gods.

I quote here West's text, since it yields the best sense whilst making the least drastic alterations to the manuscript tradition.[33] The most egregious metrical irregularities are: the lack of a 3rd-foot caesura in lines 11 (regarding the prepositive and proclitic as part of the following word) and 15; the violation of Hermann's bridge in lines 17 and 19; and the unique lengthening of a short vowel before a mute and liquid in line 13 (χρὴ δὲ πρ-).[34] In each of these cases, I submit, Xenophanes' choices can be regarded as poetically motivated, enhancing the semantic content by illustrating it in sound, facilitating an audience's immersion within the mimetic world described.

In line 11, the lack of an expected caesura illustrates the sheer extent to which the altar is covered with flowers:

> βωμὸς δ' ἄνθεσιν ἀν τὸ μέσον πάντηι πεπύκασται,
>
> and the altar in the middle is covered in every way with flowers

For metrical purposes, it is traditional practice to identify no word-gap between a prepositive preposition or a proclitic and the

[33] From West (1992).

[34] See West (1974, p. 114).

word that follows.[35] That is to say that, in this instance, the preposition ἀν and the proclitic τό should be treated as part of a continuous word with μέσον.[36] This principle has recently come under question. Schein proposes instead that we treat each "unit of accentuation" as an individual word, with the exception that proclitics be regarded as separate from the words on which they "lean."[37] If we follow Schein's approach, the line is not clumsy at all but rather features a neat feminine caesura between τό and μέσον, since they form separate units of accentuation. But given that the high frequency of strong third-foot caesuras in early hexameters derives from the tendency of formulas to end at that point in the line,[38] an audience, used to listening to traditional hexameters, may well have expected a stronger sense-break than we find in this line. What I want to propose is that the frustration of that expectation can be defended on artistic grounds.[39] Treating ἀν τὸ μέσον as a single word, a listener may be left with the striking impression that there is no gap among the continuous flowers, just as there is no word-gap in the third foot. I have followed most translators in treating ἀν τὸ μέσον as referring to the location of the altar in the middle of the *andron*; however, an alternative construal is possible (and syntactically more common) whereby the prepositional expression qualifies the verb, yielding the translation: "the altar is covered in every way throughout its middle with flowers." In other words, it is the middle of the altar (rather than, say, its sides) that is covered in flowers. If this construal is correct, then the lack of caesura is arguably even more expressive, since the third foot would describe precisely the area that is so florally coated. Whichever construal we adopt (and there may be some functional ambiguity here), the effect is enhanced by the consonance of ἄνθεσιν

[35] Thus Maas (1962, p. 84) and West (1983, p. 25-26), although at p. 36 he notes some exceptions regarding Homeric caesurae.

[36] Thus West (1974, p. 112).

[37] Schein (2016, p. 98-99). On the latter point, he follows the ancient grammarians.

[38] See n. 31 above.

[39] Frustration of metrical expectations as a deliberate poetic technique: e.g., Schein (2016, p. esp. 94-98), drawing on research from cognitive science; Ward (2021, p. 233-237).

ἀν τὸ and alliteration of πάντηι πεπύκασται: repeated sounds suggest the repeated appearance of flowers.

The lengthening of δέ in line 13 is, I believe, simply an error of transmission: Bergk (1878, V. 2, p. 111, *ad loc*.) suggested instead δή, which is recommended by the fact that it would be almost audibly indistinguishable from an elongated δέ. The similarity of the vowel sounds and frequent use of δέ after the first word in the preceding lines would have facilitated the error. Indeed, the use of δή in 13 after such a sequence would be quite effective: after the descriptive list of features of the symposium marked by use of δέ, the utterance dramatically changes to a prescription of what one must first do at such an event. The more emphatic δή would be highly appropriate to this shift and rhetorically effective.

The lack of a third-foot caesura in line 15 can also be understood as emphatic. Pious speech has already been foregrounded with the tautologous doublet of line 14, "with well-spoken words and pure speech." The first of these items is especially stressed, since it occupies the first half of the pentameter entirely with spondees. The spondaic opening to line 15 further drives home the importance of this behaviour: it is tempting to suggest that the spondaic σπείσαντας, "pouring-libations" has a meta-textual significance, given the putative etymology of "spondee," the *spondeios pous*, as the form which characteristically accompanied libations:[40] Xenophanes thus uses a spondee to describe an action that would characteristically have been accompanied by a spondee, a clear instance of the "metasympotic" quality of this poem: the fact that it describes the sort of event at which it was, most likely, performed.[41] The lengthy, quadrisyllabic εὐξαμένους then continues this emphasis on the pious behaviour, and especially the pious speech, that Xenophanes recommends. The long word, occupying a foot where one would

[40] Thus LSJ *s. v.* σπονδεῖος. It should be admitted, however, that this usage only attested later than the classical period, first at D. H. *Comp.* 17, and the etymology is first attested in the late-antique Latin grammarians, Martianus Capella 9.984 and Audax 7.334.3. See Maltby (1991, *s. v. spondeus*).

[41] See Hobden (2013, p. 22-65).

usually expect a caesura, creates the impression of continuous prayer accompanying the continuous pouring of the libation.

Moreover, Xenophanes would have special reason to stress this particular phrase since the collocation of the verbs σπένδω and εὔχομαι is traditional in Homeric verse (cf. *Il.*16.253, 24.287; *Od.* 3.45, 15.258).[42] In each Homeric instance, the expression is used in a different context and with different agreements, so that the line maintains a third-foot caesura. Xenophanes' metrical irregularity here therefore occurs as a result of deploying a Homeric formula within a new context. But there is a degree of irony in Xenophanes' usage: an epic expression here denotes a kind of speech that is starkly valorised in contrast with the talk of battles of Giants, Titans and Centaurs – in other words, typical content for epic. The distinctive metre places an emphasis on the expression and serves to highlight how the pious talk occasionally portrayed by epic is not the content of epic as a whole, and more appropriate to the harmonious world of the idealised symposium.

Lines 17 and 19 violate Hermann's bridge by featuring a word-break between the two short syllables of a fourth-foot dactyl. The rarity of this feature suggests that it would have sounded peculiar or unusual, but we have no reason to think that it would have been thought clumsy or erroneous. In this fragment, the use of the same unusual caesura in lines 17 and 19 is meaningful: it suggests a parallel between the content of the two lines which, in fact, are metrically identical. The commendable behaviour of drinking moderately is thus equated to the commendable behaviour of praising the man who speaks appropriately. Moreover, the slightly chuntering effect of the fourth-foot caesura in line 17 may illustrate the progress of the individual described, who has restrained his drinking just enough to be able to walk home unaided.[43] If this line is to be regarded as

[42] As Torres-Guerra (1999, p. 79) points out.

[43] Cf. Adkins (1985, p. 182), who suggests that the "sense-groups" in these lines reflect the unsteady progress of the walker.

"clumsy," then it reflects the clumsiness of the tipsy movement it describes.

When read in combination with the semantic meaning of the text, then, a case can be made for regarding Xenophanes' supposedly clumsy features in this fragment as meaningful and effective, especially if we regard the poem as serving the wider purpose of entrenching the values he espouses more explicitly elsewhere in the surviving fragments. The idealised description of the flower-laden altar and the emphatic claim that good men must first sing of god once they have made libations and prayers may conform to traditional sympotic values,[44] but it is hard not to read them alongside Xenophanes' more distinctive claims concerning the divine. Given that he criticises Homer and Hesiod for attributing immoral actions to the gods, and that he asserts that "one god is greatest among gods and humans, unlike mortals in body or thought" (D16=B23), D59=B1 seems designed to entrench behaviour that is pious under the assumption of this untraditional, non-anthropomorphic conception of godhood. The use of atypical metrical cola to highlight pious behaviour in particular suits this untraditional conception of godhood: Xenophanes diverges from traditional metrical practices just as he diverges from traditional conceptions of the divine that had been so canonically spread by other poets.

The allegedly "clumsy" or atypical aspects of some of the other fragments can also be explained along these lines. I analyse here each instance in turn, considering elegiac instances first, before the hexameters and anomalous D12=B14.

D60=B5:

οὐδέ κεν ἐν κύλικι πρότερον κεράσειέ τις οἶνον
ἐγχέας, ἀλλ' ὕδωρ καὶ καθύπερθε μέθυ.

Nor would one mix in a wine-cup after first pouring in wine,

[44] Thus Bowra (1937, p. 357-359), Hobden (2013, p. 30-31). Cf. Alcman fr. 19 Davies.

But rather water and on top of it pure wine.

West points out that the long upsilon of ὕδωρ in the thesis (i.e. the unstressed part of the foot, which in hexameters is the second position) is exceptional in Greek elegy.[45] Here, the unusual lengthening of the vowel in what is normally the unstressed part of the foot places an unexpected emphasis on the water which serves a rhetorical purpose: water is of great importance in ensuring a harmonious symposium since it stops the guests getting too drunk. To drink unmixed wine was a sign of barbarism.[46] Again, then, a metrical abnormality highlights a moral principal in a sympotic fragment.

B7a=D64.1-4:

καί ποτέ μιν στυφελιζομένου σκύλακος παριόντα
φασὶν ἐποικτῖραι καὶ τόδε φάσθαι ἔπος·
‘παῦσαι μηδὲ ῥάπιζ’, ἐπεὶ ἦ φίλου ἀνέρος ἐστίν
ψυχή, τὴν ἔγνων φθεγξαμένης ἀίων’.

And they say that once, walking by, he took pity on a puppy being beaten,
And uttered these words:
‘Stop and don’t hit him, since verily this is the soul of a dear friend
Which I recognised on hearing him cry.’

The third foot of the first line contains no caesura, but is instead occupied by the long, hexasyllabic στυφελιζομένου. As Allan has recently commented, “the rare fourth-foot caesura… underlines the animal’s distress” (Allan, 2019, p. 192.). But the tone of the fragment is comic and satirical – Pythagoras is lampooned for identifying the

[45] West (1974, p. 116). The only parallel in early hexameter is *hymn Dem.* 381, also with the word ὕδωρ, where it seems similarly emphatic: not even water could slow the horses of Demeter’s chariot.

[46] E.g., Anacreon fr. 356b Page, Eur. Fr. 97, Plato *leg.* 1.637e. See Hall (1989, p. 133-134). Archilochus fr. 42 may also associate foreigners with excessive drinking. Against excessive drinking more generally, note Theognis 475-492, 627-8.

soul of a deceased friend in a dog – and the monstrously long word suits the exaggerated nature of the comedy.

D30=B31:

ἠέλιός θ' ὑπεριέμενος γαῖάν τ' ἐπιθάλπων.

And the sun, passing over and warming the earth.

Since this is a single-line fragment, we cannot be certain whether it came from a hexameter, an elegiac, or indeed a polymetric poem. However, the topic of the fragment makes the first possibility the most likely, since the fragments outlining the physical nature of the cosmos are all in hexameters. There is no third-foot caesura, since the foot is spanned by the lengthy, hexasyllabic ὑπεριέμενος, "passing over" or "passing beyond." As commentators since Heraclitus the allegorist (our source for this fragment) have noted, the participle is an etymological play on the name Hyperion, a name for the sun personified as a deity which is already attested in Homer.[47] As elsewhere in the fragments, Xenophanes is flagging up the distinction between his own account and the traditional mythological explanation by alluding to the latter with reference to the name of an anthropomorphic deity (cf. D39=B32, discussed below).[48] The fact that the participle bears this extra significance provides a motivation for emphasizing it through its uncommon metrical form.

Furthermore, the effect is illustrative: the word continues over an anticipated word-break, just as the sun traverses the sky in a continuous journey.[49] The feature may highlight a distinctive aspect of Xenophanes' solar theory. The reconstruction of Xenophanes' explanation of the sun is controversial and depends upon some tricky

[47] *Alleg. Hom*. 44.5. c.f. *Il*. 19.398, *Od*. 1.8 and 24. See Heitsch (1983, p. 68); Mourelatos (2008, p. 136).

[48] Note also the possible allusion to the myth of Prometheus at D59=B1.24. See Collins (2004, p. 150), Mackenzie (2021, p. 60).

[49] For a reconstruction of Xenophanes' account of the sun, see Mourelatos (2008).

testimonia of complex provenance.[50] It seems he did not posit a single sun; rather, the sun is a celestial phenomenon that occurs separately in different parts of the world (D35<A41a = Aët. 2.24.9); each sun comes to be in some manner through the movement of clouds, apparently as a consequence of their condensation (D28=A40 = Aët. 2.20.3). But unlike most other Greek philosophical and poetic accounts,[51] for Xenophanes, the sun, or rather each sun, does not travel around the earth; instead, its journey is straighter, moving, from our perspective, across the sky, but then continuing to travel beyond and away from the earth indefinitely. Thus, it "proceeds onward infinitely" (D31<A41a = Aët. 2.24.9, εἰς ἄπειρον μὲν προιέναι).[52] The word ὑπεριέμενος captures this movement *beyond* the earth: the only other occurrence of the lexeme in archaic or Classical Greek literature is *Od.* 8.198, where Athena, in disguise, announces that none of the Phaeacians "will cast beyond" Odysseus' effort in the stone-throwing competition (ὑπερήσει, in the word's active form). The parallel suggests, then, that Xenophanes is not merely describing the sun as passing above the earth but beyond it. The metrical oddity underlines this distinctive feature of Xenophanes' thought.

D39=B32:

Like D30=B31, this fragment distinguishes Xenophanes' own account from the traditional mythological explanation through reference to a divine name:

> ἣν τ' Ἶριν καλέουσι, νέφος καὶ τοῦτο πέφυκε,
> πορφύρεον καὶ φοινίκεον καὶ χλωρὸν ἰδέσθαι.
>
> And whom they call Iris, this too is a cloud,
> Purple and scarlet and green to behold.

[50] For an overview, see Mourelatos (2008, p. 135-138).

[51] Contrast Hes. *Theog.* 746-754, Mimnermus fr.12 West and Stesichorus fr. 8a Finglass.

[52] Translation here from Laks and Most (2016).

The second line of the fragment lacks a third-foot caesura. But here, the effect is less striking than in D30=B31. Not only is the bridging word shorter, but the line itself is divided into three identical metrical units of the shape, – u u – –, each ending with a caesura. The three units reflects the list of three colours, each occupying an equal space as they do in in a rainbow. The use of a hexameter line with a hephthemimeral caesura to list three items is easily paralleled in Homer and Hesiod (cf. *Il.* 9.145, metrically identical to the present line; Hes. *Th.* 257, 258). Xenophanes' line hardly seems clumsy. On the contrary, the three equally balanced sections, along with the use of homoioteleuton (-εον… -εον) and alliteration of p- and k- sounds (πέφυκε,/ πορφύρεον καὶ φοινίκεον καὶ χλωρὸν ἰδέσθαι), may in fact make the line sound rather elegant. Xenophanes uses the traditional medium for telling stories about the gods to present a vision of celestial phenomena which no longer requires the presence of anthropomorphic deities. The use of an elegant metrical form enhances the irony. Indeed, phrase χλωρὸν ἰδέσθαι may be a re-writing of the common hexameter formula, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι (cf. *Il.* 5.725, 10.439, 18.83, 18.377; *Od.* 6.306, 7.45, 8.366, 13.108; Hes. *Th.* 575, 581 etc.): the rainbow is no longer a "wonder" to behold in the sense of something seemingly explicable; it is in fact a colourful cloud.

D49=B34:

καὶ τὸ μὲν οὖν σαφὲς οὔτις ἀνὴρ ἴδεν οὐδέ τις ἔσται
εἰδὼς ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω περὶ πάντων·
εἰ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τύχοι τετελεσμένον εἰπών,
αὐτὸς ὅμως οὐκ οἶδε· δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται.
And so no man has seen nor will know that which is clear

About gods and the things which I say about all things;
For even if he happened especially to say something which has come to fulfilment,
Nevertheless he himself does not know; but opinion is wrought
upon all things.

There is violation of Hermann's bridge in the second line, where one would not expect a wordbreak between ἅσσα and λέγω. I submit that this places emphasis on the word that follows the caesura: we have an unexpected pause, briefly creating suspense, before the crucial word λέγω is revealed. The effect is enhanced by intonation, given the initial accent on the verb. Xenophanes would have good reason to stress this word in particular. As commentators have long noted, the fragment presents a stark contrast with the traditional hexameter practice of muse-inspiration, a process Xenophanes seems to rule out (D53=B18; cf. D15=A52). Here, accordingly, he claims no divine source or authority for his utterance, instead, advertising that the content is what *he* says about all things. The slight metrical irregularity highlights a distinctive aspect of Xenophanes' thought, namely, the exclusion of direct divine-to-mortal communication, whilst drawing attention to the irony that he should choose to present his case in the traditional medium of divinely inspired speech.

D12=B14:

ἀλλ' οἱ βροτοὶ δοκέουσι γεννᾶσθαι θεούς,
τὴν σφετέρην δ' ἐσθῆτα ἔχειν φωνήν τε δέμας τε.

But mortals suppose that gods are born,
And have their clothing and voice and body.

This fragment is a metrical anomaly within the corpus since it consists of an iambic trimeter followed by a hexameter. Some have even regarded it as corrupt on this basis.[53] However, the combination is not unparalleled. The *Margites* is another satirical poem of mixed iambics and hexameters which, like Xenophanes, is associated with Colophon. Diogenes' testimony that Xenophanes wrote in iambics (9.18) increases the likelihood that the first line is original. Like the *Margites,* this fragment parodies epic, since it refutes a central premise of epic narrative, that is, that the gods are anthropomorphic and behave roughly as humans do. A hexameter line expands upon

[53] As Lesher (1992, p. 85) notes. Wright (1985, p. 47) comments "perhaps it should be adapted to fit the hexameter."

the list of attributes that mortals baselessly attribute to the gods, most canonically within hexameter poems.

More parodic still – and something which so far appears to have gone unnoticed by modern scholars – is that the fragment recalls Odysseus' description of his men assuming the bodies of pigs after consuming Circe's food at *Od.* 10.239-240:

> οἱ δὲ συῶν μὲν ἔχον κεφαλὰς φωνήν τε τρίχας τε
> καὶ δέμας, αὐτὰρ νοῦς ἦν ἔμπεδος ὡς τὸ πάρος περ.
>
> But they had the heads and voice and hairs of pigs
> And the body, but their mind was set-firm as it had been before.

Similarities of vocabulary, metre, syntax and content all suggest the connection: both passages feature the lexemes ἔχειν, φωνή, τε and δέμας; Xenophanes' φωνήν τε δέμας τε adapts the metrically identical φωνήν τε τρίχας τε, the only other instance in surviving early hexameter where φωνήν τε occurs in this metrical position; and both passages deal with the voice and bodily form of particular beings. The recollection of the passage suggests an equivalence between the two images, the human-like gods and the pig-like humans. An allusion to the *Odyssey* passage would be meaningful: the implication is that the anthropomorphic gods of popular belief are like Odysseus' porcine crew, with an appearance totally unbefitting their true nature and intellect. If the fragment does indeed adapt this passage, it adapts both the metre and content of epic: we have a hexameter, but it is juxtaposed with an iambic line, an indicator of scurrilous, rather than grandiose, content; we have phraseology borrowed from the Circe-episode, but instead of recounting a fantastic tale it is used to flag up the absurdity of mortal views of the gods.

What may appear "clumsy" in the hexameter is the hiatus in the strong, feminine caesura in the third foot of the hexameter. This is a true hiatus – there is no correption or historical digamma between the two vowels that only makes it appear as such. One might defend Xenophanes on the grounds that he was only following the practice

of Homer, who admits of hiatus much more readily than later hexameter poets, especially at this position in the line.[54] An apparently aberrant feature may turn out to be an aspect of the fragment's pastiche of its illustrious model. But in such instances of Homeric hiatus, there is usually some mitigating factor to explain the feature, most commonly the adaptation of a formula to a new context.[55] In Xenophanes' fragment, I want to suggest another possibility in keeping with its content. If hexameter poets and audiences at this stage regarded hiatus as an inelegant imperfection, such a feature could be regarded as purposeful in this particular line, which recounts the – to Xenophanes, specious - mortal claim that gods have human *voice*. Hexameter poetry was often presented as divinely inspired speech, *thespis aoide*, with a special connection to the gods. Xenophanes here gives the lie to the claim that gods could have human speech by reminding us that hexameters, supposedly the most divine form of human speech, themselves contain imperfections. After hearing a conspicuous imperfection in a hexameter line, we are presented with the ludicrous suggestion that gods have human speech. In this instance, then, the "clumsiness" appears intentional. Such an interpretation must remain tentative, given the brevity of the fragment and the fact that it is the only one with this combination of metres to have survived within the corpus. But it is supported by two further considerations. First, the metre of the line places emphasis on the word φωνήν, with its two long syllables straddling the foot division, supporting the suggestion that speech is an important theme in the line. Second, the use of usually-avoided hiatus to generate particular effects can be paralleled elsewhere in archaic Greek poetry. Famously, Sappho fr. 31 V describes the narrator's inability to express herself under the weight of her emotion with the expression γλῶσσα ἔαγε (line 9), "my tongue is broken." Although some scholars have emended the transmitted text to avoid the hiatus (and it may be explained by historic digamma), the apparent imperfection in the line seems to enact the

[54] See West (1997, p. 232).
[55] See West (1997, p. 231).

narrator's broken speech.[56] An analogous enactment of broken speech would also serve a purpose in Xenophanes B14.

But we can also find a parallel closer to home for the purposeful use of hiatus, within the Xenophanean corpus.

D17=B24:

οὖλος ὁρᾶι, οὖλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὖλος δέ τ' ἀκούει.

Whole he sees, and whole he thinks, and whole he hears.

Here, the two instances of hiatus separate the three clauses which describe a self-contained deity. Each clause thus appears as an emphatically self-contained unit, just as the god itself is completely self-sufficient. The effect is enhanced by the anaphora of οὖλος which mimics hymnic style.[57] In fact, the homonym οὖλος = destructive is a divine epithet in Homer for Ares and Oneiros (e.g., *Il.* 2.6, 8, 5.461, 717). Xenophanes thus adapts a traditional epithet, applying it to a new deity, and in a different sense ("whole" rather than "destructive"). Rather than being clumsy, then, the hiatus illustrates the self-contained nature of the deity and highlights Xenophanes' re-purposing of traditional epic language.

D19=B26:

αἰεὶ δ' ἐν ταὐτῶι μίμνει κινούμενος οὐδέν
οὐδὲ μετέρχεσθαί μιν ἐπιπρέπει ἄλλοτε ἄλληι.

Always he remains in the same placing, moving not at all,
Nor is it right for him to move at some time in some way

This fragment does not contain any of the purportedly clumsy features, but I include it as it provides the clearest case of Xenophanes deliberately using metre for illustrative purposes. The first line of the fragment, with the exception of the dactylic fifth-foot, is entirely

[56] Nagy (1974, p. 45); Ford and Kopff (1976); Budelmann (2018, p. 135-136).
[57] Cf. Hes. *Op.* 5-8. See Mackenzie (2021, p. 38-41).

spondaic. The spondees create a sense of constancy, conspicuously lacking the momentum and movement of more dactylic lines such as the one that follows. It thereby illustrates the absolute motionlessness of the deity it describes.

Conclusion

Close reading can be brought to Xenophanes' defence to make the case that his deviations from the metrical norms established by Homer and earlier elegists are purposeful: they mimetically illustrate the content described (in the hephthemimeral lines at D59=B1.11 and D30=B31, in the violation of Hermann's bridge at D59=B1.17, in the hiatus in D17=B24 and also in the spondaic D19=B26.1), they stress distinctive aspects of Xenophanes' thought and agenda (in the hephthemimeral lines at D59=B1.15, in the lengthening of the upsilon in thesis at D60=B5.1, in the violation of Hermann's bridge at D49=B34.2) or they generate a particular tone (a comic one, in the hephthemimeral B7a=D64.1 and in the combination of an iambic and hexameter at D12=B14). More generally, in the hexameter fragments, Xenophanes seems consciously to diverge from the style of supposedly divinely-inspired Homeric metre, adopting a novel form to convey his iconoclastic content. If these readings convince, Xenophanes may seem a more capable poet than has sometimes been alleged and our appreciation of his work may be enriched. There are also implications for our understanding of early Greek metre more broadly. It has been claimed that Homer only very occasionally uses metre for illustrative purposes.[58] When reading the major studies on early Greek elegiac and hexameter poetry, one sometimes gets the impression that metre was more a signifier of occasion and genre than a means of creating fine-grained effects.[59] By contrast, the present study joins a growing body of criticism which, conceptualising

[58] West (1997, p. 232-233) argues that the only two cases in Homer are *Il.* 7.238 and *Od.* 11.593-600.

[59] For hexameter, see the studies cited at n.8 above. For elegy, note e.g., West (1974), Gentili (1988, p. 32-49), Aloni and Iannucci (2007). The chapters on elegy in Swift and Carey (2016) do not discuss the metre of individual lines.

archaic Greek poetry as literature (whatever else it may be), makes a case for regarding an archaic Greek poet as manipulating metres on a detailed level for artistic purposes.[60] This possibility has often been overlooked by the prevailing scholarly focus on genre, occasion and performance, significant as those aspects are.

One might object that my approach has been circular, to assume the possibility that Xenophanes' distinctive features are purposeful and then come up with particular purposes for each case. But this method is only to be charitable. The principal of charity is widely applied in the history of philosophy to attribute to ancient thinkers the most coherent arguments possible on the basis of the surviving evidence.[61] I have here tried to extend it to the use of form. If this approach generates results that are useful or interesting, the endeavour has been worthwhile. Moreover, to apply a greater focus on formal style is to attend to an important part of the evidence that has often been overlooked. It is a standard practice (which I have followed) to distinguish form from content. This is a helpful heuristic for the purposes of analysing how literature works. But in our real-time experience of poetry, the two are of course part of the same complex process. Therefore, if we are to be dutiful readers, we should consider how metrical form and semantic content interact, otherwise our interpretation will be a significantly impoverished one.

[60] See n.24 and n.73 above for exceptions to the tendency to regard metre as a signifier of genre or occasion. For conceptualising archaic Greek poetry as literature, see the volume Budelmann and Phillips (2018), and especially the editors' introduction at p.9-15. As they write, "using the term 'literature' helps to underscore the fact that the linguistic, rhythmic, and conceptual structures to which different readers respond change much less than the contexts in which they are encountered," although the volume pays little attention to the "rhythmic" aspects of the texts discussed.

[61] On the principle in the history of ancient philosophy, see e.g., Williams (2006, p. 257) and Barnes (2011). More generally, see Davidson (1973), who influentially argued that it is an indispensable aspect of interpretation.

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Submitted in 31/05/2023 and accepted for publication 04/09/2023