I. THEOPHRASTUS ON PLATO AND THE PYTHAGOREANS (METAPHYSICS 11A6-B12)

Plato and the Pythagoreans make the distance [between the first principles and everything else] a great one, and they make all things desire to imitate fully; and yet, they set up a certain opposition, as it were, between the Indefinite Dyad and the One. In the former [resides] the Unlimited and the Unordered and, as it were, all Shapelessness as such; and they make it altogether impossible for the nature of the universe to exist without this [that is, the Indefinite Dyad] – it [that is, the Indefinite Dyad] could only have an equal share in things, or even exceed, the other [first principle, that is, the One] – whereby they also make their first principles contrary [to one another]. Therefore, those who ascribe causation to god claim that not even god is able to reduce all things to the best, but, even if at all, only insofar as is possible. And perhaps he wouldn’t even choose to, if indeed it were to result in the destruction of all existence, given that it [that is, existence] is constituted from contraries and consists of contraries.
This is why Homer says that Odysseus is, as a wise man, a man of many modes, because he knows many modes of intercourse with men. In a similar way, Pythagoras is also said to have crafted his words appropriately when speaking to children, addressing them with child-like speech, and for women, speech appropriate for women; worlds of leadership for leaders, and youthful speech for the young. To discover the mode of wisdom appropriate to each person is the mark of wisdom...

διὰ τοῦτο φησι τὸν Ὀδυσσέα Ὅµηρος σοφὸν ὄντα πολύτροπον εἶναι, ὅτι δὴ τοῖς ἄνθρώποις ἠπίστατο πολλοῖς τρόποις συνεῖναι. οὕτω καὶ Πυθαγόρας λέγεται πρὸς παιδίας ἀξιωθεὶς ποιήσασθαι λόγους διαθεῖναι πρὸς αὐτοὺς λόγους παιδικοὺς καὶ πρὸς γυναῖκας γυναιξίν ἁρµοδίους καὶ πρὸς ἄρχοντας ἀρχοντικοὺς καὶ πρὸς ἐφήβους ἐφηβικοὺς. τὸν γὰρ ἑκάστοις πρόσφορον τρόπον τῆς σοφίας ἐξευρίσκειν σοφίας ἐστίν˙

III. APPROPRIATION AS ALLEGORICAL EXEGESIS: ARISTIPPUS OF CYRENE ON PYTHAGORAS’ NAME (D.L. 8.21 = SSR IV A 150)

...he was named Pythagoras because he, no less than the Pythian, orated the truth.

Πυθαγόραν αὐτὸν ὄνομασθῆναι ὅτι τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἠφόρευεν οὐχ ἦττον τοῦ Πυθίου.

IV. APPROPRIATION AS CLASSIFICATION AND PRAGMATIC EXPLANATION: ANAXIMANDER OF MILETUS’ EXPLANATION OF THE PYTHAGOREAN SYMBOLS (FGHist 9 T 1 = Suda, s.v. Anaximandroς Anaximandroy)

[Anaximander] wrote an Explanation of the Pythagorean Symbols, of which some examples are, “do not overstep the yoke”, “do not poke fire with a knife”, “do not eat a loaf of bread whole”. etc.

ἔγραψε Συµβόλων Πυθαγορείων Ἐξήγησιν. οἴον ἐστὶ τὸ ἰγνὸν μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν ′μαχαίραι πῦρ µὴ σκαλεύειν′ ἀπὸ ὁλοκλήρου ἄρτου μὴ ἐσθίειν ′καὶ τὰ λοιπά.

V. HIPPIAS OF ELIS AND COLLECTION OF THE ‘MOST IMPORTANT [SAYINGS]’ OF HIS PREDECESSORS (DK 86 B 6 = Clem. Strom. 6.15; trans. after Mansfeld)

It may be the case that some of these things have been said briefly by others, each at a different place: some by Orpheus and some by Musaeus, some by Hesiod and some by Homer, some by others among the poets, and some in prose-writings, some by Greeks, and some by non-Greeks.
For my part, I have collected from all these (sources) the most important and kindred [sayings?] in order to compose the present original miscellany.

tούτων ἴσως εἴρηται τὰ μὲν Ὀρφεῖ, τὰ δὲ Μουσαίω κατὰ βραχὺ ἄλλω ἀλλαξοῦ, τὰ δὲ Ἡσιόδωι τὰ δὲ Ὀμήρωι, τὰ δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις τῶν ποιητῶν, τὰ δὲ ἐν συγγραφαῖς τὰ μὲν Ἐλλησι τὰ δὲ βαρβάροις ἐγὼ δὲ ἐκ πάντων τούτων τὰ μέγιστα καὶ ομόφυλα συνθεῖς τοῦτον καινὸν πολυειδῆ τὸν λόγον ποιήσομαι.

VI. ARISTOTLE’S CLASSIFICATION OF THE PYTHAGOREAN ACUSMATA (IAMBlichus, ON THE PYTHAGOREAN LIFE 82-83; TRANS. AFTER DILLON AND HERSHBELL)

The philosophy of the acusmatici consists of acusmata undemonstrated, that is, lacking a rationale, e.g. ‘one ought to do in this way’; and other acusmata, as many as were said by that man [i.e. Pythagoras], these they [i.e. the acusmatici] attempt to preserve as the divine doctrines. Neither do they pretend to be speaking for themselves, nor ought one do so, but even among themselves they suppose that those who grasp the most acusmata are best situated in regard to practical wisdom. And these so-called ‘acusmata’ are distinguished into three kinds: some signify ‘what is’, others ‘what is to the greatest degree’, and others ‘what ought or ought not to be done’. Those that signify ‘what is’ are of this sort: “what are the islands of the blessed?  Sun and moon.”; “what is the oracle at Delphi?  The tetraktys (which is the harmony in which the sirens exist).”

Those [that signify] ‘what is to the greatest degree’ are, e.g., “what is most just? To sacrifice”; what is wisest? Number.”...[list of ‘what is to the greatest degree?’ acusmata]...These and similar things are the acusmata of this kind; for each of them signifies what is to the greatest degree. And this [i.e. philosophy] is the same as that which is called the wisdom of the Seven Sages. For they too sought not what is the good, but what is [good] to the greatest degree; not what is difficult, but what is most difficult (e.g. to know oneself); not what is easy, but what is easiest (e.g. to indulge in habit)...[insertion by Iamblichus]?...

Those of the acusmata which signify what ought or ought not to be done were of this sort: one ought to beget children (for it is necessary to leave behind people to serve god)...etc.

ἔστι δὲ ἢ μὲν τῶν ἀκουσµατικῶν φιλοσοφία ἀκούσµατα ἀναπόδεικτα καὶ ἄνευ λόγου, ὅτι οὔτως πρακτέον, καὶ τάλλα, ὡσα παρ’ έκείνου ἐρρέθη, ταῦτα πειρώνται διαφυλάττειν ὡς θεία δόγµατα, αὐτοὶ δὲ παρ’ αὐτῶν οὔτε λέγειν προσποιοῦνται οὔτε λεκτέον εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτῶν ὑπολαµβάνουσι τούτους ἔχειν βέλτιστα πρὸς φρόνησιν, οἵτινες πλείστα ἀκούσµατα ἔσχον. πάντα δὲ τὰ οὔτως <καλούµενα> ἀκούσµατα διήρηται εἰς τρία εἴδη, τὰ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν τί ἐστι σηµαίνει, τὰ δὲ τί μάλιστα, τὰ δὲ τί δεῖ πράττειν ἢ μὴ πράττειν. τὰ μὲν οὖν τί ἐστι τοιαῦτα, οἴον τί ἐστιν αἱ μακάρων νήσοι; ἦλιος καὶ σελήνη, τί ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς μαντείου; τετρακτύς. ὅπερ ἐστίν ἢ ἀρµονία, ἐν ἢ αἱ Σειρήνες.
It is possible to encompass three classes of propositions and problems in a sketch. Some propositions are ethical, some are scientific, and some are logical. Propositions such as these, then, are ethical: “should one obey parents rather than laws, if they are at variance?” Logical propositions are such as, “is knowledge of contraries the same or not?” Scientific propositions are such as, “is the universe eternal or not?” And similarly also with the problems.

These thinkers [i.e. those who hold that philosophy has one or two parts], however, seem to have handled the question deficiently and, in comparison with them, those who say that a part of philosophy is physics, another ethics, and another logic, [seem to have handled the question] more completely. Of these, Plato is a pioneer, [at least] potentially, as he made many discussions on many issues of physics and ethics, and not a few on logic; but those associated with Xenocrates, as well as those [who come] from the Peripatos and those too from the Stoa, adopt this division most expressly.
They say that Triptolemus laid down precepts for the Athenians, and of his precepts the philosopher Xenocrates says that the following three still remain in force at Eleusis: ‘Honor thy parents’; ‘Offer first-fruits to the gods’; and ‘do no harm to animals’. Well, then, the first two he [i.e. Xenocrates] considers to have been handed down excellently: for we ought to do well in return unto our parents to the best of our ability, as they are our benefactors; and we ought to offer first-fruits to the gods, by whom first-fruits were given for our livelihood. But regarding the third precept he raises the question, “what did Triptolemus intend when he enjoined abstinence from eating animals? Did he simply consider,” he says, “that it would be a terrible thing to kill one’s kindred, or did he rather observe that it happens that they are killed by men because they are the most useful of living things for nourishment? So it would be through wishing to render his life civilized that he tried to preserve those animals which were domesticated and the companions of men. Unless perhaps, assuming that we should honor the gods through an offering of first-fruits, he thought that this prerogative would be better preserved if animal sacrifices were not offered to the gods.” Xenocrates gives many other reasons for this precept, none of them very precise, but it is sufficient for our purpose to note that this precept was legislated by Triptolemus.

And when she [i.e. Parthenis] gave birth in Sidon of Phoenicia, he [i.e. Mnemarchus] called the son born ‘Pythagoras’, because the Pythian greeted him [by name]. We must reject here the view of Epimenides, Eudoxus, and Xenocrates, who explained that Apollo had intercourse with Parthenis at that time, and when she was not pregnant, he made her so, and announced it through his prophetess.
ἐν δὲ Σιδόνι τῆς Φοινίκης ἀποτεκούσης αὐτῆς τὸν γενόµενον υἱὸν Πυθαγόραν προσηγόρευσεν, ὅτι ἄρα ὑπὸ τοῦ Πυθιδίου προνοοῦσθε αὐτῷ. ἔπαιρον γὰρ ἑντόθι Ἑπιμενίδες καὶ Ἐὐδοξος καὶ Ξενοκράτης, ὑπονοοῦντες τῇ Παρθενίδι τότε μιγήσεα τὸν Ἀπὸλλωνα καὶ κύουσαν αὐτήν ἐκ µὴ οὕτως ἐχούσης καταστῆσαι τε καὶ προαγγεῖλαι διὰ τῆς προφήτιδος.

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