

# Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*

## BOOK VIII

### CHAPTER 1. PYTHAGORAS (c. 582–500 B.C.)

Having now completed our account of the philosophy of Ionia starting with Thales, as well as of its chief representatives, let us proceed to examine the philosophy of Italy, which was started by Pythagoras,<sup>a</sup> son of the gem-engraver Mnesarchus, and according to Hermippus, a Samian, or, according to Aristoxenus, a Tyrrhenian from one of those islands which the Athenians held after clearing them of their Tyrrhenian inhabitants. Some indeed say that he was descended through Euthyphro, Hippasus and Marmacus from Cleonymus, who was exiled from Phlius, and that, as Marmacus lived in Samos, so Pythagoras was called a Samian. From Samos he went, it is said, to Lesbos with an introduction to Pherecydes from his uncle Zoilus. He had three silver flagons made and took them as presents to each of the priests of Egypt. He had brothers, of whom Eunomus was the elder and Tyrrhenus the second; he also had a slave, Zamolxis, who is worshipped, so says Herodotus,<sup>b</sup> by the Getans, (*V. Pyth.* i.) favours the connexion with Phoenicia, so that the boy Pythagoras was instructed there by Chaldaeans before, on his return to Samos, he enjoyed the instruction of Pherecydes of Syros and of Hermodamas of Samos.

<sup>b</sup> iv. 93 sq.

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as Cronos. He was a pupil, as already stated, of Pherecydes of Syros, after whose death he went to Samos to be the pupil of Hermodamas, Creophylus's descendant, a man already advanced in years. While still young, so eager was he for knowledge, he left his own country and had himself initiated into all the mysteries and rites not only of Greece but also of foreign countries. Now he was in Egypt when Polycrates sent him a letter of introduction to Amasis; he learnt the Egyptian language, so we learn from Antiphon in his book *On Men of Outstanding Merit*, and he also journeyed among the Chaldaeans and Magi. Then while in Crete he went down into the cave of Ida with Epimenides; he also entered the Egyptian sanctuaries,<sup>a</sup> and was told their secret lore concerning the gods. After that he returned to Samos to find his country under the tyranny of Polycrates; so he sailed away to Croton in Italy, and there he laid down a constitution for the Italian Greeks, and he and his followers were held in great estimation; for, being nearly three hundred in number, so well did they govern the state that its constitution was in effect a true aristocracy (government by the best).

This is what Heraclides of Pontus tells us he used to say about himself: that he had once been Aethalides and was accounted to be Hermes' son, and Hermes told him he might choose any gift he liked except immortality; so he asked to retain through life and through death a memory of his experiences. Hence in life he could recall everything, and when he died he still kept the

τὰ ἄδιτα κατελθὼν τὴν μυστικὴν παρὰ Αἰγυπτίων ἐκμάθοι φιλοσοφίαν. Cf. also Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 18 sq.

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same memories. Afterwards in course of time his soul entered into Euphorbus and he was wounded by Menelaus. Now Euphorbus used to say that he had once been Aethalides and obtained this gift from Hermes, and then he told of the wanderings of his soul, how it migrated hither and thither, into how many plants and animals it had come, and all that it underwent in Hades, and all that the other souls there have to endure. When Euphorbus died, his soul passed into Hermotimus, and he also, wishing to authenticate the story, went up to the temple of Apollo at Branchidae, where he identified the shield which Menelaus, on his voyage home from Troy, had dedicated to Apollo, so he said; the shield being now so rotten through and through that the ivory facing only was left. When Hermotimus died, he became Pyrrhus, a fisherman of Delos, and again he remembered everything, how he was first Aethalides, then Euphorbus, then Hermotimus, and then Pyrrhus. But when Pyrrhus died, he became Pythagoras, and still remembered all the facts mentioned.

There are some who insist, absurdly enough, that Pythagoras left no writings whatever. At all events Heraclitus, the physicist,<sup>a</sup> almost shouts in our ear, "Pythagoras, son of Mnesarchus, practised inquiry beyond all other men, and in this selection of his writings made himself a wisdom of his own, showing much learning but poor workmanship." The occasion of this remark was the opening words of Pythagoras's treatise *On Nature*, namely, "Nay, I swear by the air I breathe, I swear by the water I drink, I will never suffer censure on account of this

<sup>a</sup> Fr. 129 D., 17 B.

## VIII. 6-8. PYTHAGORAS

work." Pythagoras in fact wrote three books, *On Education*, *On Statesmanship*, and *On Nature*. But the book which passes as the work of Pythagoras is by Lysis of Tarentum, a Pythagorean, who fled to Thebes and taught Epaminondas.<sup>a</sup> Heraclides, the son of Serapion, in his *Epitome of Sotion*, says that he also wrote a poem *On the Universe*, and secondly the *Sacred Poem* which begins :

Young men, come reverence in quietude  
All these my words ;

thirdly *On the Soul*, fourthly *Of Piety*, fifthly *Helothales the Father of Epicharmus of Cos*, sixthly *Croton*, and other works as well. The same authority says that the poem *On the Mysteries* was written by Hippasus to defame Pythagoras, and that many others written by Aston of Croton were ascribed to Pythagoras. Aristoxenus says that Pythagoras got most of his moral doctrines from the Delphic priestess Themistoclea. According to Ion of Chios in his *Triagmi* he ascribed some poems of his own making to Orpheus.<sup>b</sup> They further attribute to him the *Scopiads* which begins thus :

Be not shameless, before any man.

Sosicrates in his *Successions of Philosophers* says that, when Leon the tyrant of Phlius asked him who he was, he said, "A philosopher,"<sup>c</sup> and that he compared life to the Great Games, where some went to which, like all those attributed to Pythagoras, must have been a late forgery.

<sup>b</sup> *F.H.G.* Fr. 12, ii. p. 49. The same fragment is found in Clem. Alex. *Strom.* i. 131 Ἴων δὲ ὁ Χίος ἐν τοῖς Τριαγμοῖς καὶ Πυθαγόραν εἰς Ὀρφέα ἀνενεγκεῖν τινα ἱστορεῖ. The verbal agreement, except for *τινα ἱστορεῖ*, is exact.

<sup>c</sup> *Cf.* i. 12, whence it would seem that Sosicrates used Heraclides of Pontus as his authority for this anecdote.

## VIII. 8-10. PYTHAGORAS

compete for the prize and others went with wares to sell, but the best as spectators ; for similarly, in life, some grow up with servile natures, greedy for fame and gain, but the philosopher seeks for truth. Thus much for this part of the subject.

The contents in general of the aforesaid three treatises of Pythagoras are as follows. He forbids us to pray for ourselves, because we do not know what will help us. Drinking he calls, in a word, a snare, and he discountenances all excess, saying that no one should go beyond due proportion either in drinking or in eating. Of sexual indulgence, too, he says, "Keep to the winter for sexual pleasures, in summer abstain ; they are less harmful in autumn and spring, but they are always harmful and not conducive to health." Asked once when a man should consort with a woman, he replied, "When you want to lose what strength you have."

He divides man's life into four quarters thus : "Twenty years a boy, twenty years a youth, twenty years a young man, twenty years an old man ; and these four periods correspond to the four seasons, the boy to spring, the youth to summer, the young man to autumn, and the old man to winter," meaning by youth, one not yet grown up and by a young man a man of mature age. According to Timaeus, he was the first to say, "Friends have all things in common" and "Friendship is equality"; indeed, his disciples did put all their possessions into one common stock. For five whole years they had to keep silence, merely listening to his discourses without seeing him,<sup>a</sup> until they passed an examination, and thenceforward they were admitted to his house and allowed to see him. They would never

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use coffins of cypress, because the sceptre of Zeus was made from it, so we are informed by Hermippus in his second book *On Pythagoras*.

Indeed, his bearing is said to have been most dignified, and his disciples held the opinion about him that he was Apollo come down from the far north. There is a story that once, when he was disrobed, his thigh was seen to be of gold; and when he crossed the river Nessus, quite a number of people said they heard it welcome him. According to Timaeus in the tenth book of his *History*, he remarked that the consorts of men bore divine names, being called first Virgins, then Brides, and then Mothers.<sup>a</sup> He it was who brought geometry to perfection, while it was Moeris who first discovered the beginnings of the elements of geometry: Anticlides in his second book *On Alexander*<sup>b</sup> affirms this, and further that Pythagoras spent most of his time upon the arithmetical aspect of geometry; he also discovered the musical intervals on the monochord. Nor did he neglect even medicine. We are told by Apollodorus the calculator that he offered a sacrifice of oxen on finding that in a right-angled triangle the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the squares on the sides containing the right angle. And there is an epigram running as follows<sup>c</sup>:

What time Pythagoras that famed figure found,  
For which the noble offering he brought.

He is also said to have been the first to diet athletes on meat, trying first with Eurymenes<sup>d</sup>—so we learn from Favorinus in the third book of his *Memorabilia*—whereas in former times they had *Pyth.* 18. We can still see how these quotations made by D. L. himself from Favorinus disturb the context.

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trained on dried figs, on butter,<sup>a</sup> and even on wheat-meal, as we are told by the same Favorinus in the eighth book of his *Miscellaneous History*. Some say it was a certain trainer named Pythagoras who instituted this diet,<sup>b</sup> and not our Pythagoras, who forbade even the killing, let alone the eating, of animals which share with us the privilege of having a soul. This was the excuse put forward; but his real reason for forbidding animal diet was to practise people and accustom them to simplicity of life, so that they could live on things easily procurable, spreading their tables with uncooked foods and drinking pure water only, for this was the way to a healthy body and a keen mind. Of course the only altar at which he worshipped was that of Apollo the Giver of Life, behind the Altar of Horns at Delos, for thereon were placed flour and meal and cakes, without the use of fire, and there was no animal victim, as we are told by Aristotle in his *Constitution of Delos*.

He was the first, they say, to declare that the soul, bound now in this creature, now in that, thus goes on a round ordained of necessity. He too, according to Aristoxenus the musician, was the first to introduce weights and measures into Greece. It was he who first declared that the Evening and Morning Stars are the same, as Parmenides maintains.<sup>c</sup> So greatly was he admired that his disciples used to be called "prophets to declare the voice of God," besides which he himself says in a written work that "after two hundred and seven years in Hades he has returned to the land of the living." Thus it was that they remained his staunch adherents,

<sup>c</sup> Cf. *inf.* ix. 23.

## VIII. 14-17. PYTHAGORAS

and men came to hear his words from afar, among them Lucanians, Peucetians, Messapians and Romans.

Down to the time of Philolaus it was not possible to acquire knowledge of any Pythagorean doctrine, and Philolaus alone brought out those three celebrated books which Plato sent a hundred minas to purchase. Not less than six hundred persons went to his evening lectures ; and those who were privileged to see him wrote to their friends congratulating themselves on a great piece of good fortune. Moreover, the Metapontines named his house the Temple of Demeter and his porch the Museum, so we learn from Favorinus in his *Miscellaneous History*.<sup>a</sup> And the rest of the Pythagoreans used to say that not all his doctrines were for all men to hear, our authority for this being Aristoxenus in the tenth book of his *Rules of Pedagogy*, where we are also told that one of the school, Xenophilus by name, asked by some one how he could best educate his son, replied, "By making him the citizen of a well-governed state." Throughout Italy Pythagoras made many into good men and true, men too of note like the lawgivers Zaleucus and Charondas ; for he had a great gift for friendship, and especially, when he found his own watchwords adopted by anyone, he would immediately take to that man and make a friend of him.

The following were his watchwords or precepts : don't stir the fire with a knife, don't step over the beam of a balance, don't sit down on your bushel,<sup>b</sup> don't eat your heart, don't help a man off with a load but help him on, always roll your bed-clothes up, don't put God's image on the circle of a ring, don't leave the pan's imprint on the ashes, don't wipe up

<sup>b</sup> The  $\chi\omicron\acute{\nu}\nu\iota\zeta$  was about a *quart*, in dry measure.

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a mess with a torch, don't commit a nuisance towards the sun, don't walk the highway, don't shake hands too eagerly, don't have swallows under your own roof, don't keep birds with hooked claws, don't make water on nor stand upon your nail- and hair-trimmings, turn the sharp blade away, when you go abroad don't turn round at the frontier.

This is what they meant. Don't stir the fire with a knife : don't stir the passions or the swelling pride of the great. Don't step over the beam of a balance : don't overstep the bounds of equity and justice. Don't sit down on your bushel : have the same care of to-day and the future, a bushel being the day's ration. By not eating your heart he meant not wasting your life in troubles and pains. By saying do not turn round when you go abroad, he meant to advise those who are departing this life not to let their hearts' desire on living nor to be too much attracted by the pleasures of this life. The explanations of the rest are similar and would take too long to set out.

Above all, he forbade as food red mullet and blacktail, and he enjoined abstinence from the hearts of animals and from beans, and sometimes, according to Aristotle, even from paunch and gurnard. Some say that he contented himself with just some honey or a honeycomb or bread, never touching wine in the daytime, and with greens boiled or raw for dainties, and fish but rarely. His robe was white and spotless, his quilts of white wool, for linen had not yet reached those parts. He was never known to over-eat, to behave loosely, or to be drunk. He would avoid laughter and all pandering to tastes such as in-

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sulting jests and vulgar tales. He would punish neither slave nor free man in anger. Admonition he used to call "setting right." He used to practise divination by sounds or voices and by auguries, never by burnt-offerings, beyond frankincense. The offerings he made were always inanimate; though some say that he would offer cocks, sucking goats and porkers, as they are called, but lambs never. However, Aristoxenus has it that he consented to the eating of all other animals, and only abstained from ploughing oxen and rams.

The same authority, as we have seen, asserts that Pythagoras took his doctrines from the Delphic priestess Themistoclea. Hieronymus, however, says that, when he had descended into Hades, he saw the soul of Hesiod bound fast to a brazen pillar and gibbering, and the soul of Homer hung on a tree with serpents writhing about it, this being their punishment for what they had said about the gods; he also saw under torture those who would not remain faithful to their wives. This, says our authority, is why he was honoured by the people of Croton. Aristippus of Cyrene affirms in his work *On the Physicists* that he was named Pythagoras because he uttered the truth as infallibly as did the Pythian oracle.<sup>a</sup>

He is said to have advised his disciples as follows:  
Always to say on entering their own doors:

Where did I trespass? What did I achieve?  
And unfulfilled what duties did I leave?

Not to let victims be brought for sacrifice to the gods, and to worship only at the altar unstained with blood. Not to call the gods to witness, man's duty being rather to strive to make his own word carry

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conviction. To honour their elders, on the principle that precedence in time gives a greater title to respect; for as in the world sunrise comes before sunset, so in human life the beginning before the end, and in all organic life birth precedes death. And he further bade them to honour gods before demi-gods, heroes before men, and first among men their parents; and so to behave one to another as not to make friends into enemies, but to turn enemies into friends. To deem nothing their own. To support the law, to wage war on lawlessness. Never to kill or injure trees that are not wild, nor even any animal that does not injure man. That it is seemly and advisable neither to give way to unbridled laughter nor to wear sullen looks. To avoid excess of flesh, on a journey to let exertion and slackening alternate, to train the memory, in wrath to restrain hand and tongue, to respect all divination, to sing to the lyre and by hymns to show due gratitude to gods and to good men. To abstain from beans because they are flatulent and partake most of the breath of life; and besides, it is better for the stomach if they are not taken, and this again will make our dreams in sleep smooth and untroubled.

Alexander in his *Successions of Philosophers* says that he found in the Pythagorean memoirs the following tenets as well.<sup>a</sup> The principle of all things is the monad or unit; arising from this monad the

deserves praise for the selection. Between Alexander Polyhistor in the first century B.C. and the threshold of the third century A.D. there had been an enormous increase in neo-Pythagorean literature, mostly dealing with mystical properties of numbers and with ethics based upon theology. All this D. L. ignores, going back to a Hellenistic document long forgotten.

## VIII. 25-27. PYTHAGORAS

undefined dyad or two serves as material substratum to the monad, which is cause ; from the monad and the undefined dyad spring numbers ; from numbers, points ; from points, lines ; from lines, plane figures ; from plane figures, solid figures ; from solid figures, sensible bodies, the elements of which are four, fire, water, earth and air ; these elements interchange and turn into one another completely, and combine to produce a universe animate, intelligent, spherical, with the earth at its centre, the earth itself too being spherical and inhabited round about. There are also antipodes, and our " down " is their " up." Light and darkness have equal part<sup>a</sup> in the universe, so have hot and cold, and dry and moist ; and of these, if hot preponderates, we have summer ; if cold, winter ; if dry, spring ; if moist, late autumn. If all are in equilibrium, we have the best periods of the year, of which the freshness of spring constitutes the healthy season, and the decay of late autumn the unhealthy. So too, in the day, freshness belongs to the morning, and decay to the evening, which is therefore more unhealthy. The air about the earth is stagnant and unwholesome, and all within it is mortal ; but the uppermost air is ever-moved and pure and healthy, and all within it is immortal and consequently divine. The sun, the moon, and the other stars are gods ; for, in them, there is a preponderance of heat, and heat is the cause of life. The moon is illumined by the sun. Gods and men are akin, inasmuch as man partakes of heat ; therefore God takes thought for man. Fate is the cause of things being thus ordered both as a whole and separately. The sun's ray penetrates through the

<sup>a</sup> Cf. Soph. *El.* 87 γῆς ἰσόμοιρ' ἀήρ.

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aether, whether cold or dense—the air they call cold aether, and the sea and moisture dense aether—and this ray descends even to the depths and for this reason quickens all things. All things live which partake of heat—this is why plants are living things—but all have not soul, which is a detached part of aether, partly the hot and partly the cold, for it partakes of cold aether too. Soul is distinct from life; it is immortal, since that from which it is detached is immortal. Living creatures are reproduced from one another by germination; there is no such thing as spontaneous generation from earth. The germ is a clot of brain containing hot vapour within it; and this, when brought to the womb, throws out, from the brain, ichor, fluid and blood, whence are formed flesh, sinews, bones, hairs, and the whole of the body, while soul and sense come from the vapour within. First congealing in about forty days, it receives form and, according to the ratios of “harmony,” in seven, nine, or at the most ten, months, the mature child is brought forth. It has in it all the relations constituting life, and these, forming a continuous series, keep it together according to the ratios of harmony, each appearing at regulated intervals. Sense generally, and sight in particular, is a certain unusually hot vapour. This is why it is said to see through air and water, because the hot aether is resisted by the cold; for, if the vapour in the eyes had been cold, it would have been dissipated on meeting the air, its like. As it is, in certain [lines] he calls the eyes the portals of

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<sup>1</sup> ἐστιν (ἐναντίος) Apelt.

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the sun. His conclusion is the same with regard to hearing and the other senses.

The soul of man, he says, is divided into three parts, intelligence, reason, and passion. Intelligence and passion are possessed by other animals as well, but reason by man alone. The seat of the soul extends from the heart to the brain: the part of it which is in the heart is passion, while the parts located in the brain are reason and intelligence. The senses are distillations from these. Reason is immortal, all else mortal. The soul draws nourishment from the blood: the faculties<sup>a</sup> of the soul are winds, for they as well as the soul are invisible, just as the aether is invisible. The veins, arteries, and sinews are the bonds of the soul. But when it is strong and settled down into itself, reasonings and deeds become its bonds. When cast out upon the earth, it wanders in the air like the body. Hermes is the steward of souls, and for that reason is called Hermes the Escorter, Hermes the Keeper of the Gate, and Hermes of the Underworld, since it is he who brings in the souls from their bodies both by land and sea; and the pure are taken into the uppermost region, but the impure are not permitted to approach the pure or each other, but are bound by the Furies in bonds unbreakable. The whole air is full of souls which are called genii<sup>b</sup> or heroes; these are they who send men dreams and signs of future disease and health, and not to men alone, but to

<sup>a</sup> The word λόγους is translated above by "ratios," i.e. proportionalities. With ἀνέμους compare the Stoic air-currents.

<sup>b</sup> The Greek daemons (δαίμονες) are, according to Hesiod, *W. and D.* 121-126, superhuman beings, guardians and benefactors of mankind, watching over the earth whereon once they lived.

## VIII. 32-34. PYTHAGORAS

sheep also and cattle as well: and it is to them that purifications and lustrations, all divination, omens and the like, have reference. The most momentous thing in human life is the art of winning the soul to good or to evil. Blest are the men who acquire a good soul; <if it be bad> they can never be at rest, nor ever keep the same course two days together.

Right has the force of an oath, and that is why Zeus is called the God of Oaths. Virtue is harmony, and so are health and all good and God himself; this is why they say that all things are constructed according to the laws of harmony. The love of friends is just concord and equality. We should not pay equal worship to gods and heroes, but to the gods always, with reverent silence, in white robes, and after purification, to the heroes only from midday onwards. Purification is by cleansing, baptism and lustration, and by keeping clean from all deaths and births and all pollution, and abstaining from meat and flesh of animals that have died, mullets, gurnards, eggs and egg-sprung animals, beans, and the other abstinences prescribed by those who perform mystic rites in the temples. According to Aristotle in his work *On the Pythagoreans*, Pythagoras counselled abstinence from beans either because they are like the genitals, or because they are like the gates of Hades . . . as being alone unjointed, or because they are injurious, or because they are like the form of the universe, or because they belong to oligarchy, since they are used in election by lot. He bade his disciples not to pick up fallen crumbs, either in order to accustom them not to eat immoderately, or because connected with a person's death; nay, even, according to Aristo-

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phanes, crumbs belong to the heroes, for in his *Heroes* he says <sup>a</sup> :

Nor taste ye of what falls beneath the board !

Another of his precepts was not to eat white cocks, as being sacred to the Month and wearing suppliant garb—now supplication ranked with things good—sacred to the Month because they announce the time of day ; and again white represents the nature of the good, black the nature of evil. Not to touch such fish as were sacred ; for it is not right that gods and men should be allotted the same things, any more than free men and slaves. Not to break bread ; for once friends used to meet over one loaf, as the barbarians do even to this day ; and you should not divide bread which brings them together ; some give as the explanation of this that it has reference to the judgement of the dead in Hades, others that bread makes cowards in war, others again that it is from it that the whole world begins.<sup>b</sup>

He held that the most beautiful figure is the sphere among solids, and the circle among plane figures. Old age may be compared to everything that is decreasing, while youth is one with increase. Health means retention of the form, disease its destruction. Of salt he said it should be brought to table to remind us of what is right ; for salt preserves whatever it finds, and it arises from the purest sources, sun and sea.

This is what Alexander says that he found in the Pythagorean memoirs.<sup>c</sup> What follows is Aristotle's.

But Pythagoras's great dignity not even Timon both sections. This means that, in the *Lives* of Pythagoras which D. L. consulted, the extract from Alexander has displaced a passage which came from a spurious Aristotelian treatise *Περὶ Πυθαγορείων*.

## VIII. 36-38. PYTHAGORAS

overlooked, who, although he digs at him in his *Silli*,<sup>a</sup> speaks of

Pythagoras, inclined to witching works and ways,  
Man-snarer, fond of noble periphrase.

Xenophanes<sup>b</sup> confirms the statement about his having been different people at different times in the elegiacs beginning :

Now other thoughts, another path, I show.

What he says of him is as follows :

They say that, passing a belaboured whelp,  
He, full of pity, spake these words of dole :  
“ Stay, smite not ! ’Tis a friend, a human soul ;  
I knew him straight whenas I heard him yelp ! ”

Thus Xenophanes. But Cratinus also lampooned him both in the *Pythagorizing Woman* and also in *The Tarentines*, where we read<sup>c</sup> :

They are wont,  
If haply they a foreigner do find,  
To hold a cross-examination  
Of doctrines’ worth, to trouble and confound him  
With terms, equations, and antitheses  
Brain-bung’d with magnitudes and periphrases.

Again, Mnesimachus in the *Alcmaeon*<sup>d</sup> :

To Ioxias we sacrifice : Pythagoras his rite,  
Of nothing that is animate we ever take a bite.

And Aristophon in the *Pythagorist*<sup>e</sup> :

A. He told how he travelled in Hades and looked on the  
dwellers below,  
How each of them lives, but how different by far from the  
lives of the dead  
Were the lives of the Pythagoreans, for these alone, so he said,

<sup>c</sup> Cratin. minor, Meineke, *C.G.F.* iii. 376.

<sup>d</sup> Meineke, *C.G.F.* iii. 567.

<sup>e</sup> Meineke, *C.G.F.* iii. 362.

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Were suffered to dine with King Pluto, which was for their piety's sake.

B. What an ill-tempered god for whom such swine, such creatures good company make ;

and in the same later :

Their food is just greens, and to wet it pure water is all that they drink ;

And the want of a bath, and the vermin, and their old threadbare coats so do stink

That none of the rest will come near them.

Pythagoras met his death in this wise.<sup>a</sup> As he sat one day among his acquaintances at the house of Milo, it chanced that the house was set ablaze out of jealousy by one of the people who were not accounted worthy of admittance to his presence, though some say it was the work of the inhabitants of Croton anxious to safeguard themselves against the setting-up of a tyranny. Pythagoras was caught as he tried to escape ; he got as far as a certain field of beans, where he stopped, saying he would be captured rather than cross it, and be killed rather than prate about his doctrines ; and so his pursuers cut his throat.<sup>b</sup> So also were murdered

to the same trusty pair, Myllias and Timycha). The story in Iamblichus represents a band of Pythagoreans pursued by a tyrant's myrmidons and caught in a plain where beans were growing, all of them preferring to die where they stood rather than trample on the beans ; but this story might be located anywhere. It has nothing inherently to do with the end of Pythagoras. What remains, τὸν δὲ Π. καταληφθῆναι διεξιόντα, may be compared with Porphyry, *Vit. Pyth.* § 57, where we are told that the disciples made a bridge of their own bodies over the fire and thus the master escaped from the burning house but, in despair at the extinction of his school, chose a voluntary death. The words οὕτω δέ which follow come in awkwardly, as they are separated from the sentence about the fire.

## VIII. 39-41. PYTHAGORAS

more than half of his disciples, to the number of forty or thereabouts; but a very few escaped, including Archippus of Tarentum and Lysis, already mentioned.

Dicaearchus, however, says that Pythagoras died a fugitive in the temple of the Muses at Metapontum after forty days' starvation. Heraclides, in his *Epitome of the Lives of Satyrus*, says that, after burying Pherecydes at Delos, he returned to Italy and, when he found Cylon of Croton giving a luxurious banquet to all and sundry, retired to Metapontum to end his days there by starvation, having no wish to live longer. On the other hand, Hermippus relates that, when the men of Agrigentum and Syracuse were at war, Pythagoras and his disciples went out and fought in the van of the army of the Agrigentines, and, their line being turned, he was killed by the Syracusans as he was trying to avoid the beanfield; the rest, about thirty-five in number, were burned at the stake in Tarentum for trying to set up a government in opposition to those in power.

Hermippus gives another anecdote. Pythagoras, on coming to Italy, made a subterranean dwelling and enjoined on his mother to mark and record all that passed, and at what hour, and to send her notes down to him until he should ascend. She did so. Pythagoras some time afterwards came up withered and looking like a skeleton, then went into the assembly and declared he had been down to Hades, and even read out his experiences to them. They were so affected that they wept and wailed and looked upon him as divine, going so far as to send

## VIII. 41-43. PYTHAGORAS

their wives to him in hopes that they would learn some of his doctrines: and so they were called Pythagorean women. Thus far Hermippus.

Pythagoras had a wife, Theano by name, daughter of Brontinus of Croton, though some call her Brontinus's wife and Pythagoras's pupil. He had a daughter Damo, according to the letter of Lysis to Hippasus, which says of him, "I am told by many that you discourse publicly, a thing which Pythagoras deemed unworthy, for certain it is that, when he entrusted his daughter Damo with the custody of his memoirs, he solemnly charged her never to give them to anyone outside his house. And, although she could have sold the writings for a large sum of money, she would not, but reckoned poverty and her father's solemn injunctions more precious than gold, for all that she was a woman."

They also had a son Telauges, who succeeded his father and, according to some, was Empedocles' instructor. At all events Hippobotus makes Empedocles say <sup>a</sup>:

Telauges, famed  
Son of Theano and Pythagoras.

Telauges wrote nothing, so far as we know, but his mother Theano wrote a few things. Further, a story is told that being asked how many days it was before a woman becomes pure after intercourse, she replied, "With her own husband at once, with another man never." And she advised a woman going in to her own husband to put off her shame with her clothes, and on leaving him to put it on

<sup>a</sup> Fr. 155 D.

## VIII. 43-45. PYTHAGORAS

again along with them. Asked "Put on what?" she replied, "What makes me to be called a woman."

To return to Pythagoras. According to Heraclides, the son of Serapion, he was eighty years old when he died, and this agrees with his own description of the life of man, though most authorities say he was ninety. And there are jesting lines of my own upon him as follows <sup>a</sup> :

Not thou alone from all things animate  
Didst keep, Pythagoras. All food is dead  
When boil'd and bak'd and salt-besprinkle-èd ;  
For then it surely is inanimate.

Again <sup>b</sup> :

So wise was wise Pythagoras that he  
Would touch no meats, but called it impious,  
Bade others eat. Good wisdom : not for us  
To do the wrong ; let others impious be.

And again <sup>c</sup> :

If thou wouldst know the mind of old Pythagoras,  
Look on Euphorbus' buckler and its boss.  
He says "I've lived before." If, when he says he was,  
He was not, he was no-one when he was.

And again, of the manner of his death <sup>d</sup> :

Woe ! Woe ! Whence, Pythagoras, this deep reverence  
for beans ? Why did he fall in the midst of his disciples ?  
A bean-field there was he durst not cross ; sooner than  
trample on it, he endured to be slain at the cross-roads  
by the men of Aeragas.

He flourished in the 60th Olympiad <sup>e</sup> and his

<sup>a</sup> *Anth. Pal.* vii. 121.

<sup>b</sup> *Anth. Plan.* v. 34.

<sup>c</sup> *Anth. Plan.* v. 35.

<sup>d</sup> *Anth. Pal.* vii. 122.

<sup>e</sup> 540-536 B.C. Cf. Clem. Alex. *Strom.* i. 65 "in the 62nd Olympiad" [532-528 B.C.], eight years later, and contemporary with Polycrates of Samos.

## VIII. 45-48. PYTHAGORAS

school lasted until the ninth or tenth generation. For the last of the Pythagoreans, whom Aristoxenus in his time saw, were Xenophilus from the Thracian Chalcidice, Phanton of Phlius, and Echebrates, Diocles and Polymnastus, also of Phlius, who were pupils of Philolaus and Eurytus of Tarentum.

There were four men of the name of Pythagoras living about the same time and at no great distance from one another: (1) of Croton, a man with tyrannical leanings; (2) of Phlius, an athlete, some say a trainer; (3) of Zacynthus; (4) our subject, who discovered the secrets of philosophy [and taught them], and to whom was applied the phrase, "The Master said" (*Ipse dixit*), which passed into a proverb of ordinary life. Some say there was also another Pythagoras, a sculptor of Rhegium, who is thought to have been the first to aim at rhythm and symmetry; another a sculptor of Samos; another a bad orator; another a doctor who wrote on hernia and also compiled some things about Homer; and yet another who, so we are told by Dionysius, wrote a history of the Dorian race. Eratosthenes says, according to what we learn from Favorinus in the eighth book of his *Miscellaneous History*, that the last-named was the first to box scientifically, in the 48th Olympiad,<sup>a</sup> keeping his hair long and wearing a purple robe; and that when he was excluded with ridicule from the boys' contest, he went at once to the men's and won that; this is declared by Theaetetus's epigram<sup>b</sup>:

<sup>a</sup> 588-584 B.C.

<sup>b</sup> *Anth. Plan.* iii. 35.

## VIII. 48-50. PYTHAGORAS

Know'st one Pythagoras, long-haired Pythagoras,  
 The far-fam'd boxer of the Samians ?  
 I am Pythagoras : ask the Elians  
 What were my feats, thou'lt not believe the tale.

Favorinus says that our philosopher used definitions throughout the subject matter of mathematics ; their use was extended by Socrates and his disciples, and afterwards by Aristotle and the Stoics.

Further, we are told that he was the first to call the heaven the universe and the earth spherical,<sup>a</sup> though Theophrastus says it was Parmenides, and Zeno that it was Hesiod. It is said that Cylon was a rival of Pythagoras, as Antilochus <sup>b</sup> was of Socrates.

Pythagoras the athlete was also the subject of another epigram as follows <sup>c</sup> :

Gone to box with other lads  
 Is the lad Pythagoras,  
 Gone to the games Olympian  
 Crates' son the Samian.

The philosopher also wrote the following letter :

*Pythagoras to Anaximenes.*

“ Even you, O most excellent of men, were you no better born and famed than Pythagoras, would have risen and departed from Miletus. But now your ancestral glory has detained you as it had detained me were I Anaximenes's peer. But if you, the best men, abandon your cities, then will their good order perish, and the peril from the Medes will increase. For always to scan the heavens is not well, but more seemly is it to be provident for one's  
 12, 47, ix. 23, 34), it seems likely that he is our author's authority here : so probably a different book of Favorinus is cited.

<sup>b</sup> Apelt suggests Antiphon, comparing Xen. *Mem.* i. 6.

<sup>c</sup> *Anth. Plan.* iii. 16.

## VIII. 50-52. PYTHAGORAS—EMPEDOCLES

mother country. For I too am not altogether in my discourses but am found no less in the wars which the Italians wage with one another.”

Having now finished our account of Pythagoras, we have next to speak of the noteworthy Pythagoreans; after them will come the philosophers whom some denominate “sporadic” [*i.e.* belonging to no particular school]; and then, in the next place, we will append the succession of all those worthy of notice as far as Epicurus, in the way that we promised. We have already treated of Theano and Telauges: so now we have first to speak of Empedocles, for some say he was a pupil of Pythagoras.