

BELLARIA XLVIII



Monument commemorating Lucian of Samosata from Nordkirchen, Germany

LUCIAN 4

DIALOGUES OF THE GODS

Ixion married Dia, but did not want to pay for the bridal gifts which he had promised her father for her hand in marriage. So he slaughtered her father by luring him into a burning pit. For reasons best known to himself, Zeus forgave him and even invited him to join the gods' feasts on Olympus.



Zeus (Roman copy of a Bryaxis original, Vatican) and Hera (Farnese collection)

HERA AND ZEUS

Hera

Zeus! This Ixion, what do you make of him?

Τὸν Ἰξίονα τοῦτον, ὦ Ζεῦ, ποῖόν τινα τὸν τρόπον ἠγῆ;

Zeus

Very good bloke, Hera, and a good drinking man. He wouldn't be here with us if he weren't.

Ἄνθρωπον εἶναι χρηστόν, ὦ Ἥρα, καὶ συμποτικόν· οὐ γὰρ ἂν συνῆν ἡμῖν ἀνάξιος τοῦ συμποσίου ὦν.

Hera

He's not worth it! He's an absolute outrage! Get rid of him!

Ἄλλὰ ἀνάξιος ἐστίν, ὑβριστῆς γε ὦν· ὥστε μηκέτι συνέστω.

Zeus

So what's with this outrage? I really must know about this.

Τί δαὶ ὑβρισε; χρή γάρ, οἶμαι, κάμῃ εἰδέναί.

Hera

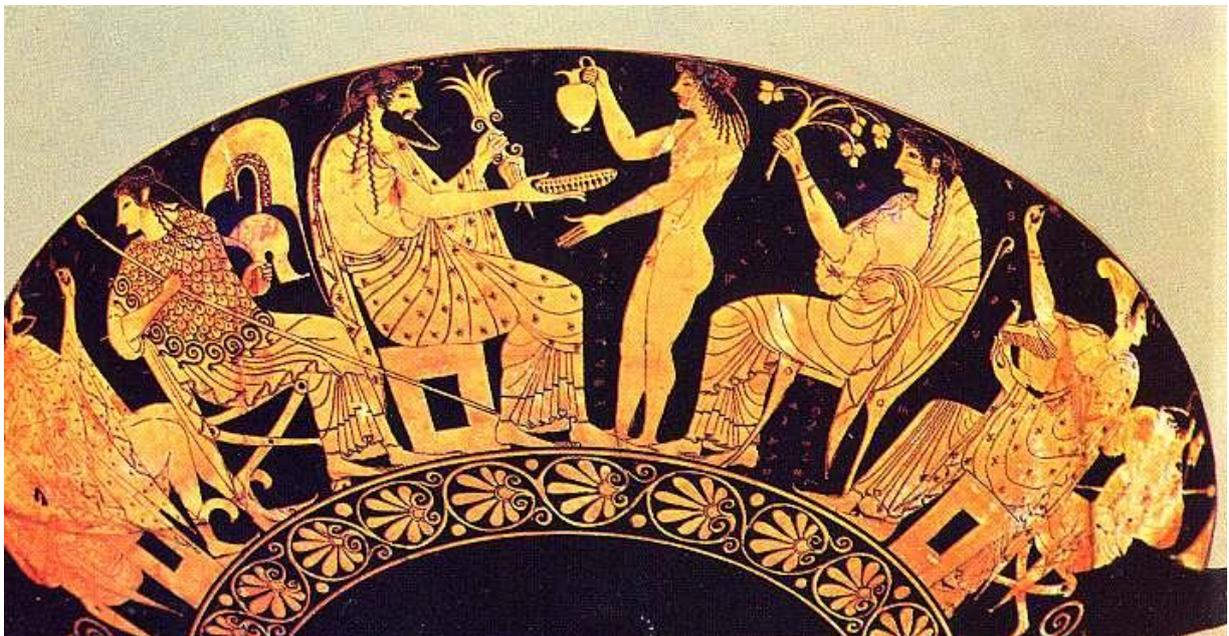
You certainly must; but I feel ashamed to tell you, just how far he's gone.

Τί γὰρ ἄλλο; καίτοι αἰσχύνομαι εἰπεῖν αὐτό· τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν ὃ ἐτόλμησεν.

Zeus

So all the more reason to tell me about it, the more shamefully he has treated you. Surely he hasn't been trying his luck with anyone, has he? I guess at some sort of disgusting behaviour, which you would hesitate to talk about.

Καὶ μὴν διὰ τοῦτο καὶ μᾶλλον εἴποις ἂν, ὅσῳ καὶ αἰσχροῖς ἐπεχείρησε. μῶν δ' οὖν ἐπεῖρα τινά; συνήμι γὰρ ὅποῖόν τι τὸ αἰσχρόν, ὅπερ ἂν σὺ ὀκνήσεις εἰπεῖν.



Ganymede serving drinks

Hera

And to me, no one else! And for a long time. At first, I had no idea what was going on, when he kept on looking at me. And then he'd groan and shed a secret tear; and if I drank and handed my cup to Ganymede, he would demand it, drink deep into it, then kiss it and lift it up to his eyes and then look at me again.

I immediately recognised the signs of infatuation. For a long time I was too ashamed to say anything to you and thought this madness would pass. But when he dared to address me with a speech, I dismissed him weeping and grovelling, blocking my ears, so as not to hear his outrageous supplications, and came to tell you. It is for you yourself to decide how you'll get after him.

Αὐτὴν ἐμέ, οὐκ ἄλλην τινά, ὦ Ζεῦ, πολὺν ἤδη χρόνον. καὶ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἠγνόουν τὸ πρᾶγμα, διότι ἀτενὲς ἀφεώρα εἰς ἐμέ· ὁ δὲ καὶ ἔστενε καὶ ὑπεδάκρυε, καὶ εἴ ποτε πιούσα παραδοίην τῷ Γανυμήδει τὸ ἔκπωμα, ὁ δὲ ἦτει ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκείνῳ πιεῖν καὶ λαβὼν ἐφίλει μεταξὺ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς προσῆγε καὶ αὔθις ἀφεώρα ἐς ἐμέ·

ταῦτα δὲ ἤδη συνίην ἐρωτικὰ ὄντα. καὶ ἐπὶ πολὺ μὲν ῥηδούμην λέγειν πρὸς σὲ καὶ ὤμην παύσεσθαι τῆς μανίας τὸν ἄνθρωπον· ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ λόγους ἐτόλμησέ μοι προσενεγκεῖν, ἐγὼ μὲν ἀφεῖσα αὐτὸν ἔτι δακρύοντα καὶ προκυλινδούμενον, ἐπιφραξαμένη τὰ ὦτα, ὡς μηδὲ ἀκούσαιμι αὐτοῦ ὑβριστικὰ ἱκετεύοντος, ἀπῆλθον σοὶ φράσουσα· σὺ δὲ αὐτὸς ὄρα, ὅπως μέτει τὸν ἄνδρα.



A Gathering of the Gods in the Clouds by Cornelius van Poelenburgh, ca. 1630

Zeus

Well done, the bastard! And at me! Myself! And with my own wife Hera! He's been drinking a bit too much nectar. Well, it's our fault. We're too kind to these mortals, making them our drinking chums. But you can't blame them, if they drink the same as we do, behold the beauties of the heaven which they'd never see on earth, and if overwhelmed with desire they long to enjoy all these things. Yes, Love's a tough master and rules not only over mortals either, but even from time to time over us gods too.

Εὖ γε ὁ κατάρατος· ἐπ' ἐμὲ αὐτὸν καὶ μέχρι τῶν Ἑρας γάμων; τοσοῦτον ἐμεθύσθη τοῦ νέκταρος; ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς τούτων αἴτιοι καὶ πέρα τοῦ μετρίου φιλόανθρωποι, οἳ γε καὶ συμπότας αὐτοὺς ἐποίησάμεθα. συγγνωστοὶ οὖν, εἰ πιόντες ὅμοια ἡμῖν καὶ ἰδόντες οὐράνια κάλλη καὶ οἷα οὐ ποτε εἶδον ἐπὶ γῆς, ἐπεθύμησαν ἀπολαῦσαι αὐτῶν ἔρωτι ἀλόντες· ὁ δ' ἔρωσ βίαιόν τί ἐστι καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπων μόνον ἄρχει, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐνίοτε.

Hera

This man in unquestionably your master and takes you and leads you by the nose, as they say, dragging you after him, and you follow him wherever he leads you and assumes whatever shape he tells you, and you are entirely the slave and plaything of love. And now I know that you are you are going to forgive Ixion, because you have committed adultery with his wife, the mother of Pirithous.

Σοῦ μὲν καὶ πάνυ οὗτός γε δεσπότης ἐστὶ καὶ ἄγει σε καὶ φέρει τῆς ῥίνος, φασίν, ἔλκων, καὶ σὺ ἔπη αὐτῷ ἔνθα ἂν ἠγῆταί σοι, καὶ ἀλλάττη ῥαδίως ἐς ὃ τι ἂν κελεύσῃ, καὶ ὅλως κτῆμα καὶ παιδιὰ τοῦ ἔρωτος σύ γε· καὶ νῦν τῷ Ἰξίονι οἶδα καθότι συγγνώμην ἀπονέμεις ἄτε καὶ αὐτὸς μοιχεύσας ποτὲ αὐτοῦ τὴν γυναῖκα, ἣ σοι τὸν Πειρίθου ἐτεκεν.

Zeus

Oh yes, you still remember it all, those *jeu d'esprits* of mine down on earth. But enough: you know my decision about Ixion? I'll never punish him, nor dismiss him from the drinking-party. That's just low class. No; as he is so fond of you, and, as you say, weeps and endures the unendurable—

Ἔτι γὰρ σὺ μέμνησαι ἐκείνων, εἴ τι ἐγὼ ἔπαιξα εἰς γῆν κατελθών; ἀτὰρ οἶσθα ὃ μοι δοκεῖ περὶ τοῦ Ἰξίονος; κολάζειν μὲν μηδαμῶς αὐτὸν μηδὲ ἀπωθεῖν τοῦ συμποσίου· σκαιὸν γάρ· ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐρᾷ καὶ ὡς φῆς δακρύει καὶ ἀφόρητα πάσχει—

Hera

What? Zeus?! I'm afraid you too are going to say something outrageous...

Τί, ὦ Ζεῦ; δέδια γάρ, μή τι ὑβριστικὸν καὶ σὺ εἴπῃς ...

Zeus

Not in the slightest. But let us fashion a cloud-phantom resembling you, and when the party has broken up after dinner and he sleeps sound, as is very likely, under the influence of love, let us take it and lay it beside him. That will ease his anguish, since he will think he has achieved his heart's desire.

Οὐδαμῶς· ἀλλ' εἰδωλὸν ἐκ νεφέλης πλασάμενοι αὐτῇ σοι ὅμοιον, ἐπειδὴν λυθῆ τὸ συμπόσιον κάκεῖνος ἀγρυπνῆ, ὡς τὸ εἶκός, ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔρωτος, παρακατακλίνωμεν αὐτῷ φέροντες· οὕτω γὰρ ἂν παύσαιτο ἀνιώμενος, οἰηθεὶς τετυχηκέναι τῆς ἐπιθυμίας.

Hera

Away with you! May he never fulfil in good time the desires that are beyond him!

Ἄπαγε, μὴ ὥρασιν ἴκοιτο τῶν ὑπὲρ αὐτὸν ἐπιθυμῶν.



Ixion (far l.), cloud-Hera, real Hera, Zeus watches from afar (Rubens)

Zeus

Yes, but be patient, Hera. What dreadful harm could come to you from a delusion, if Ixion has it off with a cloud?

Ὅμως ὑπόμεινον, ὦ Ἥρα. ἢ τί γὰρ ἂν καὶ πάθοις δεινὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ πλάσματος, εἰ νεφέλη ὁ Ἰξίων συνέσται;

Hera

But a cloud is what I'll seem to be! And the shame will rebound on me because of the likeness!

Ἄλλὰ ἢ νεφέλη ἐγὼ εἶναι δόξω, καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν ἐπ' ἐμὲ ἦξει διὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα.

Zeus

You're talking nonsense. The cloud could not be Hera, nor Hera the cloud. Ixion will be deceived. That's all.

Οὐδὲν τοῦτο φήεις· οὔτε γὰρ ἢ νεφέλη ποτὲ Ἥρα γένοιτο' ἂν οὔτε σὺ νεφέλη· ὁ δ' Ἰξίων μόνον ἐξαπατηθήσεται.

Hera

Yes, but these humans are all so vulgar. He'll probably go back down to earth and tell the story to everyone that he has slept with Hera and shares the bed of Zeus, and will probably say that I'm in love with him, and they'll believe it, not knowing he's been shagging a cloud.

Ἄλλα οἱ πάντες ἄνθρωποι ἀπειρόκαλοί εἰσιν· αὐχῆσει κατελθὼν ἴσως καὶ διηγήσεται ἅπασι λέγων συγγεγενῆσθαι τῇ Ἥρᾳ καὶ σύλλεκτρος εἶναι τῷ Δίῳ, καὶ που τάχα ἔρᾳν με φήσειεν αὐτοῦ, οἱ δὲ πιστεύουσιν οὐκ εἰδότες ὡς νεφέλη συνῆν.

Zeus

So, if he says any such thing, he shall soon find himself tumbling down into Hades, tied miserably to a wheel and spinning round and round on it for ever, an endless suffering he'll have, paying the penalty not for falling in love—no great harm there—but for boasting about it.

Οὐκοῦν, ἦν τι τοιοῦτον εἶπῆ, ἐς τὸν ἄδην ἐμπεσὼν τροχῷ ἄθλιος προσδεθείς συμπεριενεχθήσεται μετ' αὐτοῦ αἰεὶ καὶ πόνον ἄπαιστον ἔξει δίκην διδοὺς οὐ τοῦ ἔρωτος—οὐ γὰρ δεινὸν τοῦτό γε—ἀλλὰ τῆς μεγαλαυχίας.

Which, of course, was what happened.



Ixion (centre) joins Sisyphus (left) and Tantalus (right) (Roman sarcophagus, c. AD 160, Vatican)



Jules-Élie Delaunay (1828-1891)