

## Chapter 10

### Empedokles

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#### 1. Life and writings

Apollodoros knew that Empedokles visited Thurioi just after the colony was founded in 445/4 BCE. He adopted this date for the *akme* of Empedokles, which would mean that he was born in about 485 BCE. Modern opinion has generally favored a date about ten years earlier, but there is no very good reason to think that Apollodoros was far out (31 A 1). According to the most natural interpretation of what Aristotle says in the first book of the *Metaphysics* (A 6, 984 a 11), Anaxagoras was older than Empedokles, but published his book later. We shall see in due course that 500 BCE is a likely date for the birth of Anaxagoras. So, in view of the approximative character of Apollodoros' method, 490-485 BCE is a reasonable estimate for the date of Empedokles' birth; and (since Aristotle also said that he died at the age of sixty) this gives us 430-425 BCE for his death. (Both events may have been two or three years earlier.)<sup>i</sup>

Empedokles was a very gifted and romantically imaginative writer; and he had a highly romantic (not to say melodramatic) image of himself. He attracted a lot of notice both in his life and in his writings. So we have a wealth of stories about him; and a considerable body of quotations from his poetry. The quotations are very valuable; but most of the stories are not worth much as biography.<sup>ii</sup>

He was a well-born and influential citizen of Akragas in Sicily. While he was still a boy, Akragas got rid of its tyrant and became a democracy. Empedokles himself was a champion of the democracy. His visit to Thurioi may have been motivated by his political interest in this “Panhellenic” experiment.<sup>iii</sup> Since he was an aristocrat by birth, it is not surprising that his democratic sympathies made some political enemies for him at home; and he probably died in exile in mainland Greece. (There are so many stories about his death, that we can’t be sure that this is the right one; but the famous story that he committed suicide by leaping into the fires of Mount Etna is certainly a myth.)

The report that he was a “Pythagorean” is definitely reliable (as far as his philosophical education is concerned).<sup>iv</sup> But when he read Parmenides, he ceased to be an *orthodox* Pythagorean. That he was a close student of Parmenides’ poem is quite clear; but the story that he was a “pupil” of Parmenides is very doubtful. If he was ever in Elea for an extended period, we should expect to find more signs of the influence of Zeno than I can detect in the remains.<sup>v</sup> He certainly met Xenophanes; and he read his poems.

We should also accept the report that Empedokles was a trained and practising physician. Both as an adherent of the quiet life, and as a doctor he would have disapproved of luxurious living; and in spite of his democratic sympathies and his great reputation among his fellow-citizens, I think we can accept the story that he condemned their way of life (A 1, 63).<sup>vi</sup> He was homosexually attached to a certain Pausanias, who was also a physician. (The philosophical poem was *addressed* to Pausanias — A 1, 60-1; B 1.)

He was an outstanding public orator. In a lost dialogue Aristotle actually said that Empedokles “discovered [or invented] Rhetoric” (Fragment 65 — A 1, 57; A 19). This was probably what *Gorgias* claimed (since Empedokles was *his* teacher, and he wanted to distinguish himself from the Sicilian school of Corax and Teisias who were the actual authors of the first rhetorical textbooks). There could hardly be a better qualified witness.<sup>vii</sup> But Empedokles did not *write* about rhetoric.

It is certain that he wrote poetry on some other topics (apart from philosophy and religion). The Suda says that he wrote “a medical work in prose, and many other things” (A 2).<sup>viii</sup> But all of his philosophical-religious work was in one (or perhaps two) long poem(s).<sup>ix</sup> Parts of this poem — or of the one called “Purifications” if it was separate — were performed by a rhapsode at Olympia (A 12).<sup>x</sup> (I shall continue to treat the philosophical poem as a single unit, because even if there were *two* of them, they were conceived as aspects of one view.)

## **2. Being and Coming to Be**

The poem of Empedokles should be seen as a determined effort to rescue Parmenides’ Way of Seeming, by establishing a secure bridge between it and the Way of Truth.<sup>xi</sup> Empedokles knew the poems of Xenophanes; and he was influenced by them. But he did not accept the sceptical view that “opinion is wrought over all things” (or “allotted to all” democratically). There were human individuals who enjoyed privileged access to the truth; Pythagoras had been one of these, and he (Empedokles) was another.

There is just One Being in Empedokles’ vision, because the total motion of Coming to Be goes in a circle that is governed by “necessity.” But the truth that “there is a Many” is more important than this unity. Reading Parmenides, Empedokles grasped the possibility of “predicational monism.” There can be *many* real things, as long as each remains stably what it is, and does not change. Empedokles postulates precisely *six* real beings: the four “roots” — Earth, Water, Air and Fire; and the two divine powers Love and Strife. Of these six, only Love and Strife are “absolute” immortals. For these two powers exist at all times separately in their pure form. Or, to be more precise, some *part* of the extended substantial being of each of these two powers exists separately at all times; in part, they are locked in conflict with one another over the existing mixtures of the roots — and in their conflict, they are both involved in the mixtures. The immortal “roots” for their part are always in mortal mixtures, except for the transient moment when Strife is in perfect

control of them. This moment of perfect separation is the turning-point toward which our present world is moving; when it is reached, the tide will turn at once, and Love will begin to advance from the state of complete isolation towards its time of perfect control. And when that time comes, it will be long-lasting, not just momentary; also none of the “roots” will be visible.<sup>xii</sup>

When Love is in perfect control, all of the “roots” are completely lost to view in a perfectly balanced Sphere. At that stage, only Strife is separate, being outside the wholly organic Sphere, which is protected by a skin of pure Love. I shall suggest that internally the Sphere is a perfectly harmonious community of loving members (the *daimones*) rather than a simply homogeneous One. This cannot be shown decisively from our surviving evidence. All that is certain is that at this stage the “roots” are completely *hidden*. In the Sphere everything is at rest. Only Strife, outside the surface of the Sphere, is furiously in motion (cycling round and round the protective skin of pure Love).

We know from Aristotle’s report<sup>xiii</sup> that Empedokles allotted “equal times” to the dominance of Love and Strife. But it is not clear just what this means (and every possible view has been maintained). The simplest interpretation, however, is that the “dominance of Love” is equivalent to *Rest*, and the “dominance of Strife” to *Motion*. So the hypothesis adopted here is that the time-period of the Sphere (the dominance of Love) is exactly equal to the total period of the conflict that leads up to it, together with the conflict that ensued when it was ruptured. Strife is the cause of Motion; Love is *always* trying to bring things to Rest — but it is only *dominant* when the Sphere is actually at rest. So although there are two periods of conflict — one when Strife is winning, and one when it is losing — Strife is in principle “dominant” whenever there is a struggle, because some motion of the “roots” is occurring, and there is some degree of separation in which one or more of them is recognizable.<sup>xiv</sup>

If this interpretation is correct then Strife is actually completely separate and pure, for half of every cycle of true Parmenidean Being. In the other half it is mingled in the Whole, as it works to keep different elements in the Whole apart from each other. Interpretation is difficult because

(according to our hypothesis) the world that we now live in belongs to a late stage in the *rising* “dominance of Strife” — the period after the “oracle of Necessity” has been fulfilled, and the “dominance of Love” has come to an end. Strife ruptured the Sphere long ago, and the *daimones* have gone into the “exile” of sexually separated existence. Most of them have betrayed their loving community, and they assist Strife by assuming separate embodiments and then shedding one another’s blood. As the body of the Sphere becomes increasingly involved in motion, the “roots” separate into recognizable *masses*; and Mother Earth, at the center, becomes the stable home base of Love. This is the state of things that we have reached at present. But the day will come when even the Earth will tremble; and Love alone will then be at rest, isolated at the focal point of a cosmic whirl in which all the “roots” are separate and inorganic. (How long will that “day” last? Whatever Empedokles thought or said, his answer could only be a guess. So we might argue that we are entitled to *our opinion* about what he *ought* to have said. The fact that no one tells us what he said, is an argument that he said nothing, and that the absolute separation was only momentary.)

It is reasonable to assume that most of the poem was concerned with the present motion of the world from One to Many — since this moving world is all that *we* can directly know; and it is certain that the ancient students of the poem were mainly interested in this part of the “cosmic cycle.” For this reason, it must remain a contestable hypothesis that the cycle as here described was what Empedocles believed in. It is certain, however, that Empedocles believed in a two-way process from “one” to “many” and from “many” to “one.” The world of becoming goes opposite ways in different phases of the cycle; and our world is moving towards the “many.”<sup>xv</sup> That one half of the cosmic cycle is a time of stillness that has no story at all, is as good a guess as any. Aristotle — if that is what *he* meant! — was already pointing out that it was no more than a guess for Empedokles himself.

### **3. Our World**

The world of Strife began when the Oracle of Necessity was fulfilled and the Sphere was ruptured. The Sphere *shook*, and motion began (B 30, B 31).<sup>xvi</sup> The *daimones* were forced out into spherical bodies of their own — the “whole natures.” The inorganic matter of the four “roots” is squeezed out of the great Sphere in small nodules “like pips out of fruit.”<sup>xvii</sup> In the Sphere the “roots” are mixed as invisibly as the successive washes of color by which Greek painters achieved the effect of mixing their pigments (B 23). But Strife separates the “roots” by *squeezing* the Sphere. The first root to be separated was “the Titan, Aether”; and the Sun was formed early (B 38);<sup>xviii</sup> but the Sun belongs to the inner (slightly lower) level which our ordinary fire shares with air.

Love continues to be a spherical “community”; but it is smaller, surrounded by the inorganic matter that has been squeezed out. The “whole natures” shaken loose from it are little communities of at least two *daimones*. But as Love retreats, the embodied community gradually becomes a disembodied “God,” because all of the *daimones* are separated from it, and the Love driven out of the sundered living natures returns to the center. There is a natural tendency of “like” to go to “like” (which is one source of Strife’s power). This not only results in the progressive separation of the “roots” into moving cosmic masses; it causes the “fall” of the *daimones*, because they begin to fight, and to shed blood. Life takes on many sexually sundered forms and the fallen *daimones* must wander through them all. When they find their way back to their true allegiance, they must surrender their individuality, and return to an impersonal union with Love. (In the fragments recently discovered at Strasburg, Empedokles speaks of the four elements as “we”; so it is only disembodied Love that returns to the center.)<sup>xix</sup>

The first physical victory of Strife is the separation of the Aether — the fiery “root” — because motion is so essential to Fire.<sup>xx</sup> The next to separate is Air. The whole Sphere has now begun to rotate. At first — in the “Titanic” period — it was spinning more slowly than it does now (A 75). Fire and Air form the “hemispheres” of Day and Night, that we encountered in Parmenides’ poem.<sup>xxi</sup> This divided sphere is inside (i.e. below) the sphere of the aether proper (A 49).<sup>xxii</sup>

Logically, the water sphere comes next. This separation is described as the squeezing of the water out of the (still Love-dominated and organic) Earth (A 49).<sup>xxiii</sup> The logical order of separation is confused by the fact that there is a continuing interaction between air and water. Love — which has the Earth still under her control, except for the parts that have become parched desert — is still active in these intermediate spheres. But “Earth” is the *last* “root” to be completely separated; and it is not finally separated yet. There is still some fire, air and water in it; and it *lives* through the power of Love.

The action of Love in our world has been gradually bent into the service of Strife. Love forms living things; and at first it formed “whole natures” (B 62).<sup>xxiv</sup> But nowadays it has to operate through the divided sexes. Every species multiplies (further dividing the original unity of life);<sup>xxv</sup> and they compete. They fight, destroy, and even devour one another. Animal life-forms typically have a fire-hardened skeleton, or carapace (B 73). Animal life involves a mixture in which fire is still present; but it is only a rearguard action on the part of Love — and in the tendency of living individuals toward self-preservation at the expense of other life we can recognize the essential “dominance” of Strife.<sup>xxvi</sup> We can also recognize the *metaphysical* power of Strife in the inclination of most life-forms towards the element that they are “like”; and that of Love in the fact that some forms seek the “opposite” element in order to harmonize their own being (A 72, A 73).<sup>xxvii</sup>

Our world-system is no longer a sphere; it has been crushed into an egg shape, with a hard shell (A 50). The hard shell is produced by the action of Fire — which is the natural agent of Strife.<sup>xxviii</sup> Empedokles followed Anaximenes in calling this shell “the crystal”; and like Anaximenes he thought that the fixed stars were fixed in it (A 54). Under the dominance of Strife it is naturally spinning fast — carried along, we may suppose, by the Aether.

The Earth is still an organism, and the Sea is sweated out of it (B 55). That is why the sea is salty. The fish, however, are able to get fresh, drinkable, water out of it.<sup>xxix</sup> In the earlier “Titanic” period there were great upheavals in the relation of Earth and Sea (A 66). The cosmic whirl forces the Earth into the center, and keeps squeezing it (A 67).<sup>xxx</sup> There is no clear evidence about the

shape of Empedokles' Earth; but it ought to be spherical (certainly) during the earlier stages in which Love controls it fully. Probably it has been flattened from the squeezing in our present phase. It is definitely not "infinite below" (B 39 — as Xenophanes suggested). Love is now down in the center of it, with its last reserves of trapped fire (B 35; A 69).

#### **4. Plants, Animals and Humans**

Originally the Earth gave birth to living things that were still in union with Love (being stably rooted in the Earth itself). The whole vegetable kingdom is a survival of this phase. On the surface of the Earth (before the Sea was squeezed out of it?) there were "whole natures" that did not need to reproduce independently. But now (in our later phase) all of the higher forms of life have become sexually sundered and independent. They have passed over into the control of Strife. They feed upon other life-forms, and are not sustained directly by Mother Earth. Empedokles seems to conceive of the original *betrayal* of Love by the *daimones*, as the arising of the tragically erroneous belief that the Gods require blood-sacrifices (cf. B 128, B 139); but we must remember that a Greek sacrifice was a communal meal.

Also, as a result of the sexual division of the "whole natures," individuals can multiply indefinitely, compete, and fight to the death. The generation of independent life is a rearguard action by Love, because Fire is trying to escape from the Earth, and is seeking its Strife-place at the circumference. Earth and Water are also involved in organic life from the first; but Air enters only into the self-moving animals that breathe (A 70).<sup>xxx</sup>

All organic tissues are proportionate mixtures of the four elements (A 78).<sup>xxxii</sup> The Love that combines them is called *Harmonia* (which may be the name of Love as a serf in the world of of Strife, but certainly shows "Pythagorean" inspiration).

Empedokles was fascinated by the variety of animal forms; but even more by the processes of reproduction; he made observations on the development of the human foetus, and had a theory

about how newborn babies begin to breathe (A 74).<sup>xxxiii</sup> He compared the mechanics of breathing to the flow of water in a water-clock, and the operation of the eye to the working of a lantern (B 100, B 84).

Sleep is the result of the periodic dying down of the fire in the living body; and death marks the fire's extinction (A 85). Sensory consciousness arises through the blood. Here there is a balance of all of the elements; and "like recognizes like" (B 109).<sup>xxxiv</sup> That "we think with our blood" became a school-proverb about Empedokles. But this "thinking" is really sense-experience. Every living thing has "thought" in this sensory way (B 103). But "the blood round the heart" is the seat of our higher intellectual functions (B 105). Sensation (like mirror images and magnetic attraction) occurs through "pores" and "effluences"; through their appropriately different pores, the different sense-organs receive the "effluences" of different kinds that things emit.<sup>xxxv</sup> (Oil and water will not mix because their pores do not fit together — B 91.)<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Sensory recognition of like by like is the foundation of all human knowledge in Empedokles' view. But he is well aware that even perceptual experience is a complex affair of collating and comparing all kinds of evidence (B 3, 9-13);<sup>xxxvii</sup> and his concern with ethical salvation absolutely necessitated his having a theory of purely *intellectual* cognition. The most important kind of "thinking" is the knowing of Love and Strife. These are not physically perceptible things; and "knowing" them involves identification with them (B 17, 21-6).<sup>xxxviii</sup> Even at the perceptual level, the recognition of "likeness" involves attraction and clinging together. This is neatly illustrated by the explanation that Empedokles gave for the way a certain dog liked to sleep on a particular tile. He said that she liked it, because she was in some way "like" it. At the other end of the scale he agreed with Xenophanes that it takes a wise man to know one.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The world as we know it began when some of Love's *daimones* fell under the control of Strife (B 11, B 115).<sup>xl</sup> Ever since their fall into the dominion of Strife, the *daimones* have been cycling through different forms of embodiment,<sup>xli</sup> because the quantum of Love in them is a permanent element in the order of things. In this present world some of them have gained enough

spiritual understanding, to be ready for their return to union with Love. This “spiritual understanding” (or direct knowledge of Love) is quite different from the perceptual thinking that we do with our blood (and by which we know the four “roots”). Pythagoras and Empedokles himself are two of the *daimones* who are ready to return to the Love with which they have recognized their kinship (B 112, B 129).<sup>xlii</sup> To their disciples (or fellow-citizens) these Sages appear to *be* gods already; but in actual fact they are about to become part of the true God (Love) by surrendering their individuality.<sup>xliii</sup> They are vegetarians (for the *daimones* do not become plants in this part of the cycle; in our world it is Love embodied in Mother Earth who produces all plants);<sup>xliv</sup> and they have given up the heterosexual relations in which Love serves Strife by multiplying separate individuals.<sup>xlv</sup>

That Empedokles recognized two kinds of thoughtful knowledge (the empirical knowledge of the “roots,” and the purely intellectual knowledge of Love and Strife and of their cycle) is directly testified by Plutarch.<sup>xlvi</sup> But we can also see this in his theory of mental disorder. He distinguished two kinds of madness. There is one that arises from physical imbalance; and another that comes through “the purification of the soul” (A 98).<sup>xlvii</sup>

## **5. The Other Half of the Story and the Great Silence**

Our world will end as a perfectly clean and neat desert. Strife will have separated all of the “roots” and everything will be with its “like.” Everything will be moving. If Strife’s “lordship” lasts for any measurable time, then even the stable Earth has to spin. Only Love, sealed into the center of the cosmic whirl, will be still. This moment is referred to in fragment 35 (B 35: 3-4).<sup>xlviii</sup> When love is in this situation, and all life-force has returned into it, a reaction begins. If our understanding of the “equal times” is right, this happens at once. The Earth actually does no more than “shudder,” so to speak. (If the Earth was supposed to spin for a long period, we should surely find some mention of this in the fragments or reports?)

Aristotle complains that Empedokles does not explain the formation of the physical cosmos in Love's half of the cosmic struggle (A 42).<sup>xlix</sup> In some part, this problem solves itself; and in part we can see why it is insoluble. On the one hand, the cosmos is inherited; it has already been formed by the action of Strife. The four roots are all in what Aristotle will later call their "natural places"; and this ordering itself will suffice as the backdrop for the earliest phases of Love's organic activity.

On the other hand, Love is the principle of Rest, not of Motion. Yet in order to generate organic life Love must be able to seize on some part of the Aether (as well as on some Air and Water) from the first moment of its resurgence. So we have to conceive of Love as being invisibly but instantaneously present wherever it wants to be, and of Strife as automatically *expelling* from its domain, whatever Love takes over.<sup>1</sup> A cosmos that is somewhat like ours will be necessary so far as the reversed life-cycle resembles our own. But the difference is far more important, because Love does not *fight*. The Sun, and the separated hemispheres of Day and Night will be necessary; but much that happens will be a matter of "chance".<sup>li</sup> Empedokles was wise to avoid speculating too far about what is *necessary* to the life-cycle — which was the real focus of his interest.

The Earth does not really "spin." (Our "equal times" hypothesis is that it does no more than tremble momentarily.) Right away — as Love brings back the other elements into the Earth — it becomes fertile once more. But the recaptured Fire, Air and Water make it fertile in quite a new way. It will produce earth-rooted plants first — they were the last life-form to vanish in *our* world. Then it begins to bring forth free "limbs" — fragmentary organs that have to be released into independence so that they can combine into whole organisms (A 72).<sup>lii</sup> The initial chance combinations will be irrational; only when Strife is further conquered will the "limb" components be rational. The separate limbs come together haphazardly (just as they happen to meet); and the combinations that survive, are those that are viable in their environment. Many monstrosities will perish.<sup>liii</sup> It is out of this struggle for existence, that Love's world of plants and animals arises. Unlike the plants, animals and humans in our world, Love's completed organisms are "whole natures," not divided "sexual limbs." In the time of its own rise to dominance, Love has no need of sexual division for purposes of reproduction. Sexual division and indefinite multiplication, is a servitude to Strife that is forced upon Love, by its defeated situation in our world. The sexes are two

“limbs” of one organism; and (as Plato’s “Aristophanes” says about *our* situation) “The desire and pursuit of the Whole is called Love.”<sup>liv</sup> But for the sake of the maturation of the *daimones* (and the eventual formation of the Sphere, in which one supposes that there will be no irrational life) there has to be some process corresponding to the death and rebirth that happens in our world. For the finite *daimones* have to go through the phases of plant and animal embodiment. That is how Empedokles knows that he has been a bush, a fish and a bird; he does not have to “remember” these lives (B 117).<sup>lv</sup> His plant and animal existence is logically certain on the “way up,” though not equally so on the “way down.”<sup>lvi</sup>

We must think of the *daimones* as newborn with the arising of organic life in Love’s world. They are fully individuated when they become rational. It is certain that in their full maturity they do not reproduce sexually, so they must be “whole natures” like our distant predecessors in the present Strife-cycle. (It seems clear that there is no sexual reproduction in the time of Love’s advance at all — cf. B 20.)<sup>lvii</sup> When the *daimones* have all become *rational* “whole natures,” Love is nearing its goal. All life forms a community of perfect friendship. It is not clear whether Empedokles thought of this community as existing in the Sphere itself, or whether it is directly prior to the Sphere. But there is a community of blessed beings in Empedokles’ vision, who are no longer subject to death — or even to the necessary processes of growth and sustenance (B 128, B 130).

The Sphere, when it arrives, is a perfect bodily unity. It is the “one-limbed Being” of Parmenides. Empedokles describes it graphically (while insisting that we can only know it intellectually) in several fragments (B 27-29, B 133). It knows itself all over, and all at once — like the God of Xenophanes (B 134). Because the *daimones* reappear when the Sphere is shattered by motion, I think we should assume that the known body of this God (inside his/its all-knowing surface of pure Love) is actually a community of members (which Empedokles calls “limbs” when they are forced to move). This is the difference between the “purified” condition of Love at the center of the Strife-world, and its perfectly embodied condition at the circumference of its own Sphere. In the language of Plato’s *Timaeus* — suggested surely by his meditation on Empedokles? — “Reason has persuaded Necessity” (*Timaeus* ).<sup>lviii</sup> But we have to concede that the life (and

the self-knowledge) of the Sphere is a mystery. We can only be certain that Strife is then the one remaining being that is in motion — whirling furiously outside the surface of the stillness. The time of the Sphere — however long it lasts — is a great silence.<sup>lix</sup> (The reader must never forget that this is only one of many proposed reconstructions of the great philosophical romance composed by Empedokles. But even if we had every word of the poem(s) a great effort of free imagination would be needed.)

## Notes

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- i. There has been controversy about *hysteros* — literally “behind” — here taken to mean simply “later.” But compare the translation of A 6 offered by Inwood, 1992, 155 (all of the extant remains are in Inwood). For Empedokles’ death see 31 A 1 (74).
  - ii. K. Freeman (1949, ch. 31) is sceptical about *everything* in the biographical record. But she goes too far.
  - iii. At Thurioi in its early days, he would certainly have met Protagoras.
  - iv. The Pythagorean tradition (31 A 8, Eusebios, A 2, Suda) said that Empedokles was taught by Pythagoras’ son Telauges. This is plausible since Pythagoras himself would have been dead before 475 BCE; also some former close associate of the Master could readily have been persuaded to live with a would-be Pythagorean community in Akragas.
  - v. It is reported, however, that Zeno wrote an “Exposition of Empedokles” (31 A 5). So it is possible that Empedokles was in Elea (and Zeno was in quite a different mood). But see Chapter 9, note 4.
  - vi. He is supposed to have said that “the citizens of Akragas live luxuriously, as though they are about to die tomorrow, but build their houses as though they will live forever.” (On the other hand, he is also reported to have dressed sumptuously — especially at Olympia — B 31 A 1 (70) A2. Thought and action were perhaps not always consistent, but these stories are more

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obviously likely to have been invented in the light of the personal boasting in the poem.)

- vii. But see also the testimony of Timon in 31 A 1, 67. This is powerful evidence for Empedokles' activity in the political arena (even if we must agree with K. Freeman [1949, 174-5] that he is unlikely to have begun by invoking the death-penalty against two of his opponents!).
  
- viii. Compare A 3 (Suda) and B 157 for one of the "other things."
  
- ix. My own assumption is that there was *one* poem, called by Empedokles himself *Purifications*. We hear of two poems — or of the one poem under two titles. It does not matter much to us whether there really were two, because everything that we have fits together into a consistent body of doctrine; and — partly for that very reason — we cannot successfully sort what we do have into two separate categories. (Like B. Inwood, I follow C. Osborne, 1987. But I have to concede that her arguments are far from decisive.)
  
- x. This comes from Athenaios who cites Dikaearchos; cf. A 1, 63. The grandfather of Empedokles (another Empedokles) had won the Olympic horse-race many years earlier. So there was a family tradition of competition in the Games. Eusebios (A 9) says that "Empedokles and Parmenides were well known" in 456 BCE. So perhaps it was in 456 BCE that the poem was declaimed at Olympia. We can imagine Empedokles going from Olympia to Athens, and meeting Anaxagoras. But all that can be cited in support of this historical fantasy, is Aristotle's surprising familiarity with their respective ages and dates of publication. (The rhapsodic performance at the Games would have been Aristotle's Empedoklean reference point for publication. So the publication of Anaxagoras' book would have been some years after that.)

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- xi. I have usually spoken — and shall later speak — of the “Way of Truth” and the “Way of *Opinion*” in Parmenides’ poem. But this is not appropriate for the way that Empedokles would view it; and since neither subtitle has any authority in Parmenides’ text, we can vary our mode of reference as we see fit. Empedokles makes an obvious bow to Parmenides when he says (B 9, 5): “they [mortals] do <not> name them [the roots] as is right, but I myself conform to custom.”
- xii. On the crucial question of “equal times” in the cosmic cycle of Empedokles, I am following the view proposed by D. O’Brien (1969). But it may be that the perfect dominance of Strife was an “equal period” — and that there were four equal periods, not two. The opinion of M.R. Wright (1981, 41-2) is that “Despite assertions to the contrary, the sum of the evidence available does incline to the conclusion that Empedokles envisaged a domination of the whole by Strife, following the destruction of a generation of *thneta*.” (Her following summary of the evidence does not leave *me* inclined that way. But the reader must take due note that this chapter takes sides quite decisively on a fundamental question that remains — and probably will always remain — in dispute.)
- xiii. *Physics* 8, 252a 31.
- xiv. This is the interpretation of D. O’Brien (1969). His Chapter 4 discusses all of the views that had been advanced at that date. See also A.A. Long (in A.P.D. Mourelatos, ed., 1974) for some later developments.
- xv. The justification of this assertion is in A 42. The “double tale” of Becoming is in B 17. This whole section of my discussion is in the main an interpretation of B 17 and B 26. But some

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details will be further documented in what follows.

- xvi. The Sphere has no *physical* “limbs” (B 134); but in my interpretation, the “limbs” that “were shaken one after another” are the *daimones* in the great spherical community. (The “limb” language comes from Parmenides’ poem — where it refers to *modes of awareness*.)
- xvii. The best evidence for the initial “round shapes” of the *daimones* is probably the parody by “Aristophanes” in Plato’s *Symposium* (189e). The “fall and wandering” of the *daimones* begins later, when they shed one another’s blood. After that life takes on many sexually divided forms, and the fallen *daimones* pass into bodies of many kinds. For the first emergence of inorganic matter as “pips” see Aristotle, *De Caelo* 305b 1-5 — and M.R. Wright, 1981, 36-7. (The “pips” squeezed out by Strife are inorganic matter; so as the dominance of Strife increases, there is more and more inorganic material. This is the origin of the curious report in Aetios (A 4, 7) that the *kosmos* [i.e. *our* life-world] is only a small part of the Universe, and the rest of it is inert matter.)
- xviii. Compare also A 49a. The Sun is some kind of “reflection” thrown back to the Earth from the Aether (A 30, A 56, B 44 — but see note 22 below). At our stage of cosmic evolution, the Olympians have taken over from the Titans; so Fire as a “root” is called “Zeus” (B 6, 2). We can assume that for the “whole natures” the Sun was the Titan Hyperion, just as it is now the Olympian Apollo. (In B 27 we hear of the “swift limbs” of the Sun. This may be only a metaphor for its motion. But we should remember that *our* most important “limbs” are our sense-organs; and in Empedokles’ theory, the Sun is actually a “perceiver” of its own light and heat.)
- xix. [Ref. to be supplied.]

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xx. Among the “roots” Fire is a natural ally of Strife, because it moves “by nature”; Air and Water are naturally *movable*; only Earth is naturally stable (and presumably naturally *organic* also). So the Earth is Love’s natural refuge; but as Love loses the battle, Earth’s surface is gradually becoming a desert.

xxi. I am assuming that both Empedokles and Parmenides were taught the “Pythagorean” cosmology that is reflected for us in the “Way of Seeming.” Empedokles knew that Night is caused by the shadow of the Earth (B 48). But he wanted to maintain the “revelation” that the Goddess gave to Parmenides. So he assumed that the “blocking of the lights” — both Aether and Sun — actually revealed the true nature of the Air as “Night.”

According to A 30 [Pseudo-Plutarch] Air was the first “root” to be separated off, and the sphere of Fire was below it. But B 15 and A 49a are on my side of the question; probably the doxographer only knows that Day and Night (“Air”) are “equal hemispheres.” (His supposed priority of Air could have originated in some rhetorical flourish in Empedokles about the triumph of Night over Day. The absolute priority of the aether is not affected in any case.)

xxii. The Air-Night hemisphere blocks out the light of the Aether. But Empedokles understood that eclipses of the Sun were caused by the Moon (A 59; B 42). Apparently he regards the Sun itself as some kind of “burning-glass” which concentrates the Aether and overcomes the Night-Air. (Just how B 44 should be interpreted is not clear. But it clearly indicates that “Olympos” was an important “Pythagorean” symbol in the generation of Empedokles.)

xxiii. Similarly the stars are constituted by the Fire that is squeezed out of the Air-Night — 31 A 53. The Moon is *not* fiery; it is condensed Air and it shines by the reflected light of the Sun

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— 31 A 30, B 43, B 45.

- xxiv. Trees and plants generally are a surviving example of the “whole nature” — see A 70. This is because vegetation in *our* world is directly produced by the living Earth, and not through the incarnation of the *daimones*. (Unless we make this assumption, fratricidal cannibalism would become unavoidable, because we are bound to eat plant-life. But Empedokles clearly assumes that only *animal* sacrifice is tragically mistaken.)
- xxv. Birth is already “hateful” in Parmenides (28 B 12).
- xxvi. In the *Symposium*, Plato has some fun with the dominance of Strife. He lets Aristophanes suggest that soon we shall be split once more (and it will then take four of us to reproduce). There is no warrant for this in what remains to us from Empedokles himself (but “Aristophanes” understands better than M. Schofield — KRS, 305 n 1 — what the attitude of Empedokles was towards “the desirable form of limbs and voice” or “the part proper to men” — B 62, lines 7-8).
- xxvii. A 72 on “like to like” is from Aetios; A 73 on the “balance of opposites” is from Aristotle and Theophrastos. The theory of breathing (A 74) shows how Love is the generative force of *all* life.
- xxviii. Aristotle complains that although Empedokles speaks of four elements, he has really only two: Fire as agent, and the others as passive material (*Generation and Corruption* 330b 19 and *Metaphysics* A 985a 31 — compare B 62). But this is a Strife-dominated perspective; when they are under the control of Love none of the elements is *simply* active or passive.

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- xxix. Empedokles “demonstrated” this experimentally; but the fresh water he obtained actually came from dew-condensation out of the air, not from the sea in which his experiment-bowl was floating — see A 66 (Aelian).
- xxx. From Aristotle, *De Caelo* 295a 13-21. Empedokles said that the Earth was like the water in a whirling cup. Like the *clepsydra* and the lantern examples — B 84, B 100 — this is an empirical analogy. But this time it is a bad one, because a whirling cup is at the periphery not the center. Yet if we suppose that Empedokles was misunderstood, we must impugn the intelligence of Aristotle. (Empedokles may only have been thinking of the *squeezing* of the water.)
- xxxi. Compare “generations” three and four in A 72. Also B 62, A 73, A 74.
- xxxii. The formula for *bone* is preserved in the passage from Aetios.
- xxxiii. See further A 81, A 82, A 83, A 84. (From A 80 it appears that Empedokles connected menstruation with the Moon, but did not — as we might expect — acknowledge that every woman is an independent Moon. Here — as also in his speculations about the human gestation period — we can recognize the continuing influence of the Pythagoreans — see 31 B 69, A 75).
- xxxiv. For sensation and thought see B 105-8 and A 86.

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xxxv. See A 86, A 87, A 88, A 89, A 90, A 92; B 89. There has been a controversy about whether these “pores” must be *empty* in order to receive the “effluences.” This would cause a difficulty because Empedokles agrees with Parmenides that a *void* is conceptually impossible. But it seems to me to be a pseudo-problem. It is obvious that the effluences of sight and sound (for example) come to us somehow through the *air*; so our “pores” can admit them, even though they may already be full of either Air or Fire. (The problem of Zeno — and later Melissos — about how motion can happen at all, when every place is “full,” does not seem to have troubled Empedokles. His poem was written (I suggest) before the book of Zeno was published; and certainly before Melissos was heard of. He is only concerned about how sense-perceptions — and mirror-images — can be “inside” a “solid” body.)

xxxvi. In the Sphere we must suppose that Love has made everything as perfectly porous as the atmospheric Air is in our world.

xxxvii. M. Schofield suggests, very plausibly, that this passage was a criticism aimed at Herakleitos [22 B 101a] — see KRS, 285 n 101.

xxxviii. This passage says explicitly that Love is “seen by *nous* not eyes.” That this applies to *both* of the divine powers is clearly implied by the conclusion of B 21. My interpretation that the two powers are actually *known* by *identification* with them, implies that Strife is only perceptible to the philosophic mind in its *effects*. But it is also *directly* known to us when we are quite unphilosophically *possessed* by it. So the rational — or “saved” — mind can “know” it by *remembering* it.

xxxix. See A 20a (for the dog); and A 20 and A 1, 20 (for the wise man). It is not clear who remarked on the recognition of the wise man first, and it does not matter. Both Xenophanes

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and Empedokles liked the saying; and it seems safe to infer that they liked one another.

- xl. The question whether they fall by choice, or by Necessity (Chance) is foolish. M.R. Wright is correct in regarding the *daimones* as tragically compelled, but personally responsible (1981, 67-68). All of them *must* fall before Love can be reduced to its lowest ebb; and by that time all of them must also have died, so that Love can return to itself (through the surrender of their “individuality” if my interpretation is right). None can return to Love, until they have experienced their “fall” as a sinful guilt for which they are “responsible.” That is what makes the surrender of individuality necessary.
  
- xli. See especially the newly discovered testimony of Diogenes of Oenanda (B. Inwood, 1982, 199-200 — after 31 A 98).
  
- xlii. Compare also B 4, B 114, B 132, B 146. The curious advice to Pausanias that he should keep his own thoughts to himself (B 5) seems to indicate that Empedokles thought that only an inspired prophet could speak the truth about spiritual things for those who are not intellectuals. (This was probably the basis of “Pythagorean” secrecy.)
  
- xliii. When Empedokles claims that his fellow-citizens recognize him as a God — B 112 — he may be trading on the “Orphic” belief that one can join the company of the Gods (which is attested for Thurioi about forty years later — see M.L. West, 1983, 22-23). If my reconstruction is right, this is only the “civil theology” of his view. *Philosophically* he expects to lose his individual identity in the One God. But possibly this interpretation is too sophisticated. Empedokles may have thought that Love is a community even when it is disembodied.

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- xliv. The prohibition of bay-leaves and beans in our diet (B 140, 141) perhaps indicates that Empedokles thought that these plants provide the route back to union with Love. Dare we suppose that this is what Telauges taught him about the Master's prohibition of beans? (How Empedokles knows that he has been a bush, we shall see in the other half of the story.)
- xlvi. For vegetarianism, see 31 B 136, B 137; for sex, see the context of B 115 (Hippolytos) and B 141 (Gellius). One would like to believe that the powers promised to Pausanias in B 111 were only allegories for the great spiritual transformation that takes place when one escapes from the dominion of Strife. As far as control of the winds is concerned this may be right — the “winds” being the passions. But it is hard to escape the conclusion that as far as human medicine was concerned, Empedokles had a very exaggerated conception of the possible control of mind over matter.
- xlvii. See the context for his citation of B 115 (Inwood, 1992, 78); compare B 110: 10, B 112: 4 and B 113.
- xlviii. For the need to purify the soul see also B 144, B 145.
- xlix. Anyone who examines the context of this fragment in Simplicios will see that I am obliged to disagree with his reading of the situation at this point (see B. Inwood, 1992, 106). But I have to admit that B 35 is very difficult to interpret. It describes very briefly the half of Strife's cycle in which Love regenerates the Sphere (or so I think).
- xlix. *On the Heaven* 301a 14-20.

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- i. Expulsion is an act of Strife; so we must not say that Love “expels” Strife. Love does not *move*. The instantaneous presence of Love wherever it *needs* to be, must not be counted as “motion.” It was far more natural and easy for a one-time believer in the Pythagorean “divine numbers” to think like this, than it is for scholars who have been brainwashed by Aristotle. (The “equal times” dogma does not apply, naturally or logically, to the alternate *triumphing* of Strife and Love, because they operate so differently. We cannot project — and I mean that Empedokles himself could not project — how long the “return of Love” would take as compared with the conquering advance of Strife.)
  - ii. The use that Empedokles makes of “chance” may seem to indicate that in his view, the two absolute “immortals” (Love and Strife) are not *intelligent* in their “pure” condition. In that case, I ought to have said that Love immediately is “where it is impelled to be, needs to be, or by the Oracle of Necessity ‘must’ be,” instead of saying that (in the reversing of the cycle) it can be where it “wants” to be. If this view is right then it is “embodied Love” that is intelligent; and Strife has intelligence insofar as it controls Love’s finite embodied forms. For Strife that is certainly correct; but there is no need for us to doubt the intelligence of disembodied Love, because what it can do is so rigorously limited by “Necessity” in any case. “Chance” only enters the picture, because Love has to release its finite embodiments into independent motion. “Chance” belongs to the order that Love creates, because *harmony* has to be spontaneous. But this spontaneity is one aspect of intelligence; so Love is *essentially* intelligent (I think).
  - iii. It is the first and second stage here, that belong to Love’s return. Compare also B 57 (and the first alternative in B 20); and finally B 35, 9-13 with the commentary of Simplicios (Inwood, 1992, 104-6). We must remember that a “limb” always has some *sensory* capacity.

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- liii. See B 59; B 35, 16-17; B 60 and 61. There are monstrous births in *our* present world through some defect of the seed, or through a fault in its motion — A 81, Aetios. These are quite different from the logically necessary monsters that are formed by spontaneous coalescence under Love's aegis.
- liv. *Symposium* 192e. In fragment 20 we read: "mortal limbs/ At one time coming together into one by love/ All the limbs which have found a body at the *akme* of flourishing life/ At another time again, divided by evil quarrels/ They [i.e., mortal limbs] wander each *in twain* about the fractures [i.e., the generations?] of life/ In the same way [this is true] for bushes and fish in their watery halls/ And for the beasts of the mountain, and for winged gulls."
- lv. 31 B 117. There is a problem about the nourishment of Love's own creations. The friends of Love cannot even eat plants, since they must not eat the Empedokles-bush; if Empedokles thought about this, he will have said that Mother Earth provided food for everything directly; and that the *daimones* had an inspired understanding of what they could eat, and what not. (But perhaps they did not eat at all.)
- lvi. If our hypothesis about beans and bay leaves is right, it happens then too — but it is not a logically *guaranteed* part of Empedokles' personal history — see note 44 above. (If Alkmaeon's book existed by this time, Empedokles will have read it. But because of his belief in divine inspiration, he may not have accepted the *logic* of it.)
- lvii. This fragment is cited completely in note 54 above.
- lviii. The excluded power of Strife is the "errant cause." Compare especially B 116 in context

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(Inwood, 1992, 133); and A 45.

- lix. The knowledge of Strife *inside* the Sphere (or even at the surface) would be a mysterious paradox — cf. B 109. But B 3 lines 10-12 offers a hint that Empedokles has thought about this. After all, he believes that he is quite free of Strife himself, though he is still in a position both to remember it, and to observe its consequences. Perhaps he supposed that the “saved” *daimones* could *remember* all of their experiences.