

EMPEDOCLES RECYCLED*

I. ONE OR MORE EMPEDOCLES

It is no longer generally believed that Empedocles was the divided character portrayed by nineteenth-century scholars, a man whose scientific and religious views were incompatible but untouched by each other. Yet it is still widely held that, however unitary his thought, nevertheless he still wrote more than one poem, and that his poems can be clearly divided between those which do, and those which do not, concern 'religious matters'.¹ Once this assumption can be shown to be shaky or actually false, the grounds for dividing the quotations of Empedocles into two poems by subject matter disappear; and without that division our interpretation of Empedocles stands in need of radical revision. This paper starts with the modest task of showing that Empedocles may have written only one philosophical poem and not two, and goes on to suggest some of the ways in which we have to rethink the whole story if he did. If all our material belongs to one poem we are bound to link the cycle of the daimones with that of the elements, and this has far-reaching consequences for our interpretation.

II. ONE OR MORE POEMS?

The evidence:

(i) *Titles, one or more?*

It is not clear who first invented the notion that Empedocles wrote two poems. It appears in all modern accounts of his thought, along with the claim that one of these

* Abbreviations used in the notes:

- DK: Diels–Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th edition.
 D.L.: Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*.
 KRS: G. S. Kirk, J. Raven, M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*. Cambridge, 1983.
 Bollack (1965–9): J. Bollack, *Empédocle*, vols. 1–3. Paris, 1965, 1969.
 Diels (1898): H. Diels, 'Über die Gedichte des Empedokles', *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie (SBB)* 1898, 396–415 = H. Diels, *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Burkert, 127–46.
 Guthrie (1965): W. K. C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 2. Cambridge, 1965.
 O'Brien (1969): D. O'Brien, *Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle*. Cambridge, 1969.
 O'Brien (1981): D. O'Brien, *Pour interpréter Empédocle*. Paris–Leiden, 1981.
 Osborne (1987): C. J. Osborne, *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy*. London, 1987.
 Solmsen (1975): F. Solmsen, 'Eternal and Temporary Beings in Empedocles' Physical Poem', *AGP* 57 (1975), 123–45.
 Sturz (1805): F. W. Sturz, *Empedocles Agrigentinus*. Leipzig, 1805.
 Van der Ben (1975): N. Van der Ben, *The Proem of Empedocles' Peri physios*. Amsterdam, 1975.
 Williams (1982): C. J. F. Williams, *Aristotle's De generatione et corruptione*. Oxford, 1982.
 Wright (1981): M. R. Wright, *Empedocles, the Extant Fragments*. Yale, 1981.

¹ Most obviously the poem 'On Nature' is regarded as 'scientific' and the 'Katharmoi' as 'religious' in content. Those who hold that Empedocles wrote other works would probably place the 'Hymn to Apollo' in the latter class and the medical treatise in the former. For the present purpose I shall ignore these minor works attributed to Empedocles and confine myself to the question of whether the major works 'On Nature' and 'Katharmoi' can be divided into religious and non-religious in any meaningful way. For the minor works, see Diogenes Laertius 8.57–8, 8.77 and DK 31A23 and 31B134. Empedocles does not appear among Diogenes Laertius' examples of philosophers who wrote only one work, nor among those who wrote more than one (D.L. 1.16) but since Diogenes believes that Empedocles wrote various minor works neither omission is of any significance for the question in hand.

poems concerned the physical world and the other was religious in content. Neither of these ‘facts’ appears in any ancient testimony.

It might be suggested that the ancient testimonia name two titles for the major works of Empedocles, *περὶ φύσεως* and *καθαρμοί*. How significant is this?

(1) These titles (if they are titles) are used by writers several centuries subsequent to Empedocles and tell us little about any titles in use in the fifth century or Empedocles’ ‘own titles’.

(2) Notwithstanding point (1), the usage of the ancient testimonia is significant in its own right in answering two questions: (i) did these later writers use the phrases as titles proper to a work or works by Empedocles? and (ii) did they understand them to refer to two separate poems?

The first question is not easily answered given that the ancient texts did not have any means of marking out proper titles from mere descriptions of the content of a book; the capital letters, italics or inverted commas which appear in our modern editions are recent devices which may be misleading. We have to infer from the context whether ‘about nature’ or ‘about medical matters’ plays a rôle comparable to a modern title³ or a merely allusive or descriptive rôle.⁴

In the case of Empedocles it appears that *Katharmoi* is used at least sometimes in a rôle where it would be appropriate to give it a capital letter and treat it as analogous to modern titles. This seems to be true of all three occurrences in Diogenes Laertius;⁵ that in Athenaeus is very similar to one of Diogenes’ points,⁶ and there are two other occurrences in which *Katharmoi* is clearly serving as a title.⁷ A seventh example occurs in Hippolytus’ *Refutation of all heresies*, where the use of the term is ambiguous between the two types of rôle; Hippolytus claims that in prescribing abstinence from meat and sex Marcion the heretic is secretly teaching the purifications of Empedocles.⁸ Clearly Hippolytus refers *primarily* to the similarity in content between the teaching of Marcion and that of Empedocles; strictly speaking he means that Marcion teaches Empedocles’ purifications rather than that he teaches Empedocles’ *Purifications*. But the ambiguity is clearly no accident; Hippolytus uses an ambiguous formulation to imply that, in teaching Empedocles’ *katharmoi* Marcion is effectively teaching Empedocles’ *Katharmoi*.⁹ Thus there is little doubt that *Katharmoi* was used as a title

² I include here Sturz (1805), whose suggestion (pp. 71ff.) that the *Katharmoi* are certain books of the physics does not question the idea that these books are distinguishable in terms of content from the physics proper.

³ Compare the rôle played by ‘Of the Standard of Taste’ in the sentence ‘Hume produced in his essay “Of the Standard of Taste” the most mature aesthetic document...’

⁴ Compare the rôle played by ‘on taste’ in the sentence ‘The problem he faced in the essay on taste was how to escape what appeared to be the... conclusion of this view’.

⁵ D.L. 8.54 (αὐτὸς ἐναρχόμενος τῶν καθαρμῶν φησιν), 8.63 (αὐτοὺς δὲ τούτους τοὺς καθαρμούς [ἐν] Ὀλυμπίᾳσι ραψωδῆσαι λέγεται Κλεομένη τὸν ραψωδόν), 8.77 (τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ φύσεως αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ καθαρμοὶ εἰς ἑπὶ τείνουσι πεντακισχίλια).

⁶ Athenaeus 14.620 (τοὺς δ’ Ἐμπεδοκλέους καθαρμούς ἐραψώωιδησεν Ὀλυμπίᾳσι Κλεομένης ὁ ραψωιδός); cf. D.L. 8.63.

⁷ Theo Smyrnaeus, p. 104.1 (τὸ γοῦν βρέφος δοκεῖ τελειοῦσθαι ἐν ἑπτὰ ἑβδομασί, ὡς Ἐμπεδοκλῆς αἰνίττεται ἐν τοῖς καθαρμοῖς). Herodian Palimpsest (Empedocles fr. 152 Wright) παρὰ μέντοι Ἐμπεδοκλεῖ ἐν β’ καθαρμῶν ἐστιν εὐρέσθαι ἐκτεταμένον τὸ α... .

⁸ Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 7.30.3 τοὺς Ἐμπεδοκλέους λανθάνεις διδάσκων καθαρμούς.

⁹ This point is the fourth in a series of four questions addressed to Marcion. The second point uses a very similar ambiguity: δημιουργὸν φῆς εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου πονηρόν· εἴτα οὐκ ἐγκαλύπτῃ τοὺς Ἐμπεδοκλέους λόγους τὴν ἐκκλησίαν κατηχῶν; Does Hippolytus mean that Marcion is secretly teaching the theories (*logoi*) of Empedocles or the very words (*logoi*) of Empedocles? He means and implies both: the first is the more plausible charge, the second the more damning charge and Hippolytus’ refutation is built upon the slide from one to the other.

proper to a work of Empedocles in the period of these testimonia (2nd/3rd centuries A.D.).¹⁰

'On nature', by contrast, has less claim to be a fixed title for a work of Empedocles in this period. The phrase *περὶ φύσεως* itself occurs very rarely in the ancient sources: at best we have four examples in which a work or works *περὶ φύσεως* are attributed specifically to Empedocles;¹¹ two of these, however, derive from a single original – Lobon's *περὶ ποιητῶν* is thought to be the basis for the information found in the Suda and the second example in Diogenes Laertius – while a third is also in Diogenes Laertius, so that we have rather less than four independent authorities for the phrase. Furthermore while Diogenes' usage, *τὰ περὶ φύσεως* is ambiguous between 'his writings on nature' and 'his writings *On Nature*',¹² the Suda's version of Lobon is most readily understood as a description of the content of the books: 'and he wrote in verse on the nature of things that are, two books'. Indeed, the phrase used by the Suda is not *περὶ φύσεως tout court* but *περὶ φύσεως τῶν ὄντων*, 'on the nature of things that are'.¹³ Galen specifies that 'on nature' was used as a title, but his claim that this was the name given to *all* the works of *all* the early philosophers suggests that his notion of title is too vague to be helpful.

Somewhat more frequent is the term *φυσικά* as a reference to a work of Empedocles. This serves as a sort of casual title and is often used when referring to a particular book 'of the physics'.¹⁴ It has the distinction of occurring in sources much earlier and much later than those which use either *katharmoi* or *peri phuseos*, though its use in Aristotle does not indicate whether it served as a formal title in his day.¹⁵ In all *phusika* occurs about ten times in the ancient sources with reference to a work by Empedocles,¹⁶ all of them in rôles which could denote a title. Its appearance in the Aristotelian tradition suggests that it may originate from the Peripatetic classification of the subject matter of Presocratic writings.

¹⁰ Note also the occurrence of *καθαρμός* and *καθαρμοί* in connection with Empedocles in Porphyry, *De abstinence* 2.31 and Theo Smyrnaeus, p. 15.7, neither of which is conclusive evidence concerning titles for his work.

¹¹ D.L. 8.60: ὃ δὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ φύσεως προσεφώνηκεν. 8.77: τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ φύσεως αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ καθαρμοὶ εἰς ἑπὶ τέινουσι πεντακισχίλια. Suda s.v. Empedocles (DK 31A2) καὶ ἔγραψε δι' ἑπὶ περὶ φύσεως τῶν ὄντων βιβλία β. Galen, *De elem. sec. Hipp.* 1.9 (1.487K) τὰ γὰρ τῶν παλαιῶν ἅπαντα περὶ φύσεως ἐπιγέγραπται, τὰ Μελίσσου, τὰ Παρμενίδου, τὰ Ἐμπεδοκλέους Ἀλκμαίωνος τε καὶ Γοργίου καὶ Προδίκου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων. Compare also the Hippocratic *On ancient medicine* 20 which, if genuine, suggests that *περὶ φύσεως* was already used to describe the works of the Presocratics, Empedocles included, at a much earlier date.

¹² It is unclear what the neuter plural (*τά*) refers to. It could mean his verses (*ἔπη*) or books (*βιβλία*). Compare Simplicius, *Phys.* 144.26 on Parmenides: ἡδέως ἂν τὰ περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς ὄντος ἔπη τοῦ Παρμενίδου . . . παραγράψαμι. Here it is similarly unclear whether *περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς ὄντος* is a title for Parmenides' poem or a description of the content of the specific sections Simplicius is concerned with.

¹³ If we were looking for a fifth-century title this would be more plausible than *περὶ φύσεως* on its own. Apart from *V.M.* 20 (above, note 11) there is no good evidence for *φύσις* being used without a limiting genitive to mean 'nature in general' in the Presocratic period. See E. Schmalzriedt, *Peri Phuseos* (1970) and Wright (1981), pp. 85–6. The credentials of *περὶ φύσεως τῶν ὄντων* as a title for Empedocles are increased by the fact that Lucretius' *De rerum natura* (which is often thought to be a deliberate echo of the titles of Epicurus and Empedocles) is a direct translation of *περὶ φύσεως τῶν ὄντων*.

¹⁴ Aetius 1.30.1; Simplicius, *Phys.* 157.27, 300.20, 381.29; Tzetzes, *Chil.* 7.522, *ex il.* 53.23.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Meteor.* 2.4, 382a1. Aristotle also uses the phrase *ἐν τῇ κοσμοποιίᾳ Physics* 196a22, but this may designate a particular section of the work rather than the whole thing.

¹⁶ In addition to those listed in nn. 14 and 15 see for example Simplicius, *Phys.* 32.1–2, 331.10 and schol. ad Dionys. Thrac. p. 166.13 (DK 31A25).

We may conclude that we have good evidence for one fixed title, *Katharmoi*, and one informal title classifying the contents of some books of ‘physics’. *περὶ φύσεως* is not well attested as a title for Empedocles’ work, and is probably a conventional classification similar to *φυσικά*.

Given that we appear to have two titles of a sort we may turn to our second question: did the ancient testimonia use these titles to refer to separate poems? It is significant that the majority of those ancient writers who quote from Empedocles give no title or description for the work from which they quote, and are clearly not concerned to distinguish poems of different content. Those who do use the titles ‘physics’ and ‘*katharmoi*’ do not make clear what work they are distinguishing these from; thus we may not assume that *ἐν τοῖς φυσικοῖς* means ‘in the physics, i.e. not in the *katharmoi*’ since it might equally mean ‘in the physics, i.e. not in the medical works’. No ancient writer uses both *phusika* and *katharmoi* as titles and none mentions any distinction between the titles in terms of the subject matter of the poem; no ancient writer summarises or describes the general content of the poem designated by the title he uses.¹⁷

All these silences seem to fall into place when we consider the possibility that the two titles are alternative ways of naming the same poem. Double titles are very common, not least among the Presocratics as presented in the ancient testimonia¹⁸ and although in some cases *both* titles are given by a single authority,¹⁹ frequently only one of the two titles is used by any one writer.²⁰ In the case of Protagoras, for example, we know that *Aletheia* and *Kataballontes* are names for the same work because two authorities happen to quote the opening words of the book.²¹ For Empedocles we have no such key: Diogenes Laertius quotes the opening words of the *Katharmoi*²² but no one tells us what the opening words of the physics were.

Diogenes Laertius uses both *peri phuseos* and *katharmoi* to refer to Empedocles’ work, but this need not imply that the titles belonged to separate poems. In accordance with his usual practice, Diogenes has composed his *Life* of Empedocles out of extracts from earlier accounts, and he names nineteen different sources of information in the course of this passage. The two titles may simply reflect the usage of the different sources on which he depends and need not mean that anyone supposed that they

¹⁷ Common sense suggests that *φυσικά* as a title implies that the contents had some connection with ‘natural philosophy’. The implications of ‘*Katharmoi*’ as a title are more difficult to determine (see Guthrie [1965], pp. 244–5). The best evidence for the subject matter of *Empedocles’ katharmoi* (as opposed to those of Orpheus and Musaeus, Plato, *Republic* 364e) are the hints in Hippolytus and Porphyry. Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7.30.4 mentions prohibitions on marriage, reproduction and meat-eating as the *katharmoi* of Empedocles, and gives an explanation of the reasons in terms of the cycle of one and many under Love and Strife. Porphyry mentions *katharmoi* in connection with the sin of meat-eating and gives as an example Empedocles’ confession of his own guilt, B139 (*De abstinentia* 2.31). These hints pose some difficulties (though not insuperable ones) for the suggestion (put to me by David Sedley) that the *Katharmoi* was a medical work and was not the locus of any of the main doctrines we attribute to Empedocles. On this see further below nn. 51 and 98.

¹⁸ E.g. Melissus, *περὶ φύσεως ἢ περὶ τοῦ ὄντος* (Simplicius, *Phys.* 70.16, *De caelo* 557.10), Protagoras, *Ἀλήθεια ἢ καταβάλλοντες* (Plato, *Theaet.* 161c, Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 7.60), Gorgias, *περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἢ περὶ φύσεως* (Sextus, *Adv. Math.* 7.65).

¹⁹ E.g. Simplicius, *Phys.* 70.16: *ὁ Μέλισσος καὶ τὴν ἐπιγραφὴν οὕτως ἐποιήσατο τοῦ συγγράμματος Περὶ φύσεως ἢ περὶ τοῦ ὄντος*. Cf. also Simplicius, *De caelo* 557.10 and Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 7.65.

²⁰ With the examples in n. 19 compare Olympiodorus in *Plat. Gorg.* p. 112: *ἀμέλει καὶ γράφει ὁ Γοργίας περὶ φύσεως συγγραμματα οὐκ ἀκομψον...* Suda s.v. *Μέλητος Λάρου*: *οὗτος ἐγράψε Περὶ τοῦ ὄντος*.

²¹ See Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 7.60 and Plato, *Theaetetus* 152a with 161c.

²² B112, D.L. 8.62.

belonged to different works. The one exception seems to be the comment at the end of the *Life* concerning the length of Empedocles' works.

(ii) *Numbers of books and numbers of verses*

The comment concerning the length of Empedocles' works at the end of Diogenes Laertius' account is notable chiefly for its unreliability. It probably derives from Lobon, as does the equivalent section of the Suda's account,²³ and Lobon's information is notoriously untrustworthy.²⁴ Apart from this the discrepancies between the two versions require explanation.

Diogenes Laertius gives the following comment:

τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ φύσεως αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ καθαρμοὶ εἰς ἑπὶ τείνουσι πεντακισχίλια, ὁ δὲ ἱατρικὸς λόγος εἰς ἑπὶ ἑξακόσια. περὶ δὲ τῶν τραγωδιῶν προειρήκαμεν. (8.77)

His writings about nature and his *katharmoi* amount to five thousand verses, his medical treatise to six hundred verses. We have spoken about the tragedies earlier.

The Suda reports the following:

καὶ ἔγραψε δι' ἐπῶν περὶ φύσεως τῶν ὄντων βιβλία β'. καὶ ἔστιν ἑπὶ ὡς δισχίλια, ἱατρικὰ καταλογάδην καὶ ἄλλα πολλά.

And he wrote in verse on the nature of things that are two volumes. And there are about two thousands verses, medical works in prose and many other things.

It is likely that the numbers of verses are corrupt in one or possibly both cases.²⁵ The correlation of two books and two thousand verses in the Suda, which many have taken as support for the inference that Diogenes *meant* five books when he said five thousand verses,²⁶ is undermined by two facts: (1) the number of books is missing in the two best Suda manuscripts and moreover the first editors of the Suda printed βιβλία γ', 'three books' (though we do not know what manuscript support they had, if any), while the codex Marcianus has βιβλία δ', 'four books';²⁷ (2) the 'two thousand verses' need not refer just to the books 'on the nature of things that are'.²⁸

It would be convenient to suppose that the Suda mentioned a work in three, or perhaps even four, books amounting to two thousand lines (or less, if a verse medical work was included in the total); indeed we have independent evidence for first, second and third books of physics.²⁹ But if the Suda's 'two thousand' refers to Empedocles'

²³ Lobon, fr. 19 Crönert. The ascription is made on the basis of the characteristic counting in verses.

²⁴ 'A man best known for his forgeries' (Guthrie [1965], p. 135 n. 3). It need not follow, of course, that everything he says is a lie.

²⁵ If five books are in question in Diogenes, a thousand lines per book seems surprisingly high. See Wright (1981), p. 21. But longer books are attested in the Hellenistic period, e.g. Apollonius Argonautica (1285–1781 lines per book). See O. Skutsch, *The Annals of Q. Ennius* (Oxford, 1985), p. 369. However there is no evidence that Diogenes had five books in mind: indeed more than five would be compatible with our present evidence.

²⁶ In particular Van der Ben (1975), pp. 12 and 14–16 writes as if Diogenes had written 'five books' (in response see O'Brien [1981], pp. 5–6, Zuntz, *Mnemosyne* 18 [1965], p. 365).

²⁷ See Wright (1981), p. 20 and n. 104.

²⁸ As punctuated here the Suda's two thousand verses are not necessarily confined to the physics but would cover all Empedocles' verse works. This means that if the medical treatise in 600 verses mentioned by Diogenes is distinct from the prose works mentioned by the Suda it might be included in the Suda's total of two thousand verses. However, '600 verses' in Diogenes could be a loose way of referring to 'lines' of a prose work. The usual punctuation makes καὶ ἔστιν ἑπὶ ὡς δισχίλια a parenthesis after βιβλία β', but such a parenthesis beginning καὶ and repeating ἑπὶ is stylistically improbable. I owe this point to David Sedley.

²⁹ Good evidence in Simplicius, *Phys.* 157.27, 300.20, 381.29 for first and second books. Tzetzes, *Chil.* is the only extant reference to a third book of Physics. Diels argued that this really referred to the Katharmoi.

entire output it cannot be reconciled with Diogenes' 'five thousand' plus 'six hundred' verses; and even if it refers to only one of two major verse works, the other would need to be surprisingly long to make up a total of five thousand. Given that numerals are particularly liable to errors in transmission we need not set much store by the precise figures in Diogenes. It is quite possible that his text once said two thousand like the Suda.³⁰

Diogenes mentions physics and *katharmoi* while the Suda mentions only physics, and this remains problematic, particularly as they seem to have a common source. If Lobon gave two separate statistics for physics and *katharmoi* of which only one is preserved in the Suda it is unclear why Diogenes should have added the two together rather than listing them separately. At the very least he must have had some reason for regarding them as a unit for counting, as distinct from the medical work.³¹ On the other hand, the possibility that both the Suda and Diogenes mentioned the *same* number of verses, perhaps two thousand, suggests a different explanation: rightly or wrongly Diogenes understood this number of verses to belong to the physics and the *katharmoi*. Several possible reasons might be suggested for this, depending on whether Diogenes added material not in his source (perhaps the title *Katharmoi*) or omitted material that was given (perhaps numbers of books).³²

The discrepancy between the statements of Diogenes and the Suda means that both are suspect as evidence for Empedocles' books. Diogenes' ignorance and dependence on secondary sources leaves us in some doubt as to how well he understood his source of information for Empedocles' works. Either he was correct in supposing that the number of verses belonged to two separate works and in listing these as on nature and *katharmoi*; or this was a mistaken inference on his part and the Suda was right in listing only one work on the nature of things that are. Given the nature of the evidence we cannot exclude the possibility that Empedocles wrote one work on nature, often called *katharmoi*; we may indeed be tempted to suggest that it was in three books and about two thousand lines long. On the basis of this evidence we cannot prove or disprove such a hypothesis.

(iii) *The beginning of his philosophy*

For stronger evidence that there must have been only one poem we have to turn to Plutarch, whose knowledge of Empedocles was extensive and detailed,³³ and whose scholarly integrity was also probably superior to Diogenes'. At *De exilio* 607c Plutarch introduces some lines of Empedocles with the words

ὁ δὲ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς φιλοσοφίας προαναφωνήσας ἔστιν ἀνάγκης χρήμα...

'Empedocles, giving an introductory account at the start of his philosophy, says "There is an oracle of necessity..."'

The lines quoted (from B115) concern the pollution of *daimones* and their banishment for sin. Given the usual assumption that Diogenes Laertius' two titles represent two poems, most scholars have naturally asked themselves which of the two Plutarch

³⁰ E.g. if we read πάντα δισχίλια instead of πεντακισχίλια. Compare Diels' suggestion that it should read πάντα τρισχίλια, Diels (1898).

³¹ Note the μέν...δέ construction in Diogenes' sentence.

³² Diogenes' source might have given both titles even if they denoted one and the same work; similarly it might have mentioned a number of books for the physics with or without a number for the *katharmoi* books.

³³ Plutarch quotes frequently from Empedocles. 41 out of 133 fragments in Wright are quoted wholly or in part by Plutarch in extant works. In addition there is evidence that he wrote a work in ten books on Empedocles, now lost (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 5.10.6; Lamprias, catalogue 43).

meant by 'Empedocles' philosophy'. The question proves an embarrassment since the content of the quotation aligns it with what most would consider 'Katharmoi material'. Can Plutarch have referred to the Katharmoi as the starting point of Empedocles' philosophy? Modern editions always treat the physics first and consider it the more important, more interesting and more philosophical of the two works, as well as considerably longer than the (rather minor) 'religious poem'. Given these assumptions Plutarch's words clearly require some delicate explanation.³⁴

Among those who have taken measures to resolve this difficulty is Van der Ben in *The Proem of Empedocles' Peri Physios* (1975). Arguing that 'philosophy' *must* mean physics, he proposed to transfer the lines in question along with the rest of B115 and twenty seven other 'katharmoi' fragments to a long religious proem preceding the physics proper. Very little is left for the *Katharmoi*, which, however, is still supposed to have existed as a separate work.³⁵ Van der Ben's hypothesis has been greeted with extensive scepticism,³⁶ and indeed his hypothesis, like most others that have been put forward to resolve this supposed difficulty, is unnecessary. If we take Plutarch's evidence at face value it is quite clear that he knows of *no* significant division within Empedocles' philosophy. Plutarch quotes Empedocles frequently on a wide range of topics, but never in all his extant works does he give a title for the work he quotes from, or specify that a passage occurred in one or another of two works. For Plutarch, Empedocles' philosophy is Empedocles' philosophy; his comment implies that it was one work and that somewhere near the beginning of it, or at least thematic to the whole work, was the banishment of the daimones in B115.

Plutarch may have been right or he may have been wrong. If Plutarch was right then Empedocles wrote only one philosophical poem; if Plutarch was wrong then he had a muddled text and we can set no store by his comment in *De exilio* 607c. In either case there is no need for hypotheses, such as Van der Ben's, to explain Plutarch's words.

Moreover, while it is possible that Plutarch was wrong, we have no good evidence to indicate that he was. To conclude that Empedocles wrote two poems rather than one is to privilege the inconclusive evidence of Diogenes Laertius for two titles over the stronger evidence of Plutarch that Empedocles' philosophy could be mentioned in terms appropriate to a single poem. On Plutarch's side are all the other ancient testimonia, from Aristotle to Tzetzes, who are silent about any distinction between books of physics and books of katharmoi.³⁷

The most acceptable conclusion, therefore, seems to be that Empedocles wrote one

³⁴ Van der Ben (1975), pp. 16–20, enumerates arguments in favour of the conclusion that *philosophia* must mean the physics. Arguments that it could mean the *Katharmoi* are found in Diels (1898), O'Brien (1981), pp. 14–15, Wright (1981), pp. 81–2 and 270–1.

³⁵ Van der Ben (1975) discusses only those passages he believes to belong to the proem, but he suggests that other 'Katharmoi' fragments also belonged to the main books of *Peri Physios*.

³⁶ E.g. P. Kingsley (unpublished thesis, Cambridge, 1979), O'Brien (1981), Wright (1981), p. 271. Van der Ben's position differs from mine in that he continues to operate with a strong distinction between what is properly 'physics' and what is properly 'religion'. In moving material to the proem rather than the main thematic material of the physics, he is creating a further divide between proem (religious) and main books (physical) as well as that between *Peri Physios* and what remains for the *Katharmoi*.

³⁷ In addition to the fact that the testimonia fail to make a clear distinction between the physics and katharmoi some actually make it impossible to do so. Cf. e.g. Plutarch, *De Is. et Osir.* 48, 370d; *De tranq. an.* 15, 474b. We do not possess an extended interpretation in Plutarch's extant works, but Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7.29–30 is a good example of an exposition which interprets the entire system in terms of the banishment of the daimones. See Osborne (1987) and below section B.

poem on nature, called by some the Katharmoi, that it was probably in three books and possibly about two thousand lines long. All the quotations that we possess probably come from this work,³⁸ of which we have therefore nearly a quarter.

(iv) *One or more addressees*

As regards subject matter this conclusion must surely be acceptable, for it has often been observed that the gulf between religious and scientific was a creation of the editors of Empedocles' text. Several scholars have argued that a strict division of *thought* is inappropriate, while maintaining that two distinct *poems* existed.³⁹

The existence of two separate poems has not been questioned seriously in the past, and one reason for this is the prevalent notion that the poems were addressed to different audiences. The katharmoi, it is supposed, was addressed to a plural audience of Acragantines, the physics to the disciple Pausanias in the singular.⁴⁰ Again the evidence must be called into question, for it is not as good as it might at first appear. Firstly the facts are not so simple, since many different addressees appear in the fragments, ranging from the Muse in B3 and B131 to mortals in general in B124. Of those which include second person plurals only B112 is certainly addressed to the Acragantines, with B114 a probable second.⁴¹ This evidence does not imply that the addressee was consistent throughout either the physics or the katharmoi. Indeed it is incompatible with such a suggestion.

Secondly we rely again on Diogenes Laertius alone for information concerning the addressees, and, moreover, his evidence does not establish that the two poems were distinguished in this way. Two passages, separated by some distance in Diogenes' account, are in question. At 8.60–1 Diogenes says that the work on nature was addressed to Pausanias; Pausanias had just been mentioned for another reason and Diogenes continues:

ἦν δ' ὁ Πασανίας, ὡς φησιν Ἀρίστιππος καὶ Σάτυρος, ἐρώμενος αὐτοῦ, ᾧ δὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ φύσεως προσπεφώνηκεν οὕτως:

Πασανίη, σὺ δὲ κλύθι, δαίφρονος Ἀγχίτου υἱέ.

This Pausanias was, according to Aristippus and Satyrus, Empedocles' beloved, and it was to him that he addressed the work on nature thus:

But you, Pausanias, listen, son of the wise Anchitos.

Diogenes claims that the work as a whole was addressed to Pausanias, not that Pausanias was just mentioned in it, nor that Pausanias was the only person mentioned in it. There is no reason to suppose that this line stood very early on in the work; Diogenes does not say that this was the beginning of the poem. Obviously it is possible that a work addressed to Pausanias might have begun by naming him and

³⁸ An exception might be made for one or two fragments (e.g. B134) which may be from the hymn to Apollo if such a thing existed.

³⁹ H. S. Long, 'The Unity of Empedocles' Thought', *AJP* 70 (1949), 142–58 pointed out that the division of fragments was largely based on speculation concerning the content of the two works. Among others who argue for the unity of Empedocles' thought may be mentioned R. A. Prier, *Archaic Logic* (1976), pp. 1–22, 120–5, 130; C. H. Kahn, 'Religion and Natural Philosophy in Empedocles' Doctrine of the Soul', *AGPh* 42 (1960), 3–35, p. 24; Wright (1981), p. 57; S. M. Darcus, 'Daimon Parallels the Holy Phren in Empedocles', *Phronesis* 22 (1977), 175–90.

⁴⁰ This 'fact' is often used as a criterion for assigning verses to one or the other poem on the basis that they include singular or plural second person forms.

⁴¹ Both start ᾧ φίλοι and it is natural to assume that the friends are the same. However, B114 continues with a concern for men in general, so that even here an audience of Acragantines cannot be reliably assumed.

apostrophising him from an early stage⁴² but this clearly need not be the case at all; many examples might be cited of poems in which the addressee changes in the course of the work.⁴³ The most instructive comparison is with Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, a poem much indebted to Empedocles for inspiration (see above, note 11). Here Memmius is the principal addressee, but his name occurs only eleven times in the work as a whole and these occurrences are confined to books one, two and five. Two of them are in the third person in the opening section of book one, where 49 lines are addressed directly to Venus. Book 3 opens with an address to Epicurus, book 6 includes an address to the Muse (lines 92–5), and the proem of book 2 includes an address to mortal men in their folly (lines 14–19). It is clear that the line quoted by Diogenes to show that Empedocles addressed the physics to Pausanias could have occurred at any point in the poem. It most likely came after a proem addressing the Muses, and possibly other passages addressed to other audiences, human or divine.

By contrast, what Diogenes has to say about the Katharmoi specifically concerns the *beginning* of the poem. At 8.54 he says:

ὅτι δ' ἦν Ἀκραγαντίνος ἐκ Σικελίας, αὐτὸς ἐναρχόμενος τῶν καθαρμῶν φησιν·
ὦ φίλοι, οἱ μέγα ἄστυ κατὰ ξανθοῦ Ἀκράγαντος
ναίειτ' ἄν' ἄκρα πόλεος.

But that he was an Acragantine from Sicily he himself says when beginning upon the katharmoi:
O friends who dwell in the great city on the yellow
Acragas on the high citadel...'

We should note that Diogenes does not say or imply that the poem as a whole was addressed to the Acragantines.

What can we conclude from these two passages of Diogenes Laertius? We are not after all entitled to identify the Katharmoi as 'a poem addressed, unlike *On Nature*, to an extended group of people'.⁴⁴ Nothing in what Diogenes says precludes the main part of the Katharmoi from being addressed to an individual or the opening lines of the physics from haranguing the crowd. And since, as we have seen, there is good reason to suppose that the two were one and the same, we should conclude that the poem opened with an address to the men of Acragas and subsequently directed its main teaching to Pausanias, the chief addressee of the work as a whole. We have no certain evidence concerning the location of other lines that address gods or men in the singular or the plural.

The question of whether one or more persons are addressed in a fragment is in itself irrelevant to the task of locating that fragment in relation to the other verses that we possess. It is also of no significance for the issue of whether physics and katharmoi are one work or more than one work.

III. NOW ONE, NOW MORE: INTERPRETING EMPEDOCLES' THOUGHT

Two main points emerge if we suppose that Empedocles wrote one coherent poem.

(a) We ought not to suppose that his doctrines were incompatible or contradictory

⁴² We might compare Hesiod's *Works and Days* which names Perses in the third person at line 10, addresses him by name in the second person at line 27 and frequently thereafter; even this, however, begins by addressing the Muses first.

⁴³ For instance the Pindaric odes: the victor is usually named within the first 28 lines of a victory ode but is often not addressed directly until 100 lines later (e.g. *Ol.* 1, 10). In *Pythian* 1 Hieron is named at line 32 and addressed directly from 85–100, but the poem also apostrophises Zeus (29, 67), Apollo (39) and the Muse (58).

⁴⁴ KRS, p. 313.

within one poem; and it is therefore the task of the interpreter with this unity in mind to make the best possible sense of the themes as a coherent whole, rather than interpreting one theme at the expense of its connections with another. In other words the history of the daimones had better be related in some satisfactory and significant way to the history of the material world.

(b) The main passage that we know concerning the banishment of the daimones occurred early on in the poem in a fundamental introductory rôle;⁴⁵ hence this theme is apparently basic to Empedocles' entire system and cannot be treated as an afterthought or insignificant in status. Indeed, if the title *katharmoi* is to be explained, it is likely that pollution was central to the poem. We must therefore reinterpret the physical doctrines in terms of the banishment of the daimones and not vice versa.

What has to go? Many basic assumptions that underpin modern reconstructions of the cosmic system have to be questioned.

(1) Many accounts imply that value judgements are irrelevant to the cosmic processes. It is not normal to suggest that one stage of the world is good and another bad, or, if such a judgement is made, it is made on the basis that Love appears to be a good thing and is spoken of in terms of approval, while Strife is given pejorative epithets; no *explanation* of why or how Love is good or Strife bad can be adduced so long as all the moral issues are relegated to a separate poem. Once we begin to integrate the notions of guilt, pollution and punishment into the cosmic cycle of change, the questions of the explanation of good and bad in the world and whether any value judgements are unqualified become prominent and vital to our understanding of the poem. (See below, section B.)

(2) The exclusion of passages involving voluntary action on the part of moral agents from the physical poem leaves the traditional account with a picture of causation in the cosmos which is somehow necessary and mechanical: no further explanation can be sought for why these things had to occur beyond the fact that they had to occur. Restoring the *katharmoi* material to this picture we find that the notion of causation becomes much richer: necessity remains, but moral choice is also involved, and questions of motivation and responsibility become much more relevant than on the traditional view.

(3) Love and Strife are almost invariably assigned responsibility for mixture and separation respectively; these are commonly regarded as their peculiar rôles in acting upon immutable inanimate elements whose innate capacities do not extend beyond a tendency of like to like (a tendency which, somewhat paradoxically, seems to correspond with the supposed rôle of Strife). If the two poems are reunited the account has to become much more sophisticated; the relationship between elements and daimones makes it impossible to view the elements as passive inanimate materials in Love's mechanical liquidiser, and the extent of their immutability has to be questioned. The idea that Love's effect is to mix but not to change is, in any case, untenable on a close reading of the physical fragments themselves.

(4) Perhaps the most dearly held tenet of the traditional view of Empedocles is that his four elements were eternal, immutable and *persisted* unchanged in the mixture under Love. This view stands or falls with the view that Love behaves like a liquidiser and that the unity over which she presides is a mixture. It too needs to be questioned once the rôles of Love and Strife are clarified.

Reconsideration of these issues requires particular attention to those texts which concern the importance of good and bad and voluntary action, and those which explain the rôles of Love and Strife and the one and the many.

⁴⁵ Plutarch, *De exilio* 607c. (See above, section iii.)

A. Mankind, victim of delusion

At the start of his poem Empedocles addressed the men of Acragas in the words we know as fragment B112:

‘O friends, who dwell in the great city on the yellow Acragas, on the high citadel, caring about good deeds, honourable harbours for strangers, unacquainted with evil, greetings! Among you, I, an immortal god and mortal no longer, go about honoured by all, so it appears, crowned with ribbons and fresh garlands; and as I come to the prospering towns I am revered by all, men and women; they follow me, tens of thousands, asking where is the path to profit, some desiring prophecies, others ask to hear the word of healing for every kind of illness, long pierced by harsh pains.’

The value-laden terms introduced in this passage immediately raise the question of what counts as good (good deeds, honour, prosperity, profit) and what counts as bad (evil, illness, pains) in Empedocles’ system. What is Empedocles’ message to the Acragantines? Does he simply commend them for their concern with good deeds and their righteous hospitality, and approve their treatment of him as a divine wonder-worker? Surely not, for this unlikely scenario is undercut by the frequent references in other fragments, not least in B114 which is also addressed ‘O friends’, to the ignorance and delusion of men in general and their inability to perceive their true predicament.⁴⁶ Read in the light of these passages, B112 is full of irony: it expresses the Acragantines’ failure to see their predicament by describing them in the way they see themselves. It is in the light of what Empedocles proceeds to reveal that we perceive the ambiguities of the value judgments implied in B112.

The men of Acragas are bound up in their concern for good deeds (line 2) *ἀγαθῶν μελεδήμονες ἔργων*. The phrase implies that this care is a burden of anxiety. But what sort of good deeds do they care about? Their pious duties to the gods, perhaps, and their hospitality to strangers (line 3). Yet, as Empedocles will proceed to lament (B136, B137), every time they perform these rites and sacrifices, every time they set forth a good meal for their guests, they are murdering their own parents, they are serving up their children at the feast. What sort of good deeds are these to be an object of care to the Acragantines? They should indeed prove to be a burden of anxiety. The Acragantines turn out to be, in a very real sense, *κακότητος ἄπειροι*, inexperienced or ignorant of evil (line 3).⁴⁷ They have not learnt what evil is, that the very acts which they place in such high regard are the worst evils, and that their prosperity, their non-acquaintance with misfortune and evil, is illusory.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Apart from B114 see particularly B136, 137, 145, 124, 4, 8, 9, 11 and 15.

⁴⁷ Line 3 of B112 does not, strictly speaking, belong to B112 since it is not quoted by Diogenes Laertius with the other lines, but is inserted by most editors of Empedocles. It is quoted by Diodorus Siculus without any context of its own, 13.83.2. However, since he uses it of the hospitality of the Acragantines we may consider its content relevant even if it did not occur in precisely this position.

⁴⁸ *κακότητος ἄπειροι* (unacquainted with evil) is ambiguous. It may well be that the primary meaning of *κακότης* at this period is ‘misfortune’, bad things that happen (regardless of agency). The superficial meaning of the phrase is clearly suggesting that the Acragantines are prosperous – ignorant of evil because it never befalls them. But, I suggest, two further meanings may be in play: (1) they are ignorant of evil in the sense that they are unaware that their apparent prosperity and good fortune is in fact misfortune – that they *are* suffering evil and (2) they are ignorant of evil in the sense of wrong-doing – they are unaware that they are *doing* bad things when they think they are doing good things. The range of possible meanings and of irony is dependent on the context; we cannot be sure what that context was. See K. J. Dover, ‘The Portrayal of Moral Evaluation in Greek Poetry’, *JHS* 103 (1983), 35–48.

Empedocles' description of the honour in which he is held by the men and women who flock to him is similarly ironic. To all appearances they are treating him like a god (line 5), as indeed he appears to be with his prophetic and wonder-working gifts. Yet they are still failing to perceive the truth of his divinity; the divinity that they think they see in the wonder-worker is not the polluted and exiled daimon that Empedocles describes in B115 and B139. They want their fortunes told, their illnesses healed; they want to be told the way to prosperity (lines 9–12). It seems unlikely that the way to prosperity that Empedocles will offer, and the means by which they may achieve healing and release from their miseries, is quite what they expect. The Acragantines' confidence is undercut when, prompted by the parallel address *ὦ φίλοι*, we juxtapose B114 with B112:⁴⁹

'O friends, I know that there is truth in the words which I shall speak; but indeed it comes hard to men and the assault of belief on the mind is bitter.'

The men of Acragas have sought advice from Empedocles, but they will find the truth hard to admit. The allusiveness of the last line of B114 implies a struggle between the old belief which jealously occupies the mind and the bitter and unwelcome assault of the new belief to be admitted; it is hard to give up one's old convictions and accept the truth:

μάλα δ' ἀργαλέη γε τέτυκται
ἀνδράσι καὶ δύσζηλος ἐπὶ φρένα πίστις ὁρμή.⁵⁰

Thus if B112 represents the opening of Empedocles' poem, that opening raised a number of issues concerning the value and the valuation of Empedocles' teaching. But the claims he makes cannot be taken at face-value; they are full of ambiguity, and, it emerges, irony also. These features are significant, for they set the scene and the theme for the rest of the work: the fact that values are at issue, but that values are not what men take them to be; we are to be brought to an awareness that all value terms may be ambiguous, that our entire value-system will be inverted if we adopt Empedocles' new perspective on the world.⁵¹

B. The exile of the daimones

If the opening section of Empedocles' work concerned the delusion of the men it addressed and their difficulty in perceiving their true plight, the first section of his message to those wretched mortals explains how and why they came to be in such a miserable state. This section, our knowledge of which consists mainly of the lines collected as B115, stood at the beginning of Empedocles' philosophy⁵² in the sense

⁴⁹ I make no claim here concerning the original location of B114, simply observing that the parallel address would invite interplay with B112 regardless of their respective locations.

⁵⁰ Clement, *Strom.* 5.9 identifies a *positive* valuation of *pistis* in these lines, though on what grounds is unclear. On the other hand, it is undeniable that *δύσζηλος* connotes bitter jealousy and that the struggle between truth and deep-rooted belief is characterised in harsh terms of Homeric warfare (see Wright [1981], pp. 267–8).

⁵¹ This interpretation of B112 as the opening lines of the poem depends upon the claim that *Katharmoi* and *Physics* are the same work, so that this passage can be juxtaposed with those which undercut it. This is the claim that I am making and one of its recommendations is its productivity in the interpretation of B112 and the resultant explanation of the excessive compositeness of these opening lines. For the alternative that the *Katharmoi* was a non-philosophical work (which would remove this fragment to a quite separate context), see below n. 98.

⁵² Plutarch, *De exilio* 607c. See above, section (iii).

that it was the first stage in the revelation of the truth to which B114 alludes. But it was also a preliminary introduction,⁵³ a brief summary of the story providing the essential background for the details of the main part of the poem.

B115 is best read with the detailed commentary provided by Hippolytus.⁵⁴ This brings out the relationship between the banishment of the daimones and the cycle of one and many which is central to the whole poem. Hippolytus identifies the 'god' from which Empedocles is a fugitive, with the 'one' of the world under Love before it is broken up by Strife. Thus the daimon who sins by the breaking of an oath is initiating the new outbreak of Strife; the banishment of the daimones is the breaking up of the one into many by Strife. The work of Strife is to change and incarnate the daimones wandering on the harsh paths of life, and the daimon trusts in raging Strife because Strife is the ruling creative power in the world in which the daimon is now condemned to dwell. The work of Love is to free the daimon from the process of reincarnation and restore it to the one. The 'decree of necessity' (B 115, lines 1–2) is related by Hippolytus, and by Simplicius likewise,⁵⁵ to the alternation of one and many, Love and Strife, the central theme of Empedocles' cosmic system.

(i) *Necessity*

For Hippolytus and Simplicius the decree of necessity of B115 which involves the banishment of polluted daimones is the same necessity as that which ensures the continuing cycle of one and many in B26 and the inexorable return of Strife in his allotted time in B30.⁵⁶ But what now becomes apparent is that this necessity is not an extraneous arbitrary necessity which decrees an unvarying sequence of events, untouched by the movements or desires of the things that it governs: the oracle of necessity covers the consequence of the punishment upon a crime, the fact that when someone sins the cycle of banishment is initiated. The cycle depends initially upon a voluntary action

εἵτε τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνῳ φίλα γνία μήνη
νεῖκει θ' ὅς κε ἐπίορκον ἀμαρτήσας ἐπομόσση... (B115, 3–4...)

The necessity belongs to the punishment which ensues.

It might be thought that B30 implies that the oath which governs the banishment of the daimones for their original sin also governs the time at which Strife will break out anew.

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ μέγα νείκος ἐνὶ μελέεσσιν ἐθρέφθη
ἔς τιμάς τ' ἀνόρουσε τελειομένοιο χρόνοιον
ὅς σφιν ἀμοιβαῖος πλατέος παρ' ἐλήλαται ὄρκον.

This would in a way be correct but only incidentally, since it is not the return of Strife that is necessitated by the oath, but the time which must be fulfilled *before* his return. The implication is that, as in B115 there was a fixed duration (thirty thousand seasons perhaps⁵⁷) for the period of banishment under Strife, so there will be a fixed duration for the period of unification under Love also decreed in turn (ἀμοιβαῖος) by the broad oath, and until that time has been completed Strife is restrained by the necessity of

⁵³ *προαναφωνήσας*, Plutarch, *De exilio* 607c.

⁵⁴ *Refutatio* 7.29. For justification of this confidence in Hippolytus' commentary see Osborne (1987).

⁵⁵ Simplicius, *Phys.* 1184.8–18.

⁵⁶ B26.1, B27.1, 3, 4, B30 and B31 are all quoted by Simplicius in the same context as B115.1–2; *Phys.* 1183.28–1184.18.

⁵⁷ Thirty thousand seasons may not mean anything specific in itself, but it presumably stands in for a determinate period of time.

the oath. But when that time has been completed, his return is not necessitated by the oath, merely the possibility for Strife to return is opened up. His actual return still depends in some way upon the voluntary act mentioned in B115; B30 describes what happens 'when Strife springs to his honours' when 'the alternate time was fulfilled which was marked for them by the broad oath'.⁵⁸

(ii) *Alternation*

Aristotle complains in *Physics* 252a5–32 that Empedocles gives inadequate explanation of the alternation of Love and Strife and of the equal times involved.⁵⁹ Aristotle's objection does not, however, constitute evidence that the return of Strife could not consist in the voluntary act of bloodshed in B115; since that act *is* the return of Strife we may still ask why it should ever occur, and why later rather than sooner. Aristotle's dissatisfaction is not with the inadequate explanation of why Strife is active in the Cosmos, or Love similarly,⁶⁰ but rather with the reason why each is active at some periods and inactive at others,⁶¹ and why they should take it in turns. Why, if Strife has been inactive, should he return to activity at his allotted time, and why should Love relinquish her hold when he does so? Aristotle rightly points out that the alternation of activity and rest and the taking of turns are not essential to what Strife and Love ordinarily are.⁶² He does not consider the possibility that the reason for the alternation might lie in the nature of the things Love and Strife act on or in. If these are 'daimones' they may be presumed to be intelligent beings with some sort of choice between acting with Strife and acting with Love. The arbitrary time at which the act of Strife seems to occur in B115 is the arbitrariness of an animate being's decision by contrast with the routine performance of a mechanical process.

The act of bloodshed that initiates a new regime of Strife is not itself necessitated by the decree, or by the allotted period of time. B39 assumes that Strife is ready and eager to act as soon as the time arrives at which he is free to do so; the necessity applies to the restraint which is placed upon Strife during the time allotted to Love and not to the fact that he will act once that restraint is removed. There is a sort of necessity about the time at which Strife returns to action: he must because he wants to and can act and is now allowed to do so; but the necessity of his acting at that time does not follow directly from the decree concerning the time allowed to Love, but from the completion of the allotted time (and hence the phasing out of the decree) combined with the necessity of Strife's nature such that he must act in a Strife-like way. The act of bloodshed might be said to have a double motivation: it depends upon the daimon choosing to act in that way but it also has to happen because Strife is present and nothing restrains him.

The process of unification under Love clearly reaches a limit when the total unity

⁵⁸ Simplicius' suggestion that the alternation of rule of Love and Strife is itself governed by necessity is not supported by the texts he quotes, *Phys.* 1184.6–18.

⁵⁹ This is the passage on which Simplicius is commenting (see note 58). Aristotle's criticism has been much discussed (especially by O'Brien [1969], ch. 4).

⁶⁰ He allows that there are some grounds for this simple claim in the analogy with their presence in human affairs, 252a28–30.

⁶¹ Note that Aristotle's statement *ὡς τὸ κρατεῖν καὶ κινεῖν ἐν μέρει τὴν φιλίαν καὶ τὸ νεῖκος ὑπάρχει τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐξ ἀνάγκης*, *ἡρεμεῖν δὲ τὸν μεταξὺ χρόνον* need not imply that the *world* is alternately in motion and at rest, but that Love and Strife are each alternately active and at rest, being at rest during the time that the other power is active: 'that it applies to things of necessity that Love and Strife are alternately ruling and moving and are at rest in the intervening time.'

⁶² 252a26.

has been achieved. In this sense the work of Love is finite – once this unity has been attained she can do no more unifying; after that her job will be merely to hold that unity together, maintaining it in a stable state. But in this respect the unity under Love can continue for as long as the decree determines; there seems to be no theoretical limit to how long Strife might be restrained and the unity maintained. There are two possibilities in theory – either Strife may be released again before Love's work is complete, in which case total unity is never achieved, or Strife is not released until after a time at which there has been a completed unity. In practice Empedocles seems to envisage Love completing her task and it is possible that this is required by the system if Strife is fully restrained only at the stage at which Love completes the unity, rather than for the period when she is performing the unification.

What about the corresponding period of Strife's power and the point at which Love is out of action? Is it a mirror image of Love's period of power and if so how does it mirror it? Two possibilities are open: (a) just as Love reached a finite state at which she had completed the task of unification, after which she maintains a stable state in the absence of Strife, so Strife might reach a limit at which his task is complete – a finite plurality which he maintains for the period (if there is one) of Love's absence, or (b) by contrast with Love, Strife may have an open-ended task of creating an increasing plurality during the absence of Love, in which case there would be no theoretical limit to his task and no stable state would be achieved. A limit would be imposed in practice by the return of Love.

(iii) *The work of Strife*

Much has been written on the vexed question of what happened at a time of 'total Strife'; Empedocles appears not to have described the state of the world at such a time, at least so far as our present evidence goes.⁶³ This fact is in itself instructive, for it is only on the assumption that the process of increasing strife is a finite one that we should expect some definite stage to be achieved at the height of Strife's power and described by Empedocles. Such an assumption has normally been made on the basis that increasing Love and increasing Strife are symmetrical and that the plurality to be created by Strife is a finite number, namely four, just as the one of Love is finite. But Empedocles never says that the plurality aimed at by Strife is finite, nor that it is merely the plurality of the four elements; these certainly constitute a plurality and they are certainly produced by Strife, but they are not the only plurality in the world under Strife, nor are the differences between the elements the only differences for Strife to create. The other differences are derivative from the elemental differences but they are differences none the less.

From these come all that were and are and will be,
and trees have sprung up and men and women,
beasts and birds and water-bred fish,
and long-lived gods, highest in honours.
For these are these, but running through each other
they become different in appearance; so much does it
change by mixture. (B21.9–14)

⁶³ Plutarch, in *De fac. in orbe lun.* 926d–927a, describes a total separation of elements as the work of Strife, but it is not clear that this is 'total Strife' as opposed to the first stage of Strife's work. The couplet quoted by Plutarch (fr. 26a Bignone, fr. 19 Wright) describes a state in which the elemental masses *cannot* be distinguished and does not appear to fit the context he provides for it. It has often been assimilated to fr. 27 which appears to describe the sphere under Love, but nothing in Plutarch can justify the assimilation.

Exactly who is responsible for the differences in beasts and birds and the other things mentioned in B21 is a matter of some confusion at least when we try to read Empedocles in the fragmented state we know him in now. There is no doubt that these differences are present in the period when Love has just returned to action after Strife's period of supreme power, and indeed the mortal things are brought into being at that time as Love returns:

When Strife reached the lowest depth of the whirl,
and when Love comes to be in the middle of the vortex,
there it is that all these things come together to
be one only, not suddenly but combining reluctantly
from different directions. And as they mingled countless
tribes of mortal things poured forth.

ἐπεὶ νεῖκος μὲν ἐνέρτατον ἵκετο βένθος
δίνης, ἐν δὲ μέσῃ φιλότῃς στροφάλιγγι γένηται
ἐν τῇ δὴ τάδε πάντα συνέρχεται ἔν μόνον εἶναι,
οὐκ ἄφαρ, ἀλλ' ἀθελήμα⁶⁴ συνιστάμεν' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλα.
τῶν δέ τε μισγομένων χεῖτ' ἔθνεα μυρία θνητῶν. (B35.3–7)

We need not doubt that the early stages of Love's return are in some way responsible for the creation of the mortal creatures at this point, since they come about as a result of a process of mixing, a process which seems to be initiated by the coming together into one that is Love's work. But whether Love is thereby creating *more* differences than were there under Strife depends upon what was there before Love returned – what are 'all these things' (τάδε πάντα) that come together? If they are the four elements in pure forms, as on the traditional view, then of course Love's return will have resulted in more differentiation with the introduction of a wondrous range of mortal creatures. But fragment B35 does not say that 'all these things' are the pure elements, and the elements are not mentioned at all in the fragment. The only explicit mention of something that Strife is involved in is 'limbs' in line 11. Thus if one constructs a model of the work of Strife looking something like this:

one → four elements → mortal things, trees etc.⁶⁵ → separate limbs → chaos

it is clear that Love's return would be to a world full of distinct and separate bits and pieces held apart by Strife (B35.9).⁶⁶ The mixing and combination that occur as Love starts to return are the coming together and combining of different parts and limbs to make unified creatures: it is undoing the differentiation produced by Strife, making things less different so that they can combine into a smaller number of coherent creatures. Love is responsible not so much for the differences between the creatures

⁶⁴ Most editors read ἀλλὰ θελήμα ('but at will').

⁶⁵ There is no clear evidence for a zoogony created by Strife in the verses we possess, but on this reconstruction it would be satisfactory to suggest that there was one, so that Love's zoogony does not create any new differences over and above those that were there under Strife. Nothing else hangs on it and it is possible that Strife might create nothing more coherent than detached limbs, which are thereby more diverse and count as more differences than the whole creatures produced under Love.

⁶⁶ These distinct bits and pieces would obviously be made out of combinations of the four elements, since Empedocles repeatedly emphasises that the further differences are a result of these things 'running through each other'. Thus there is a sense in which what is there when Love returns is the four elements and nothing more, and the mortals formed when Love returns are made of combinations of the four elements; but there is also a sense in which what is there is not pure elements at all but a whole lot of other different things.

(those were created by Strife beforehand) but for their coherence, for their having sufficient unity to stick together as creatures at all and not remain separate limbs.⁶⁷

It is possible in this way to make a coherent interpretation of these passages on the assumption that the work of Love is to make things one – eventually; initially Love's work results in a variety of creatures, but with less variety than had been achieved by Strife – and the work of Strife makes more than one.⁶⁸ The process of increasing plurality is open-ended, and thus there need be no superficial symmetry between the work of Love and that of Strife.

It is important to insist that the plurality under Strife may be open ended for two reasons. (1) The outbreak of violence in B115 showed that the introduction of difference is connected with violence, and thus all increase in difference should properly be the work of Strife; (2) the creation of *this* world demands some explanation; its variety is inadequately explained if the contents of the cosmos primarily oscillate between being one and being four and neither Love nor Strife nor the daimones have any motive for increasing the variety to more than four distinct things.

(iv) *Love's return*

Strife may go on creating greater diversity and discord in an ever-increasing plurality as long as he has scope to do so. What then determines the end of Strife's period of rule if it is not the achievement of some finite state of 'total strife'? To suppose that Love's return is necessitated simply by the passing of a certain time or the achievement of a certain state of disunity is no more appropriate than it was in the case of Strife's return. A fixed period of banishment may follow of necessity upon the first act of strife, but this does not preclude the banishment being prolonged indefinitely as a consequence of further acts of strife. The return of Strife depended upon the action of a daimon in accordance with strife, and this happened as soon as Love's time was up because Strife was no longer restrained. Similarly the return of Love depends upon the daimones choosing to act in accordance with love instead of strife, and this they *can* do once Strife's time is up and must do if Strife's time is not to be prolonged still further. Unless they do choose to act with love, continued acts of strife can prolong and promote the period of differentiation which is the exile of the daimones and Strife's regime.

The indeterminacy of the time of Love's return is thus closely linked to Empedocles' pleas to mankind to come to its senses and give up those actions of bloodshed, sacrifice and sex which are the cause of the continuation of Strife's regime and of the daimones' exile and misery.⁶⁹ If these actions had no effect upon the duration of the exile or the

⁶⁷ Both this and the traditional interpretation of B35 are circular: if we assume that the work of Strife is to make four elements then we assume that at Strife's peak at the start of B35 there are four elements and it transpires that Love creates a greater plurality than Strife; if we assume that the work of Strife is to make an extreme plurality of distinctions then we assume that at Strife's peak at the start of B35 there are a great many different things and it transpires that Love reduces the plurality and creates more unified beings. Lines 14–15 of B35 are very unclear and it is impossible to determine what are supposed to be mixed or unmixed. Simplicius has ἄκριτα (confused) not ἀκρητα (unmixed) in line 15. Most editors read ἀκρητα on the basis of a (?mis)reading by Theophrastus which clearly puzzled him and others: Plutarch 677d; Athenaeus 10.423f.

⁶⁸ B17.1–2, 7–8, 9–10, 16–17; B20.2–5; B26.5–9.

⁶⁹ On sacrifice and bloodshed, B136, 137, 139. On sex see Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7.29.22. Given Empedocles' one world view all sexual relations are incestuous. On the consequent miseries, B145. Marriage and the shedding of blood in childbirth are conceived as parallel to sacrifice (see H. King, 'Sacrificial Blood', *Helios* Women in Antiquity, special issue 1986, discussing B70).

time of Love's return, there would be little force to Empedocles' passionate words of rebuke. The cosmic alternation of one and many is not a separate story from the katharmoi; it is upon these ritual exiles (katharmoi) and their capacity to choose between a life of bloodshed and discord or one of purity and unanimity that the cosmic changes depend.⁷⁰

The open-endedness of increasing Strife is supported by the parallel which has often been observed in the myth in Plato's *Politicus*. At 273c–e the world gradually runs wild in the absence of the good pilot, but although it comes 'in danger of destruction' there is no final state of disarray to which it attains; it continues to deteriorate until such time as the god perceives its dire condition and takes control once more. The sea in which god fears it may founder is a boundless one, ἄπειρον ὄντα;⁷¹ there is no limit to the process of differentiation which constitutes the 'boundless sea of unlikeness'.⁷²

(v) *Mixing and unmixing*

Plato's wording in the *Politicus* also suggests an explanation of the process of creating a plurality that is the work of Strife. What Strife creates is unlikeness, dissimilarity, ἀνομοιότης, whereas Love creates likeness, sameness, a total absence of difference. How do these tasks relate to the process of mixing which is clearly prominent in several passages of Empedocles?

We hear of mixing in a number of contexts, but particularly in passages describing the creation of mortal creatures. One of these is the section of B35 where, on the return of Love after the completion of Strife's rule, all things begin to come together, and as a result of mixture many sorts of mortal creatures pour forth. The other main references to mixing occur in B23 which is the description of the painter mixing his colours to create a representation of all the things in the world; this is apparently a simile for explaining the process by which the real things are formed out of mixtures of elements (as in B21.9–14) and it becomes fairly clear from the connection between B21 and B23 (in which the same list of things – trees, men, women, beasts, birds, fish and gods – is given) that the phrase 'running through each other' (B21.13, B26.3, B17.34) is another way of referring to the elements mixing. At B21.14 Empedocles mentions that mixture (κρῆσις) causes change, while at B8 he says that there is no such thing as real birth or real death but only mixture and interchange of mixed things (ἀλλὰ μόνον μίξις τε διάλλαξις τε μιν γέντων).⁷³

Empedocles never ascribes the process of mixture to any agent;⁷⁴ it is something

⁷⁰ B128 in particular describes mortals living in a state of purity in accordance with love, and it is natural to suggest that this belongs to the period of increasing unity just before the return to the one. B130 probably also describes the same stage. The source of enlightenment which will set deluded mortals on the path of purity may be the wise man described in B129.

⁷¹ 273d6.

⁷² τὸν τῆς ἀνομοιότητος ἄπειρον ὄντα πόντον, 273d6.

⁷³ The phrase suggests 'mixing and remixing' of things already mixed rather than mixture and separation out of, and into, pure elements. An individual mortal thing is born when its peculiar mixture is formed; it dies when its elements are remixed to form other products. No reference is made here to separation into elements.

⁷⁴ It is noteworthy that in the simile of mixing paints the painters are mentioned – it is they who mix the paints and produce the representations (B23.1–5) – whereas by contrast in the real world no one does the mixing: the things grow up of their own accord (ἐβλάστησε, B21.10) and run through each other; they mix themselves up. Whether they do this 'in Love' or 'in Strife' is unclear: both are mentioned in B21.7–8; in Strife the things become different shapes (διάμορφα) which seems to be much like what happens when they mix, for then they 'become various' (γίγνεται ἀλλοιωπά) B21.7, 14.

which happens at one or more times in the sequence of alternating regimes, but what causes it to happen may be complex. We have seen that it happens when Love returns after Strife's supremacy (B35), and Love's return might be said to cause it in a minimal way; however, it may be no more than a by-product of the initial stages of the real process governed by Love – that things 'come together to be one alone' (B35.5). At the time at which the mixing occurs both Love and Strife are operative and indeed Strife still tips the balance of power; Love is operating on the things in the state of differentiation achieved by Strife, a chaotic state in which there exists a huge plurality of different things at odds with each other. The first thing that happens under the influence of Love's return is that these things begin to combine and cohere, mixing into compounds that are more similar and less at odds. But this is not to say that mixing is the exclusive rôle of Love. There is no reason why mixing should not also occur when Love is on the way out, as things mix and remix to make more *dissimilar* compounds in the differentiation produced by Strife.

Unmixing of compounds into elements is not a process described in the verses of Empedocles that are preserved. A number of testimonia suggest that there was a stage at which the four elements were entirely segregated under Strife,⁷⁵ but there is no clear evidence that this was the final achievement of Strife's work rather than a preliminary stage, nor is it certain that the elements had then been separated out from a mixture.⁷⁶ Whether Strife's segregation of the four elements into a cosmos is a process of *unmixing* a mixture or *making* different elements out of a unity that did not have those elements before, depends on what there was under Love before Strife set about making the cosmos.

(vi) *The one*

Against the commonly held view that the one under Love is a mixture of four elements retaining their proper characteristics but so finely mixed as to be apparently indistinguishable,⁷⁷ much evidence might be cited from the verses of Empedocles, in which, so far as we can judge, the four elements are probably named only in the context of the contents of the *plural* world.⁷⁸ But the clearest evidence that the elements do

⁷⁵ See for example Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A4. 985a25ff.; *De caelo* B13. 295a29ff.; Plutarch, *De fac. in orbe lun.* 926d–927a. See above n. 63.

⁷⁶ Ps. Plutarch (DK 31A30) does mention separation from a primal mixture, but the basis of his testimony is not known. The reference to mixture is absent from Aetius 2.6.3 (DK 31A49).

⁷⁷ This view is expounded in detail by M. C. Stokes, *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy* (1971), ch. 6, esp. pp. 162–3. The result would be that Love is actually incapable of producing a unity since one part must always differ from another however small those parts. It begins to look as though to achieve homogeneity by the smallness of the parts in the mixture Empedocles would have to make Love complete an infinite division; Love's 'one' becomes an extreme plurality. Solmsen (1975) suggests that Empedocles could not allow the elements to lose their identity completely, and that the most he can afford to say is that they disappear for the eye (p. 136) on the grounds that he has repudiated *genesis* and *phthora*; but (a) as Solmsen himself notes (1975, p. 128) it is only *genesis e nihilo* that is repudiated and (b) the resolution of *phusis* and *thanatos* into mixing and interchange of mixed things in B8 is specifically applied to mortal things (*θνητά*) and need not extend to elements.

⁷⁸ See particularly B17.17. Note that the entire passage B17.17–35 describes the world of plurality; it describes the way in which Love is operative among mortals in this world and likewise the way in which the elements operate in this world, each with its own *ἦθος* (line 28). This gives a better sense to line 27: they are 'of like age' not in being immortal but in coming to birth at the same time and persisting throughout the period of Strife's dominance. B6 need not imply that the elements are fundamental to more than Strife's dispensation: we have no context for these verses and *πρῶτον* need not mean that they occurred early in the poem; it could be the start of any new section (compare B38.1).

not retain their characteristics in a mixture under Love come from some passages of Aristotle.

Aristotle discusses mixture at some length in his *De generatione et corruptione* 1.10, and raises problems of divisibility which arise with the type of mixture which aims at homogeneity by means of juxtaposition of fine parts that are actually distinct; this is the type of mixture that has often been attributed to Empedocles, but although Aristotle is eager to attack Empedocles when he can in the *GC* he does not attack him for this confusion. The only explicit object of attack in this chapter is Anaxagoras who is accused at 327b15–23 of maintaining mixture of non-separables.⁷⁹ This suggests that Aristotle did not think that Empedocles' unity involved homogeneous mixture. Moreover in *GC* 315a3–25 Aristotle makes it quite clear that, as he reads Empedocles, the elements can and do lose their properties when gathered into the one and that they 'come into being' from the one. Philoponus, commenting on this passage, expands Aristotle's point thus:

On the one hand he says things contrary to the *phainomena* in denying alteration when it is in fact evident,⁸⁰ and on the other hand he says things contrary to himself in that he says (a) that the elements are immutable and that they do not come into being from each other but the other things come to be from them; but then again he says (b) that when Love is in power all things become one and bring about the sphere which exists as something without quality, as no character, neither of fire nor of any of the others, is preserved in it any longer, given that each of the elements has cast off its individual form.⁸¹

Philoponus specifically claims that the elements lose their character, *ιδότης*, and their proper form when under the one, not just that they get mixed up since that would not entail any contradiction of point (a). Philoponus' account is merely spelling out Aristotle's own comment:

For the universe was not, presumably, fire *and* earth *and* water when it was one.⁸²

Nevertheless Philoponus' exegesis of Aristotle is slightly misleading, for Aristotle's point is not, as one might suppose from reading Philoponus, that Empedocles said (a) that the elements are eternally immutable and (b) that under the one the elements change by losing their character. The contradiction which Aristotle imputes to Empedocles is more subtle and philosophically more interesting; it is that Empedocles maintained (a) that one element could not change *into another* and (b) that if, as Empedocles holds, the elements lose all their differentiae under the one and then gain their differentiae when divided from the one again, it will follow that a part of the one that had once been water may now become earth and hence one element may after all change into another:

He maintains *both* that none of the elements comes to be from any other, whilst everything else comes to be from them *and* – when he has gathered together the whole of nature except Strife into one – that from this one everything once again comes into being. Clearly then it is by their being separated out from some one thing by various differentiae and affections that one thing came to be water, another fire, just as he calls the sun white and hot, the earth heavy and hard. So if these differentiae are removed (and they are removable since they came to be) obviously earth must come to be from water and water from earth, and similarly with each of the others...⁸³

⁷⁹ There is no reason to suppose that Empedocles is included in this error, *pace* Williams (1982), p. 144, Joachim, *Aristotle on Coming to Be and Passing Away* (1922), p. 179. Philoponus takes the plural *οἱ φάσκοντες* to mean *οἱ περὶ Ἀναξαγόραν*, which is surely right.

⁸⁰ This must refer to the denial of alteration within the current phenomenal world.

⁸¹ Philoponus, *Gen. et Corr.* 19.3.

⁸² *De gen. et corr.* 315a18–19 (tr. Williams, 1982).

⁸³ *De gen. et corr.* 315a4–14 (tr. Williams, 1982).

Aristotle takes it as obvious in this passage that the differentiae of the elements come and go as they pass out of and into the one; the part of his interpretation that he regards as tendentious is the fact that Empedocles has to admit that what was once water will become earth and so forth; this Empedocles has to admit as a result of his claim that things come into being out of something without any of these differentiae. Thus for Aristotle's polemic to work, the claim that differentiae are lost and gained must be an interpretation that is not open to question, otherwise Empedocles would have an easy and obvious line of defence. Aristotle offers some argument in favour of this interpretation, but he does not anticipate that it might cause much surprise. It is the datum on which he bases his inference that elements must change into each other.

Aristotle does *not* say that Empedocles denied that the elements could lose and gain their differentiae; in fact he specifically attributes to him the doctrine that they do lose and gain their differentiae in changing into and out of the one.⁸⁴ What Empedocles is supposed to have denied is that one element might lose its own differentiae and gain those of another; a part which was earth before ought only to become earth again after it leaves the one.

Aristotle's criticism goes home only on his assumption that the elements lose not only their actual characteristics but also their potential differentiae, a distinction which Aristotle does not import here though he might have done. On his view no part of the sphere can be distinguished, even by having the capacity to become earth rather than water or vice versa. Thus so far from suggesting that Empedocles' one is a mixture, Aristotle envisages it as an absolute unity from which all distinctions, actual or potential, have been eliminated.⁸⁵

(vii) *Difference*

Strife's rôle then is to create differences where there were *no* differences before and to set things at odds with each other. His rôle is not to separate elements from a primal

⁸⁴ It might be thought that Aristotle is importing inappropriate distinctions here since it might appear plausible to claim that the elements do not lose their character any more in the one than in the ordinary mortal compounds: just as earth, air, fire and water are not apparent as such in trees and the like so they would not be apparent in the one; but nevertheless Empedocles would want to maintain that the elements were still unchanged in reality, the appearance being the result of the mixture. The sphere or 'one' would then be simply a huge 'mortal'. This view, a version of which must be maintained by anyone who holds that the one is a mixture of the same type (only more so) as the mortals, does not do justice to the strong distinction made by Empedocles between the one and the many and the divine status accorded to the one. The distinction that Aristotle assumes between the way the elements behave in mortal compounds and the change they undergo in moving into and out of the 'one' seems to correspond with the emphatic contrast pervading Empedocles' account.

⁸⁵ This must surely be right if Love's work is to abolish differences, but whether Aristotle's criticism is fair depends on whether he is right to suggest that the elements could not change into one another when the 'one' occurred as an intervening step, or whether Empedocles meant to exclude such change only within a single world of Strife. This relates to the question of whether the 'one' or the elements are Empedocles' prior principles, which Aristotle proceeds to discuss, 315a19–25; if the elements are merely passing phases of a basic 'one' it is unlikely that the same part of the one need retain the same character in successive plural worlds; if the one is a passing phase of basic elements it is more plausible that they might be envisaged returning to their former character. This issue also affects the notion of personal immortality: if Empedocles takes the kinship of life seriously the true self is the one daimon in its true home under Love, and the differences under Strife are unfortunate aberrations; thus personal immortality is preserved by the repeated return to the one not by repeated return to the same elemental characters and mortal compounds.

mixture since there was no primal mixture.⁸⁶ One way in which he creates differences is by creating the differences between four elements and setting them apart; but he may also create differences in other ways, most obviously by creating numerous different combinations of those elements to produce a variety of different ‘things’ in the world. Once we have freed ourselves from the notion that mixing is the unique work of Love there need be no difficulty in suggesting that Strife also uses combination of elements to create differences and discord in the plural world. The criterion for whether things are governed by Strife or Love is not whether they are mixed or unmixed but whether they are at odds and different or alike and drawn to each other.

A number of passages emphasise the notions of hostility and difference, contrasting with likeness and desire for each other. In B21.7–8 things become different (*διάμορφα*) under Strife and are apart, while under Love they desire each other. The ‘all things’ (*πάντα*) that are the subject in these lines must relate to the elements (listed in the preceding four lines) but they need not be the elements in their pure forms; in line 9 ‘all things’ refers to the compounds – the trees, men, women, beasts and birds; it is just as plausible to say that under Strife men and women differ and are set apart and in Love they come together and desire each other, as it is to say the same of the elements. Even more interesting is B22.4–9; again the four elements have just been listed (B22.2) but the subject of these lines is various combinations and mixtures of the elements. Of these the ones that are more suited to each other, as regards their mixture, love and desire each other, being made alike by Love:

ὥς δ' αὐτως ὅσα κρήσιν ἐπαρκέα μάλλον ἔασιν
ἀλλήλοις ἔστερκται ὁμοιωθέντ' Ἀφροδίτῃ.

(B22.4–5)

By contrast those which are unlike in mixture and birth and form are hostile to each other and unaccustomed to come together, because Strife is responsible for their birth:

ἐχθρὰ <δ' ᾧ> πλείστον ἀπ' ἀλλήλων διέχουσι μάλιστα
γέννηι τε κρήσει τε καὶ εἶδεν ἐκμάκτοισι,
πάντῃ συγγίνεσθαι ἀήθεα καὶ μάλα λυγρὰ
Νείκεος ἐνεσίησιν, ὅτι σφίσι γένναν ἔοργεν.

(B22.6–9)

Both groups are mixtures and both are presumably mortals, but one group is of mixtures that are drawn to each other and made alike; Love is responsible for these. The other group is of hostile and very different mixtures which are at odds; these mixtures are brought to birth by Strife.⁸⁷

Strife can go on creating more and more differences between compounds, an ever-increasing variety of ‘things’. For this to be possible the four elements would have to be infinitely divisible, both to allow for an infinity of different possible proportions in the mixtures and in order to permit the production of an unlimited number of individuals in this world. So matter would in effect need to be potentially divisible at every point. This need not create any problems for Empedocles since Strife never actually completes his infinite task, and it is unlikely that Empedocles ever considered

⁸⁶ That is to say, the state of unity under total Love was not a primal mixture. There may be a primal mixture in the sense that the first creation of the differences between the four elements may convert the one under Love into a mixture of four elements, which Strife then structures to make a world. See below, section (x).

⁸⁷ Simplicius (*Phys.* 160.26–161.13), who quotes the passage, clearly sees that two groups of products are in question, one lot created by Love, the other by Strife. He suggests that the former are in the intelligible world, the latter in the sensible world. The text and precise meaning of line 9 are in doubt.

the implications of Strife's potentially unlimited differentiation in this way. However, it would explain Aristotle's inference that Empedocles had a peculiar theory about divisibility, *De caelo* 305a1ff.:

But if the dividing up is to stop, either the body at which it comes to stop will be atomic or it will be divisible but never-to-be-divided, just like Empedocles seems to want to say.

For Empedocles Strife's work comes to an end not because he could not in principle go on differentiating but because the time comes round which marks the end of his supremacy, when Love returns; that is when the daimones start to act in accordance with Love's principles.

(viii) *Creation and action*

At various points throughout this paper I have used phrases such as 'Strife creates differences' and 'Love makes things one', but the support for such a notion of direct action by the forces of Love and Strife in the verses of Empedocles is scanty. Strife 'grows big' and 'springs to his honours' (B30) and he 'reaches the depth of the whirl' (B35.3) and once he actually seems to 'hold things back' (B35.9), but for the most part Empedocles describes the effects of Love and Strife indirectly: the things themselves act 'in love' and 'in strife'; they are not passive things acted upon by external agents – they have the capacity to act in themselves but their actions are in accordance with Strife and with Love.

Our tendency to express Empedocles' theories in terms of action by Love and Strife upon passive materials probably derives from the ancient testimonia which frequently use expressions of that form. Aristotle treats Love and Strife as Empedocles' equivalent of the efficient cause – they ought, he considers, to be the source of movement and change.⁸⁸ He therefore treats the elements as lacking a principle of movement within themselves and describes Strife and Love as acting independently, for example creating.⁸⁹ Aristotle's usage in this respect does not correspond with anything preserved in the verses of Empedocles; when Empedocles uses phrases such as

ἄλλοτε μὲν φιλότῃτι συνερχόμεν' εἰς ἓν ἅπαντα
ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ διχ' ἕκαστα φορεύμενα νείκεος ἔχθει

(B17.7–8)

we should not infer that things are moved *by* Love and Strife in any strong sense.

The possibilities opened up by the notion that the elements and mortal compounds are all themselves animate, intelligent beings, responsible (at least to some degree) for their own action, correspond much better with the expressions used by Empedocles. Strife is active in the world just in so far as things in the world are acting in strife, and Love similarly. The things themselves – elements, mortals, daimones – are the ones that act and they are held responsible for their actions: the punishment of exile falls upon the daimones because they are guilty of an act of strife; to what extent their choice is a free one may vary, but Empedocles implies that they have *some* scope for choosing between a life of love or a life of strife in his calls to mankind to give up murdering each other.⁹⁰ The relationship of the daimon in exile to Strife who holds sway is not a passive one of being controlled by Strife but an active one – putting trust in raging Strife (B115.14). This may be compulsory, because the punishment is compulsory, but it is still the daimon that has to do it. It is not something that Strife does to the daimon.

⁸⁸ E.g. *Metaphysics* 985a21–63.

⁸⁹ *Metaphysics* 1000a26–8.

⁹⁰ B136, 137, 139.

Thus when we use phrases such as ‘Strife makes things many’ and ‘Love makes things one’ we should constantly be aware that this is a post-Aristotelian shorthand. It really means ‘in strife things become many, different, etc.’ and ‘in love things become one, alike, etc.’.

(ix) *Daimones*

When the many cease to be many and become one they do not cease to be altogether. They cease to be earth, air, fire and water and all the many mortal things made out of these elements – they lose their differentiae, they cease to be different, but they do not cease to be.

For the purpose of unity in the one it is clearly not necessary that they should lose all qualities: the one itself may have some quality, and any quality that does not differentiate things and set them apart may be preserved in the one. Thus there may be some continuity between the inhabitant of the world under Love and the inhabitants of the world under Strife. Empedocles described the one as ‘god’,⁹¹ but what are banished from it are ‘daimones’ in B115. Once differences mark them out they are a plurality of daimones, but in respect of being daimones they are all alike. Thus we may suggest that the god is a single undifferentiated daimon while the banished daimones are the elements and all the other mortal compounds that inhabit the world of Strife. All these are alike in having intelligence (B110.10) and being daimones, so that Empedocles can use ‘daimon’ as a term for the elements which are the contents of Strife’s world in B59:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μείζον ἐμίσγετο δαίμονι δαίμων,
ταῦτά τε συμπίπτεσκον, ὅπῃ συνέκυρσεν ἕκαστα,
ἄλλα τε πρὸς τοῖς πολλὰ διηνεκῇ ἐξεγένοντο.

These words, Simplicius tells us, describe a time when Love was getting a hold over Strife and it is surely significant that it is in respect of their likeness (as daimones) rather than in respect of their unlikeness (as different elements and compounds) that things are said to combine under Love’s influence.

The elements, then, are not eternal and immutable except in so far as they are daimones. As elements they are a feature of the fallen world under Strife, and within his world their differences are the basic ones from which all further differences are derived; but their differences are not preserved into the one under Love. They survive into that unity only as the daimon that is ‘god’.

(x) *Blood*

What happens when Strife returns after the unity formed in the period of Love? The details of how the unity breaks up are far from clear: we know that Strife returns when the time decreed by the oath is up⁹² and Simplicius tells us that it is at this time that ‘all the limbs of god began to quiver’,⁹³ but how does the return actually come about? As we have seen ‘Strife returns to action’ is another way of saying ‘some thing begins to act in accordance with strife again’, and as a basis for speculation on what that would mean we have to turn to B115 again.

In B115 it appears that Strife’s return consists in an act of bloodshed (φόνος)⁹⁴

⁹¹ B115.13; B31; cf. Simplicius, *Phys.* 1124.1.

⁹² B30. See above, section (i).

⁹³ Simplicius, *Phys.* 1184.2ff., quoting B31.

⁹⁴ Reading φόνωι in B115.3 with DK, KRS and most editors. φόβωι, as in Plutarch, is retained by Wright (1981). νείκεί θ’ in line 4 is Diels’ suggestion.

εὐτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνωι φίλα γυῖα μίγηι,
 <νείκεί θ'> ὅς κε ἐπίορκον ἀμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσει...

But this act of bloodshed must have to occur within the undifferentiated one, the god. How can this be? We should note first the shift from singular to plural in the lines describing the act of bloodshed:

εὐτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνωι φίλα γυῖα μίγηι,
 νείκεί θ' ὅς κε ἐπίορκον ἀμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσει,
 δαίμονες οὔτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο...

What was there before the act of bloodshed was one thing (τις): this was the one who committed the sin because there was no other to do so; but in doing so it has become differentiated and plural – as soon as the deed has been done the one has become the daimones. Thus the daimones are guilty of the deed because they were the one that committed it at the time that it happened.

But how can the one shed blood when there is no other whose blood it might shed? It must shed its own blood; and this is a correct description of what it does precisely because that first act of strife introduces difference into the undifferentiated unity. What the sin does is to turn a unity in which there were no differences into a mixture of different things. This means that the one god turns into blood because the mixture that results is a mixture of the four elements in equal proportions⁹⁵ and a mixture of that sort is blood, as we know from B98.

'When someone in error stains his own limbs with blood' (B115.3) carries a double significance. *Phonos* stands for murder, the act of shedding blood, but it also stands quite simply for the physical substance, blood. Empedocles uses it interchangeably with αἷμα in describing physiological processes in a living creature in B100, and in B118.8 *phonos* is used for the blood of sacrificial animals with which one drenches the altar. Here in B115 the significance is both physical and ritual: god physically stains his own limbs with real blood at the same time as he pollutes himself with (the sin of) murder. That murder is the death of god as he sheds his own blood. This is why bloodshed is so important as the archetypal sin – every time murder is committed it reiterates the first act of bloodshed which turned the one into a plurality.

If this reconstruction of the first act of strife is correct it is clear that the first stage of Strife's world will be a mixture of the four elements – blood.⁹⁶ From this mixture Strife may perform a cosmogony by segregating the four elements to form the cosmic masses, but it still remains true that the principal effect of Strife is to create further differentiation rather than to segregate the things already differentiated. The segregation will follow from the differentiation because the different things formed in Strife are hostile and at odds and move away from each other in hatred.

(xi) *Cosmic cycles*

Much recent work has centred on reconstructing how Empedocles' Cosmic cycle must have worked. One of the aims of this paper has been to divert attention from such details which seem to me to be far from the focus of Empedocles' attention. Empedocles' preoccupation is with motivation; his observation that mortals perversely choose a life of hostility, strife and bloodshed when their lot would be much improved if they lived in love and unity leads him to postulate an explanation in terms of an opposition between Love and Strife, a degree of delusion on the part of those who live in strife and an element of compulsion to explain why things ever went wrong

⁹⁵ For the idea that there are equal quantities of the four elements in the world, see B17.27.

⁹⁶ See above, n. 86.

in the first place. Clearly he seeks some sort of symmetry between the two forces to explain why neither wins out in the end and this leads to the notion of taking turns and limited allowances of time; but to seek precise measures and equal periods, times of increasing Strife matching increasing Love, and to enquire about the duration of 'total Strife' or 'total Love' would be misguided. These issues are vague precisely because the actions and motivations of the beings in the world are unpredictable and perverse. There may be times when, of necessity, we cannot but act in strife, but there are other times when we may certainly choose whether we act in strife or in love; which choice we make must have some effect on how soon or how late Love completes her return, and hence how long the periods within a complete cycle last.⁹⁷

IV. ONE MESSAGE

This essay has been an attempt to reinterpret Empedocles' system as a whole by taking the banishment of the daimones as the fundamental theme. The result is a picture of Empedocles as primarily concerned with what we might call moral and religious issues. He is seeking an explanation for the way in which the beings which inhabit the world choose to act and the way in which their actions seem to have repercussions in the physical and social structure of the world as a whole. Physics itself becomes a moral issue: the physical details of the alternation between one and many, which have been the focus of so much attention in the past, are merely the symptoms of the delicate balance between motivation by love and motivation by enmity which Empedocles posits as the metaphysical explanation of our moral and religious experience. It is therefore not surprising that it is impossible to find a satisfactory explanation of the physical details without reference to the moral and religious matters of motivation, guilt, sin, responsibility and punishment.

Empedocles' philosophy as presented here is a single message. It is the message of a Pythagorean whose belief in the kinship of all living things, and in the possibility that intelligence extends beyond the limits of the brief existence that is commonly called life, is matched by a conviction that the actions of individuals have a profound effect upon the fate of themselves and their kindred and upon the history of the whole world – animate, inanimate and divine. Indeed, there are no clear distinctions between animate and inanimate: there is a continuum of being so that the kinship of living things extends to all things, elements and compounds alike. Nor is the distinction between divine and mortal a firm one: the mortal things are as capable of becoming god as god is capable of becoming mortal. Thus there can be no clear divisions between physics and ethics or between physics and religion.

V. PYTHAGOREAN AND ELEATIC

Empedocles is fundamentally a Pythagorean, but he is a Pythagorean responding to Parmenides. Clearly, however, his response to Parmenides cannot be the response of the atomists, a response which posits no ultimate unity but an ultimate plurality that

⁹⁷ All this suggests that the type of scheme involving a single cosmogony between successive worlds of Love is more in the right spirit than a double cosmogony with a strictly symmetrical four-stage cycle. Whether we would need two proper zoogonies within the world of Strife depends on how far towards chaos Strife's work gets before the daimones come to their senses, and whether Strife can make anything resembling a coherent creature in the period in which difference is increasing. See above, n. 65. The primary opposition is between the world as 'one' and the world as 'more than one', the latter including all the various degrees of dominance of Strife or Love within 'this world'. For this type of two-stage cycle see e.g. Bollack (1965–9) and KRS.

can change only by mixing and separating. Only under Strife does Empedocles have a plurality that changes by mixture; on the other hand it is the 'one' under Love, in which there is no plurality and no differentiation, that cannot fail to remind us of the subject of Parmenides' *Way of Truth*. So far from responding to Parmenides with a denial that the one is undifferentiated, Empedocles affirms this feature as fundamental: given that the 'one' is marked by a total absence of difference, what is the explanation of the difference that we experience in the world? Difference, he suggests, is something that alters and breaks up the one and the explanation of it is sin. Things have gone wrong, because Strife exists as well as Love.

Empedocles responds to Parmenides by agreeing that unity is perfect; that is how things ought to be. But the plurality of Parmenides' *Way of Seeming* turns out to be not merely an appearance. For Empedocles it is real because the world is not always perfect; the plurality comes into being because of the capacity of moral beings to choose evil; Parmenides' Way of Seeming becomes the miserable plural path of life on which deluded mortals are condemned to wander as long as they continue in their witting or unwitting acts of strife. Their delusion is not in taking for truth what is merely an appearance but in taking for good what is actually evil, destructive Strife which promotes the well-being of this plural world.

Empedocles' position is basically pessimistic because of the fundamental dualism of Love and Strife. Love will never achieve eternal supremacy because Strife can never finally be overcome. The daimones have the capacity to choose between acting in love and acting in strife, but nevertheless they will always act in strife as soon as they are given the chance after Love's rule. On the other hand, there are moments of optimism, since our capacity to act in accordance with Love provides an opportunity for hastening the return to the one and improving the lot of the exiles banished into the divisive world of Strife. The possibility that we might change to a life of love instead of strife depends upon our recognising that the values of this world in which we are indoctrinated are the reverse of the true values of the other world to which we rightly belong and from which we are in exile. Empedocles' poem is concerned both to point out the importance of getting our values the right way up and to declare that most of us have got them the wrong way up.⁹⁸

New Hall, Cambridge

CATHERINE OSBORNE

⁹⁸ I have argued for the unity of Empedocles' philosophy on the basis that physics and *Katharmoi* are one and the same poem. David Sedley has suggested an alternative view which is that all our fragments come from the physics except the few that are explicitly assigned in the sources to the *Katharmoi*, proposing that the *Katharmoi* was not a philosophical work but a set of medical purifications. This position would change little in the interpretation offered here, the main difference being the exclusion of B112 (see above, n. 51). On the other hand, I prefer to maintain the idea that the *Katharmoi* was the title of the philosophical poem because (1) it fits well with the theme of banishment of the daimones in purification of blood guilt which is central to the work, (2) Hippolytus implies that the alternation of one and many belonged with the *Purifications*, and (3) the material in B112 is rich in connotations if it belongs in a context which questions the values of society.

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