

THE SPEECH OF PYTHAGORAS IN OVID *METAMORPHOSES* 15: EMPEDOCLEAN *EPOS*

Ovidians continue to be puzzled by the 404-line speech put into the mouth of Pythagoras in book 15 of the *Metamorphoses*. Questions of literary decorum and quality are insistently raised: how does the philosopher's popular science consort with the predominantly mythological matter of the preceding fourteen books? Do Pythagoras' revelations provide some kind of unifying ground, a 'key', for the endless variety of the poem?¹ Can one take the Speech as a serious essay in philosophical didactic, or is it all a mighty spoof, as intentionally laughable, perhaps, as the imperial panegyric with which the narrative of book 15 concludes?² Or should we beware of imposing modern tastes on Ovid's original audience, and respect the Hellenistic and Roman predilection for scientific poetry? This article seeks to establish further contexts for the evaluation of the Speech of Pythagoras through a study of Ovid's allusive practice within the Greco-Roman tradition of hexameter *epos*. The figure who provides a foundation for Ovid's construction of his own poetic genealogy turns out to be the Greek philosophical poet Empedocles. The resulting reflections on Ovid's manipulation of generic conventions may be timely in the light of the recent appearance of sophisticated and fresh approaches to the question of whether the *Metamorphoses* is, or is not, an epic.³

I. EMPEDOCLES IN OVID

In 1924 A. Rostagni attempted to reconstruct an esoteric Pythagorean *Hieros Logos*.⁴ One of the chief witnesses in his case was Ovid's Pythagoras; Rostagni, arguing against the theory that the Speech was derived mainly from Varro,⁵ pointed to the

¹ G. Hermann, *Die Pythagorasrede im XV Buch als Schlüssel zum Gesamtwerk der Metamorphosen* (Staatsarbeit Saarbrücken, 1955); S. Viarre, *L'Image et la pensée dans les 'Métamorphoses' d'Ovide* (Paris, 1964), pp. 223–88; D. A. Little, 'The Speech of Pythagoras in *Metamorphoses* 15 and the Structure of the *Metamorphoses*', *Hermes* 98 (1970), pp. 340–60 (with a survey of earlier attempts to find unity).

² The case for parodic or satirical intention has been argued by C. P. Segal, 'Myth and Philosophy in the *Metamorphoses*: Ovid's Augustanism and the Augustan Conclusion of Book XV', *AJPh* 90 (1969), 257–92; A. W. J. Holleman, 'Ovidii Metamorphoseon Liber XV 622–870 (Carmen et Error?)', *Latomus* 28 (1969), 42–60; W. R. Johnson, *CSCA* 3 (1970), 137–48; G. K. Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 104–7; id., 'The Cipus Episode in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (15.565–621)', *TAPhA* 98 (1967), 181–91. Arguments against this, seemingly the now prevailing, view of *Met.* 15 are brought by D. A. Little, 'Non-Parody in *Metamorphoses* 15', *Prudentia* 6 (1974), 17–21; id., 'Ovid's Eulogy of Augustus: *Metamorphoses* 15.851–70', *Prudentia* 8 (1976), 19–35. Little points out that George Sandys and Dryden thought that the Speech of Pythagoras was the high-point of the poem, Renaissance judgments which should at least give us pause for thought.

³ P. E. Knox, *Ovid's Metamorphoses and the Traditions of Augustan Poetry (PCPhS Supplement 11, Cambridge, 1986)*; S. Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone* (Cambridge, 1986).

⁴ *Il Verbo di Pitagora* (Turin, 1924).

⁵ A position maintained by A. Schmekel, *De Ovidiana Pythagorae doctrinae adumbratione* (diss. Greifswald, 1885); G. Lafaye, *Le Métamorphoses d'Ovide et leurs modèles grecs* (Paris, 1904), pp. 191–216.

large number of parallels between the Speech of Pythagoras and the fragments of Empedocles, a feature which he explained on the hypothesis that Ovid drew on the esoteric *Hieros Logos*, a work some of whose secrets had already been divulged by the indiscreet Empedocles.⁶ Rostagni's exercise in Pythagorean *Quellenforschung* has not won many followers, and the reasons for Ovid's extensive use of Empedocles still await explanation.

The Speech of Pythagoras is a highly eclectic exercise in writing philosophical poetry, but the broad outline, as well as much of the detail, is paralleled in the philosophical hexameter poetry of Empedocles.⁷ The Speech contains two main subjects, firstly, a passionate attack on meat-eating and sacrifice which frames, secondly, a revelation and lengthy exemplification of the principle of cosmic metamorphosis; the two are linked (explicitly at 15.456–62) by the doctrine of metempsychosis, the migration of souls from one body into another (one reason that it is wrong to eat meat is because you might be eating your relatives). Otis and Bömer see the passages on vegetarianism as a ploy whereby lip-service is paid at beginning and end to the *persona* of Pythagoras, while the central and longer section is in effect a semi-philosophical discourse on change in the mouth of Ovid.⁸ But the juxtaposition of a sermon on vegetarianism with a lecture *de rerum natura* reproduces the duality of Empedocles' work: traditionally the fragments of the Sicilian preSocratic are distributed between two works, the *Katharmoi*, containing a religious doctrine on metempsychosis and the consequent need to abstain from meat-eating and sacrifice; and the *Peri Phuseos*, containing a physical doctrine on the four elements and the cosmic cycle of Strife and Love. The relationship between the religious and the scientific doctrines is one of the central problems of Empedoclean scholarship; modern scholars, moving away from the positivist urge to set hard barriers between *logos* and *muthos*, tend to see Empedocles' physics and his religious philosophy as being closely interdependent; and Ovid will reproduce the Empedoclean model even more faithfully if the surviving fragments of Empedocles in fact come from one, not two, poems, a case that has recently been argued by Catherine Osborne.⁹

Why should Ovid put in the mouth of Pythagoras a speech which is in essence Empedoclean? The reasons are many, and this plurality itself serves Ovid's

⁶ Cf. W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (E. L. Miner, transl., Cambridge, MA, 1972), pp. 218–20. The parallels between Empedocles and the cosmogony of *Met.* 1, as well as the Speech of Pythagoras, were listed by C. Pascal, *Graecia Capta* (Florence, 1905), pp. 129–51; F. E. Robbins, *CPh* 8 (1913), 403–4 dismissed Pascal's Empedoclean parallels on the grounds that they were all mediated through Lucretius; this was excessively sceptical, but the Lucretian colouring is also important (see below). The Empedoclean parallels in the Speech of Pythagoras are also discussed by E. Bignone, *Empedocle* (Turin, 1916), p. 272; R. Segl, *Die Pythagorasrede im 15. Buch von Ovids Metamorphosen* (diss. Salzburg, 1970); F. della Corte, 'Gli Empedoclea e Ovidio', *Maia* 37 (1985), 3–12 (who airs the possibility that Sallustius' *Empedoclea* was an intermediary model for Ovid, but is otherwise silent on the relation of the Speech of Pythagoras to the Latin hexameter tradition).

⁷ I list the Empedoclean parallels (varying in their degree of closeness): *Met.* 15.60–64: **Emped.** B 129 DK; 15.63–4: B 17.21; 15.75–6, 459–68: B 136, 137; 15.93: B 139.2 (cf. *Od.* 9.295); 15.96–103 (Golden Age): B 128; 15.102: B 130; 15.111–26: B 128.8; 15.143–52: cf. B 112; 15.153: cf. B 124; 15.192: cf. B 47; 15.239–51 (four elements): B 6.1; 15.252–8: B 8, 12, 17.6–13, 26.8–12; 15.340–55 (Etna): cf. B 52. Many of these parallels are discussed by F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso. Metamorphosen Buch XIV–XV* (Heidelberg, 1986): p. 323 for a list. The Empedoclean colour is virtually absent in the long section of *admiranda* and *paradoxa* at 259–452.

⁸ Bömer (n. 7), p. 271; B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge, 1970²), pp. 296–9.

⁹ *CQ* n.s. 37 (1987), 24–50.

kaleidoscopic principle of imitation; but behind the plurality a unifying ground may be found in the use of Empedocles to redefine the history of Latin *epos*, and to establish Ovid's place at the culmination of that tradition.

In terms of the structure of the *Metamorphoses* the Speech of Pythagoras does two things: firstly, it introduces a philosophical section at a climactic point of the *Metamorphoses*, and secondly it associates that philosophical doctrine with material on the history of Rome, prelude to the Roman stories in the last part of 15. The literary-historical reasons for this conjunction of philosophy and national history I shall return to; here I make the point that the conjunction is very tidily catered for by using the old, if apocryphal, story about the meeting between the south Italian philosopher Pythagoras and Numa, the second king of Rome.¹⁰ That meeting is emblematic of the encounter between Rome and Greece which forms one of the major themes of the last book of the *Metamorphoses*, and of which we shall find another, metapoetic, example in the adoption in Latin by Ennius of the Greek (Empedoclean) hexameter tradition of didactic poetry.

We may assume that there will have been no central text ascribed to Pythagoras that Ovid would automatically have turned to (and according to some ancient *testimonia* Pythagoras like Socrates left no writings at all);¹¹ Empedocles' poem (or poems) would be a most acceptable substitute given the belief, widespread in antiquity, that Empedocles was a Pythagorean, or even a pupil of Pythagoras.¹²

As well as providing Pythagorean-type doctrines on metempsychosis and vegetarianism, Empedocles also teaches that the universe is in a state of constant change; here is another reason for his attraction as a model for Ovid. Ovid's central statement of this idea at 15.252–8 is close to Empedoclean formulations, above all fragment 8 (cf. also B12, 17.6–13, 26.8–12):¹³

nec species sua cuique manet, rerumque nouatrix
ex aliis alias reparat natura figuras,
nec perit in toto quicquam, mihi credite, mundo,
sed uariat faciemque nouat, nascique uocatur
incipere esse aliud, quam quod fuit ante, morique
desinere illud idem. cum sint huc forsitan illa,
haec translata illuc, summa tamen omnia constant.

ἄλλο δέ τοι ἔρως φύσις οὐδενὸς ἔστιν ἀπάντων
θνητῶν, οὐδέ τις οὐλομένου θανάτοιο τελευτή,
ἀλλὰ μόνον μίξις τε διάλλαξις τε μιν γέντων
ἔστι, φύσις δ' ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀνομάζεται ἀνθρώποισιν.¹⁴

Empedocles taught that cosmic history was governed by the alternating sway of the principles of Love and Strife, Love joining things together and Strife drawing them apart; at one point in the cosmic cycle Empedocles claims that the earth brings forth monsters with limbs joined at random, a bizarre picture that has an affinity with the unpredictability of the Ovidian world of metamorphosis (B 61):

πολλὰ μὲν ἀμφιπρόσωπα καὶ ἀμφίστερνα φύεσθαι,
βουγενῇ ἀνδρόπρωρα, τὰ δ' ἔμπαλιν ἐξαντέλλειν
ἀνδροφυῇ βούκρανα, μειγνύμενα τῇ μὲν ἀπ' ἀνδρῶν
τῇ δὲ γυναικοφυῇ σκιεροῖς ἡσκημένα γυίοις.

¹⁰ See Bömer (n. 7), pp. 252–3; L. Ferrero, *Storia del pitagorismo nel mondo romano* (Turin, 1955).

¹¹ Burkert (n. 6), pp. 218–20.

¹² Diog. Laert. 8.54–7.

¹³ Cf. Lucr. 1.792–3 'nam quodcumque suis mutatum finibus exit, | continuo hoc mors est illius quod fuit ante'.

¹⁴ In detail note the shared pattern of two negatives followed by adversative ('nec... nec...sed'; οὐδενὸς...οὐδέ...ἀλλὰ), and the closeness of 'nasci...uocatur' to φύσις...ὀνομάζεται.

Ovid will have noted that the Hellenistic epic poet Apollonius of Rhodes had drawn on Empedoclean monsters when describing the victims of Circe, that most famous mythological agent of transformation (*Argonautica* 4.672–80):

θήρες δ', οὐ θήρεσσιν ἐοικότες ὠμωστήσαν
οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδ' ἀνδρεσσιν ὁμὸν δέμας, ἄλλο δ' ἀπ' ἄλλων
συνμειγέες μελέων, κίον ἄθροοι, ἥτε μήλα
ἐκ σταθμῶν ἄλις εἰσιν ὀπηδεύοντα νομήι.
τοίους καὶ προτέρους ἐξ ἱλῦος ἐβλάστησεν
χθὼν αὐτῇ μικτοῖσιν ἀρηρεμένους μελέεσσιν,
οὕτω διψαλέω μάλ' ὑπ' ἥερι πιληθείσα.

Apollonius draws on Empedocles elsewhere most notably in Orpheus' song on the origin of the universe at 1.497–511,¹⁵ just as Ovid includes Empedoclean colouring in his cosmogony at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses*.¹⁶ Peter Knox argues that the Speech of Pythagoras may be taken as a symptom of Ovid's Alexandrianism, pointing to Callimachus' use of Pythagoras in his poetry;¹⁷ the Apollonian imitations of Empedocles show that in using this model as well Ovid continues an Alexandrian interest in earlier scientific poetry. Apollonius' Orpheus also yields a precedent for the displacement of Empedoclean material into the mouth of another archaic figure of wisdom.

II. EMPEDOCLES, LUCRETIUS, OVID

Aristotle in the *Poetics* (1447b 17–20) denies that Empedocles is a poet in anything but metre, but it may well be that the example is chosen polemically, because many *did* hold that he was outstanding as a poet as well as a philosopher; Diogenes Laertius (8.57) reports that in Aristotle's *On Poets* it was said that Empedocles was 'Ὀμηρικός and μεταφορικός';¹⁸ Ovid may preserve an Empedoclean metaphor in the description of the sun as (15.192) 'ipse dei clipeus' (the surviving fragments of Empedocles bear out Aristotle's statement that he liked to use striking metaphors).¹⁹ Empedoclean influence has been traced in Aeschylus, as well as Apollonius of Rhodes;²⁰ the Latin poet most indebted to Empedocles is of course Lucretius. Jean Bollack has gone so far as to claim that 'die philosophische Affinität zu Empedokles stärker als die doktrinaire Treue zum Heilbringer Epikur erscheint'.²¹ Certainly as *poet* Lucretius is

¹⁵ See W. Spoerri, *Späthellenistische Berichte über Welt, Kultur und Götter* (Basel, 1959), p. 50. For other Empedoclean echoes in Apollonius see Livrea on 4.672–81; R. L. Hunter, *Apollonius of Rhodes. Argonautica Book III* (Cambridge, 1989), index s.v. 'Empedocles'.

¹⁶ Pascal (n. 6), pp. 129ff.; L. Alfonsi, 'L'inquadramento filosofico delle Metamorfosi ovidiane', in N. I. Herescu (ed.), *Ovidiana* (Paris, 1958), p. 266; see also n. 26 below. Spoerri (n. 15), pp. 37–8 is sceptical about the direct use of Empedocles in *Met.* 1.

¹⁷ op. cit., pp. 70ff.

¹⁸ G. F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge, MA, 1957), pp. 50–52 reconciles the two Aristotelian statements through the assertion that in the *Poetics* the main issue is *mimesis*.

¹⁹ J. Longrigg, '“Ice of Bronze” (Lucretius 1.493)', *CR* 20 (1970), 8–9; I. Cazzaniga, 'Le metafore enniiane relative a cielo e stelle ed alcuni placita di tradizione Anassimeno-Empedoclea', *PP* 26 (1971), 102–19, at 104 on *caeli clipeus* (see also Rostagni (n. 4), p. 289 n. 1).

²⁰ Empedocles and Aeschylus: S. Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 121 n. 32; W. Rösler, *Reflexe vorsokratischen Denkens bei Aischylos* (Meisenheim, 1970); M. Griffith, *The Authenticity of the Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 222–3; Cazzaniga (n. 19), 111–17.

²¹ 'Lukrez und Empedokles', *Die Neue Rundschau* (1959), 656–86, at 685. Other discussions of Lucretius' debt to Empedocles: F. Jobst, *Über das Verhältnis zwischen Lucretius und Empedokles* (diss. Munich, 1907); W. Kranz, 'Lukrez und Empedokles', *Philologus* 96 (1943/4), 68–107; D. Furlay, 'Variations on Themes from Empedocles in Lucretius' Proem', *BICS* 17

profoundly Empedoclean. Ovid frequently imitates Lucretius in the *Metamorphoses* and Lucretian influence is overwhelming at a number of points in the Speech of Pythagoras (the sampler of hexameter didactic within the *Metamorphoses*);²² the result is a good example of 'double allusion', as Ovid simultaneously imitates both Empedocles and his imitator Lucretius.²³ This double allusion is signalled right at the beginning of the episode, in the description of Pythagoras at 15.60–72, where the language echoes the praise of Epicurus at Lucretius 1.62–79, but the object of praise, Pythagoras, is the same as that in Lucretius' own model in Empedocles (B 129).²⁴

The Ovidian Pythagoras prefaces his revelation of the nature of the world and of the soul with a diatribe on the evil of animal sacrifice; Lucretius, at the beginning of his poem on the nature of things, fulminates against the impiety of a religion which exacts the human sacrifice of an Iphianassa. In Empedoclean and Pythagorean thought animal sacrifice is tantamount to human sacrifice; Empedocles describes a father unwittingly sacrificing his metensomatized son in language that is close to the later Aeschylean account of the sacrifice of Iphigenia (B137).²⁵ The Empedoclean

(1970), 55–64 (= *Cosmic Problems*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 172–82); C. J. Castner 'De Rerum Natura 5.101–3: Lucretius' Application of Empedoclean Language to Epicurean Doctrine', *Phoenix* 41 (1987), 40–49; M. J. Edwards 'Lucretius, Empedocles and Epicurean Polemics', *Antike und Abendland* 35 (1989), 104–15; G. B. Conte, *Generi e lettori* (Milan, 1991), pp. 17–26; D. N. Sedley, 'The Proems of Empedocles and Lucretius', *GRBS* 30 (1989), 269–96 (this important, if speculative, article argues that the whole of *Lucr.* 1.1–145 closely reproduces the structure of an Empedoclean proem; if this is true, the whole Empedoclean complex is also one that lies close to the surface of the Ovidian Speech of Pythagoras); and cf. other works cited by Dalzell in *CW* 67 (1973/4), 98–9, and W. J. Tatum, *TAPhA* 114 (1984), 178 n. 5.

²² For a list of Lucretian allusions see Bömer on *Met.* 15.6. In general on Ovid's imitation of Lucretius see O. S. Due, *Changing Forms. Studies in the Metamorphoses of Ovid* (Copenhagen, 1974), pp. 29–33.

²³ On 'double allusion' see J. C. McKeown, *Ovid Amores i. Text and Prolegomena* (Liverpool, 1987), pp. 37–45. The phenomenon has come to the centre of recent criticism of Latin poetry; cf. e.g. R. F. Thomas, *HSCPh* 90 (1986), 188–9, using the label 'window reference'.

²⁴ *Met.* 15.60–68 'uir fuit hic, ortu Samius; sed fugerat una | et Samon et dominos odioque tyrannidis exul | sponte erat; isque, licet caeli regione remotus, | mente deos adiit et, quae natura negabat | uisibus humanis, oculis ea pectoris hausit. | cumque animo et uigili perspexerat omnia cura, | in medium discenda dabat coetusque silentum | dictaque mirantum magni primordia mundi | et rerum causas et, quid natura, docebat.' Emped. DK B 129 ἦν δέ τις ἐν κείνοισιν ἀνὴρ περιώσια εἰδώς, | ὃς δὴ μῆκιστον πραπίδων ἐκτίσατο πλοῦτον, | παντοίων τε μάλιστα σοφῶν τ' ἐπιήρανος ἔργων. | ὁπότε γὰρ πάσῃσιν ὀρέξαιτο πραπίδεσσιν, | ῥεῖ' ὃ γε τῶν ὄντων πάντων λεύσσεσκεν ἕκαστον | καὶ τε δέκ' ἀνθρώπων καὶ τ' εἰκοσιν αἰώνεσσιν. *Lucr.* 1.66–75 'primum Graius homo mortalis tollere contra | est oculus ausus primusque obsistere contra, | quem neque fama deum nec fulmina nec minitanti | murmure compressit caelum, sed eo magis acrem | irritam animi uirtutem, effringere ut arta | naturae primus portarum claustra cupiret. | ergo uiuida uis animi peruicit, et extra | processit longe flammantia moenia mundi | atque omne immensum peragrauit mente animoque, | unde refert nobis uictor quid possit oriri.' Empedocles' wise man is most likely to be Pythagoras, as Porphyry claimed (cf. Burkert [n. 6], pp. 137–8). Ovid's passage is closer to Empedocles than to Lucretius in the details of the opening 'uir fuit hic', and in the notion of the mental 'seeing' of the master.

²⁵ Emped. B 137 μορφήν δ' ἀλλάξαντα πατήρ φίλον υἱὸν αἰείρας | σφάζει ἐπευχόμενος μέγα νήπιος· οἱ δ' ἀπορεῦνται | λισσόμενον θύοντες· ὁ δ' αὖ νήκουστος ὁμοκλέων | σφάξας ἐν μεγάροισι κακὴν ἀλεγύνετο δαῖτα. | ὥς δ' αὖτως πατέρ' υἱὸς ἐλὼν καὶ μητέρα παῖδες | θυμὸν ἀπορραΐσαντε φίλος κατὰ σάρκας ἔδουσαν. Aesch. *Ag.* 228–37 λιτὰς δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατρώϊους | παρ' οὐδὲν αἰὼ τε παρθένειον | ἔθεντο φιλόμαχοι βραβῆς· | φράσεν δ' ἀόζοις πατήρ μετ' εὐχάν | δίκαι χιμαῖρας ὑπερθε βωμοῦ | πέπλοισι περιπετὴ παντὶ θυμῷ | προνωπὴ λαβεῖν ἀέρδην στόματός | τε καλλιπρώρου φυλακαὶ κατασχεῖν | φθόγγον ἀραιὸν οἴκοις... See M. R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven and London, 1981), pp. 286–7. Sedley (n. 21), 293, 295 argues that B 137 comes from the Empedoclean proem, and is the structural model for the Lucretian sacrifice of Iphianassa. In Ovid's outburst against meat-eating at *Met.* 15.88–90 'heu quantum scelus est in uiscera uiscera condi | congestoque auidum

passage also suggests a feast such as that offered to Thyestes, in an earlier episode from the history of the Pelopids; when the Ovidian Pythagoras returns to his diatribe against meat-eating at the end of his speech, he makes the connection between his injunction and the doctrine of metempsychosis and inveighs against 'Thyestean tables' (15.462 'neue Thyesteis cumulemus uiscera mensis'). As in the case of the opening description of the power of Pythagoras' mind, Ovid here reaches back beyond Lucretius to the original context of the Lucretian model in Empedocles, here the attack on *animal*-sacrifice and the associated doctrine of metempsychosis, and so inverts the Lucretian rejection of Pythagorean-Empedoclean teaching on the soul (Lucr. 1.102–35).

This emphatic double imitation of the Greek and Latin philosophical poets at the beginning of the last book of Ovid's poem marks a return literally to first things, for the description of Chaos at the beginning of book one of the *Metamorphoses* (1.7–14) imitates a Lucretian passage (5.432–5) that is in turn a close imitation of an Empedoclean passage (B27).²⁶

III. EMPEDOCLES, ENNIUS, LUCRETIVS

At *Metamorphoses* 15.153–9 Pythagoras exposes the vanity of the fear of death, a fear which is nurtured by the Underworld fables of the *uates*, and which may be dispelled by the truth about the transmigration of souls, a truth which also reinforces the prohibition of meat-eating:

o genus attonitum gelidae formidine mortis!
quid Styga, quid manes et nomina uana timetis,
materiem uatum, falsique pericula mundi?

At 174 Pythagoras describes his admonition to abstain from flesh as *uaticinari*, that is he claims himself to be a *uates*. The word *uates* is a key term for the Augustan poets; used as a self-description it appropriates to the poet a lofty position as social and religious spokesman. It is sometimes supposed that by Ovid's time the word had been rubbed rather bare, and that Ovid used it indifferently as a word for 'poet', without making particular claims for his own poetic role;²⁷ but the apparent contradiction in the present passage between Pythagoras' disparagement of *uates* and his claim a little later to be a *uates* himself reveals rather Ovid's understanding of the Lucretian tactic of snatching the high ground from the enemy. At the beginning of his poem (1.102–35) Lucretius attacks the *uates* who frighten mankind with talk of the afterlife, including in their number the epic poet Ennius; Lucretius refers to the episode at the beginning of the *Annals*, in which Ennius relates how the simulacrum of Homer appeared to him in a dream, and explained to him the nature of the universe and the transmigration of souls, by way of a prelude to the revelation that the true soul of Homer now lodged in the breast of Ennius. Lucretius rejects such accounts of the survival of the soul after death, and arrogates to himself the alternative *uates*-like stance of that most vatic of philosophers Empedocles;²⁸ at the same time he

pinguiscere corpore corpus | alteriusque animantem animantis uiuere leto', there is strong Lucretian colouring (see Bömer *ad loc.*); the *scelus* of 88 may remind of Lucr. 1.82–3 'sceleris... scelerosa' (the sacrifice of Iphianassa).

²⁶ See n. 16. Ovid's use of divine metonyms for parts of the universe (*Met.* 1.10 *Titan* (the sun), 11 *Phoebe*, 14 *Amphitrite*) is also in the Empedoclean manner (B6, the four elements; B38.4 *Τῦραν... αἰθήρ*...).

²⁷ J. K. Newman, *Augustus and the New Poetry* (Brussels, 1967), pp. 182–95; Newman sees in the apparent contradiction merely an example of Pythagoras 'forgetting himself' (pp. 190–91); see also Bömer on 15.155.

²⁸ Cf. Cic. *Lael.* 24 'Agrigentinum... uaticinatum'.

substitutes for the account of nature contained in the Dream of Homer at the opening of Ennius' *Annals* his own Epicurean *de rerum natura*.²⁹ Lucretius' usurpation of Ennian territory extends to the Empedoclean role itself, for Ennius in the *Annals* had borrowed from Empedocles, to an extent that we can no longer exactly define: most obvious is the modelling on Empedoclean *Neikos* of *Discordia*, the demon who hurls Rome into the chaos of war with Carthage in book seven of the *Annals*; and Bignone has argued that the Dream of Homer itself is specifically indebted to Empedocles' version of the cycle of souls.³⁰ For my argument that is indeed a tempting hypothesis, for the Ovidian imitation of Ennius to be discussed in the next section would then offer another example of 'double allusion' to a Latin text, and to the Greek model for that text.

IV. OVID, VIRGIL, AND THE LATIN HEXAMETER TRADITION

Via Empedocles and Lucretius we have thus arrived at the founding father of Latin hexameter poetry, Ennius, and this is the point at which to raise the question of the place of the *Metamorphoses* within the tradition of Latin hexameter epic.³¹ As Ovid moves through universal history towards the present day, he catches up on the temporal span of the *Annals*, which related the history of Rome from the time that Aeneas fled from Troy; at the end of book 14, in the account of the apotheosis of Romulus, Mars in the council of gods reminds Jupiter of the promise he had made that Romulus would be raised to the sky (14.814) 'unus erit, quem tu tolles in caerulea caeli'; the reason that Mars can remember these pious words is that he has read them in the epic of Ennius (*Ann.* 54). With book 15 we move on through the Ennian time-span and beyond in the continuation of Roman history to the time of Augustus; Numa himself of course figured prominently in the *Annals*.³² Ovid also imitates the structure of the *Annals*; the Dream of Homer at the beginning of Ennius' epic, as well as reworking the Hesiodic and Callimachean topos of the initiation of the poet, functions as a natural-philosophical prelude to the historical account of Roman history. Quite how emphatic this philosophical prelude was it is difficult to say, since we do not know how long it was; but if it did develop at some length, the reader will have been given the impression that this disquisition *de rerum natura* had an importance for Roman history that went beyond its function in validating the poetic credentials of the narrator of that history.³³ Ovid repeats the Ennian combination of philosophy and history, distorting and stretching the structure of the *Annals*; the *Metamorphoses* begins with a lengthy philosophical account of the creation of the world as prelude to human history, and like Ennius he will bring that history down *ad mea tempora*; the stretching of course is responsible for the bulk of Ovid's material, the mythological and legendary stories that fill the first 11 books before we come to the story of Troy and Aeneas in 12. The Speech of Pythagoras in book 15 is to be taken together with the philosophical cosmogony in book 1 as the two parts of a

²⁹ P. R. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 17–22.

³⁰ Ennius and Empedocles: E. Norden, *Ennius und Vergilius* (Leipzig, 1915), pp. 10–18; E. Bignone, 'Ennio ed Empedocle', *RFIC* 57 (1929), 10–30; O. Skutsch, *The Annals of Quintus Ennius* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 160, 164 n. 18 (expressing some scepticism about Bignone's claim), 260, 394–7, 758.

³¹ On Ennian elements in the *Met.* see H. Hofmann, 'Ovids *Metamorphoses: Carmen Perpetuum, Carmen Deductum*', *PLLS* 5 (1986), 223–41, at 223–6.

³² But probably not the story of the meeting of Numa and Pythagoras: cf. Skutsch (n. 30), pp. 263–4.

³³ See O. Skutsch, *Studia Enniana* (London, 1968), pp. 24–7; id., *Annals* (n. 30), pp. 147–53.

philosophical frame to the whole poem;³⁴ and here again we see Ovid's *oppositio in imitatione*, for if it is the Speech of Pythagoras, rather than the creation account of book 1, that is the more exact counterpart to the Dream of Homer in Ennius, it has been removed from the beginning to almost the end of the poem; nevertheless, since Ovid has also postponed the Ennian matter of Roman history until the end of his hexameter poem, the Speech of Pythagoras, at the beginning of Ovid's *last* book, still performs the function of preface to Roman history that Ennius' Dream of Homer performs coming at the beginning of his *first* book: for the bulk of Ovid's Roman stories come in the second part of book 15.

The Ennian Homer restricts his utterances to cosmology and psychology, with the particular reference to the case of the poet Ennius; the history is to follow in the narrative of Ennius himself. The Ovidian Pythagoras includes within his speech *both* natural philosophy *and* history, telling of the rise and fall of empires and prophesying the future greatness of Rome, arising from the ashes of Troy, at a climactic point in his speech (15.420–52).³⁵ Ovid's imitation of Ennius is in this rearrangement mediated through Virgil; again we are dealing with the phenomenon of 'double allusion'. As is well known, the Ennian Dream of Homer is one of the central models for the Speech of Anchises in book six of the *Aeneid*,³⁶ from the point of view of structure, Ovid's placing of *his* imitation of the Dream of Homer at the end of his poem thus emerges as the end-product of a kind of continental drift, during which the Ennian model, loosed from its moorings at the beginning of a poem, had reached a provisional halting-place at the centre of Virgil's epic. In the first part of his speech Anchises, like Ennius' Homer, expounds to Aeneas the nature of the universe and the doctrine of the transmigration of souls; in the second, and longer, part of his speech he shows Aeneas a pageant of future Roman heroes, the main part of which concludes with an Ennian quotation, 6.846, 'unus qui nobis cunctando restituis rem' (cf. *Ann.* 363). Virgil thus combines in the single Speech of Anchises both the natural-philosophical prelude to the *Annals*, namely the Dream of Homer, and a resume of the rest of the *Annals*, for in taking us through the parade of heroes Anchises in fact is running over the historical subject matter of the whole of Ennius' poem, and there are other detailed Ennian echoes in these lines. Furthermore Anchises also functions as a figure of the poet Ennius, appearing, as it were, to Virgil as well as to Aeneas, just as the poet Homer appears to Ennius to pass on the mantle of epic poetry; as Ennius, taking the story from the flight of Aeneas, is the continuator of the poet of the *Iliad*, so Virgil continues and completes the epic of Roman history begun by *pater* Ennius.³⁷

Ovid's use of the Speech of Anchises calls forth two further observations: (i) Ovid again distorts the proportions of his model; while Anchises' philosophy is merely a preliminary to his history, the story of Rome's greatness which concludes Pythagoras' lecture on cosmic metamorphosis is reduced in scale to little more than an example of the Empedoclean theme of universal change. (ii) Ovid's use of Empedoclean material may itself have the additional function of commenting on the Virgilian model, for Anchises in his account of the elemental purgation of souls uses language

³⁴ Newman (n. 27), pp. 189–90 points out that the Ennian ring that binds *Met.* 1 and 15 is reinforced by the imitation of the Ennian *concilium deorum* in *Met.* 1.

³⁵ In this respect the Speech of Pythagoras may be seen as a microcosmic recapitulation of the whole of the *Annals*, as also of the whole of the *Met.* in its span of time from the memory of the Golden Age (cf. 1.89–112) to prophecy of the greatness of Rome.

³⁶ For a discussion see Hardie (n. 29), pp. 76–83.

³⁷ See P. R. Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 103–5.

that reminded Norden of Empedocles' doctrine of the elemental wandering of the daemons,³⁸ but if this is correct, it may of course be that Virgil has picked up some Empedoclean material from his reading of the Ennian Dream of Homer.

To trace the Empedoclean in the Speech of Pythagoras is thus to follow the outline of a genealogy of the *Metamorphoses* as hexameter epos. The instinct of those critics who have sought in the Speech some kind of general reflection of, or comment on, the poem as a whole is sound, but the mistake has been too narrowly to concentrate the search for a 'key' in the subject-matter itself of transformation. The unifying ground is rather to be located at the level of poetics, in the construction of a literary history within the text. With Ovid we should of course not expect such a literary history to be anything but tendentious and partial. But even so the modern reader of Roman epic may profit from the insights, however biased, of an ancient reader as skilled as Ovid. To see the Roman epic tradition as Empedoclean epos is to highlight the themes of change and process, a convenient way for Ovid as poet of the *Metamorphoses* to proclaim his own centrality in the tradition; but it may also prompt us to a rereading of earlier epics. For example an Empedoclean reading of the *Aeneid* will bring to the surface a pervasive interest in change, not infrequently expressed in individual episodes of metamorphosis. Mutability is both the precondition of Virgil's story of the transformation of Trojans into Romans, and the source of an anxiety that Augustus' perfected Rome may be prey to further change.³⁹ Empedoclean epos also points to the importance of scientific poetry in the Latin hexameter tradition, and to the continuing influence of Ennius' foundational gesture of beginning the *Annals* with a Pythagorean *de rerum natura*. Ennius' decision had its consequences: in so far as Ovid uses a philosophico-didactic form within which to reflect on the Latin hexameter tradition, he passes comment on the continuing tendency within that tradition for didactic to slip into the guise of heroic epic (Lucretius), and for heroic epic to dally with the didactic (the *Aeneid*, above all).⁴⁰ Empedocles' interest in the transmigration of souls and in his own personal experience of that process further directs us to what becomes an obsession, peculiarly insistent in the Roman epicists, with their own literary genealogies, and one associated with a doctrine of metempsychosis in Ennius, Lucretius (in the negative mode of alerting the reader to his own Ennian affiliation through a correction of Ennian eschatology at *DRN* 1.102–35), and Virgil. At a more abstract level, the temporal process of Empedoclean physics and anthropology acts as a figure for the Latin 'Empedoclean' tradition itself, as Ovid traces the metamorphoses of the tradition down to its last reincarnation in his own hexameter poem.

V. POETS, PHILOSOPHERS, AND PRINCES

It has become commonplace to see in the person of the Ovidian Pythagoras a figure for the poet Ovid himself,⁴¹ an identification that may be seen in the light of the close relationship that exists between the poets Ennius and Lucretius and *their* philosophical mentors, Homer and Epicurus. Ovid, introducing Pythagoras, describes

³⁸ E. Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis Buch VI* (Stuttgart, 1957⁴), p. 28; M. R. Arundel, *PVS* 3 (1963/4), 33–4.

³⁹ See P. R. Hardie, 'Augustan Poets and the Mutability of Rome', in A. Powell (ed.), *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus* (Bristol, 1992), pp. 59–82.

⁴⁰ On the combination of scientific and legendary-historical epos see Hardie (n. 29), *passim*.

⁴¹ See Bömer (n. 7), p. 269; M. Petersmann, *Die Apotheosen in den Metamorphosen Ovids* (diss. Graz, 1976), p. 199; R. Crahay and J. Hubaux argue that the meeting between Pythagoras and Numa conceals an allegory about Ovid and Augustus, 'Sous le masque de Pythagore', in Herescu (n. 16), pp. 283–300.

him as another Lucretian *Grāius homo* wandering through the universe (15.62–4); Pythagoras' own words at 143–52 echo more closely Lucretius' account of his own poetic mission at *De rerum natura* 1.921–30. Pythagoras' fragmented outline of the course of human history from the Golden Age (96–103) to the greatness of Rome and the deification of Augustus (431–49) offers a miniature recapitulation of the whole of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as we have seen. And Pythagoras' ecstatic fancy that he wanders through the stars, leaving behind the dull earth, is close to Ovid's prophecy of his own celestial destination in the epilogue to the poem (871–9),⁴² as he is transformed into the immortal fame of his own poetry, escaping from the vicissitudes of the body. In his own journey heavenwards he traces the same path that Augustus some day will take in the footsteps of Julius, a bold formulation of the *Anspruch des Dichters* to equivalence with the ruler, but not necessarily disrespectful given the Virgilian precedent in *Georgics* 3.⁴³ There is also, however, precedent in Empedocles, according to whom (B146) the final rung on the ladder of the soul's ascent to divinity is occupied by *μάντεις* [*uates*] *τε καὶ ὑμνοπόλοι καὶ ἱητροί | καὶ πρόμοι* [*principes*]... | *ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῇσι φέριστοι*. Empedocles himself seems to have embodied all these four roles in one person,⁴⁴ thus supplying a model for the poet at his most pretentious. But the epilogue also marks a contrast with Pythagoras' doctrine of mutability, for in his personal destiny Ovid at last escapes from the law of universal change (and so brings the sequence of *Metamorphoses* to an end).⁴⁵ This too might be understood as the manipulation of different Empedoclean models. In fragment 115 Empedocles bleakly describes the 'decree of necessity' that when one of the daimons does wrong he is condemned to thirty thousand years' wandering through elemental cycles of reincarnation, and says that 'I too am now one of these, a fugitive from the gods and a wanderer'. Yet in fragment 112.4–5, possibly from a different work,⁴⁶ Empedocles claims *ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός, | πωλεῦμαι μετὰ πᾶσι τετιμένος*: an earthly version of the celestial immortality and universal fame to which Ovid looks forward at the end of the *Metamorphoses*. The contrast between these two Empedoclean roles, the exile and the god, has added point for those tempted to believe that Ovid continued to work on the *Metamorphoses* after his relegation.⁴⁷

⁴² 147–9 'iuuat ire per alta | astra, iuuat terris et inerti sede relictā | nube uehi'; 875–6 'parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis | astra ferar'. By the terms of the last line of the poem, 879 'siquid habent ueri uatum praesagia, uiuam', Ovid in fact becomes his own *uates*; cf. above on Pythagoras and *uates*; and note esp. 144–5 'Delphosque meos ipsumque recludam | aethera et augustae reserabo oracula mentis' (playing on the etymology of Pythagoras). Relevant also is the association of Empedocles with Apollo and Delphi (according to the *Suda* he went around carrying *στέμματα Δελφικά*); cf. F. Solmsen, 'Empedocles' Hymn to Apollo', *Phronesis* 25 (1980), 219–27.

⁴³ V. Buchheit, *Der Anspruch des Dichters in Vergils Georgika* (Darmstadt, 1972), 99–103; see also my 'Questions of Authority', forthcoming in the papers of a conference 'The Roman Cultural Revolution' held in Princeton, 25–28 March, 1993.

⁴⁴ With regard to the fourth see G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1983²), p. 282 'We may...infer that Empedocles took a leading role as a democrat in the affairs of his city.'

⁴⁵ Even Augustus' apotheosis as foretold by Pythagoras is not immune to the suspicion of mutability, for in the sequel we learn that the sky, the dead *princeps*' destination, is itself subject to change: 15.449 (the last words of Helenus' reported prophecy about Augustus) 'caelumque erit exitus illi...'; but 453–5 'ne tamen oblitis ad metam tendere longe | exspatiemur equis, caelum et quodcumque sub illo est, | immutat formas tellusque et quidquid in illa est.'

⁴⁶ See Sedley (n. 21), 274–6.

⁴⁷ Those tempted include M. Pohlenz, *Hermes* 48 (1913), 1–13; C. P. Segal, *AJPh* 90 (1966), 290–92; R. G. M. Nisbet, *JRS* 72 (1982), 54; D. Kovacs, *CQ* 37 (1987), 462–5. In addition to the points raised by these scholars I note the parallelism between the description of Pythagoras'

VI. THE EMPEDOCLEAN PRODIGY

The influence of Empedocles may be traced elsewhere in Ovid and Augustan poetry.⁴⁸ As final token of the sympathy between the portentous pre-Socratic and the playful poet of love consider the possibility that one of Ovid's own favourite lines from his own poems may be an Empedoclean adaptation. Let us return to a passage that we have already considered:

πολλὰ μὲν ἀμφιπρόσωπα καὶ ἀμφίστερνα φύεσθαι,
βουγενῇ ἀνδρόπρωρα, τὰ δ' ἔμπαλιν ἐξανατέλλειν
ἀνδροφυῇ βούκρανα, μεμειγμένα τῇ μὲν ἀπ' ἀνδρῶν
 τῇ δὲ γυναικοφυῇ σκιεροῖς ἡσκημένα γυίοις.

Empedocles DK B61

Was the chiasmic play in successive half-line on the roots *βου-* and *ἀνδρο-* in Ovid's mind when he came up with the following Empedoclean monster of a line (*Ars Amatoria* 2.24): *semibouemque uirum semiuirumque bouem*?⁴⁹

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'flight of the mind' and his 'oculi pectoris' (*Met.* 15.62–4) with the common *topos* of 'oculi mentis' in the exile poetry; particularly close is *Tr.* 4.2.57–64. Like Empedocles, the Ovidian Pythagoras is also an exile, but of a more literal kind (*Met.* 15.61–2 'odioque tyrannidis exul | sponte erat'); his politics have something in common with Empedocles, who is said (Diog. Laert. 8.63, after Aristotle and Xanthos) to have refused the offer of a throne. Further there was a tradition that Empedocles had gone into exile from his home to Syracuse (Diog. Laert. 8.52). Ovid's escape from the conditions of mortality will ultimately transcend the metamorphosis of 'fortunae uultus meae' which he bemoans in *Tristia* 1.1.117–22, on which see S. Hinds, *PCPhS* n.s. 31 (1985), 20–21 (I am grateful to the anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this reference).

⁴⁸ Ovid: see n. 6; G. Pfligersdorffer argues for the extensive use of Empedocles by Ovid at the beginning of the *Fasti*: 'Ovidius Empedocleus. Zu Ovids Ianus-Deutung', *Grazer Beiträge* 1 (1973), 177–209; cf. F. Börtzler, 'Janus und seine Deuter', *Abh. u. Vortr. Bremer Wiss. Ges.* 4 (1930), 103–96, at 137. Empedocles in late Republican and Augustan literature other than Lucretius: Cic. *Lael.* 24, *Rep.* 3.19; Virgil *Geo.* 2.484 (cf. C. O. Brink, *Phoenix* 23 (1969), 138); Horace *Ep.* 1.12.20, *Ars Poet.* 463–6; Sallustius *Empedoclea* (cf. H. Bardon, *La Littérature latine inconnue* i. (Paris, 1952), p. 335; della Corte [n. 6]).

⁴⁹ For the story see Sen. *Contr.* 2.2.12. After completing this article I discovered that the Empedoclean parallel had already been suggested by J. S. Rurten 'Ovid, Empedocles and the Minotour', *AJPh* 103 (1982), 332–3.