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Empedocles on Ensouled Beings

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Abstract

The paper analyses fragmentarily preserved views of Empedocles, that, in the author's opinion, represent the antecedents of deviations from the anthropocentric vision of the world and anticipate the majority of later attempts at scientific, philosophical, and legal modifications of the status of all living beings. Empedocles, namely, claims that all beings think, i.e., that they have understanding or consciousness. He is, moreover, portrayed as a proponent of the thesis that plants as well have both intellect and the ability to think, and that they are driven by desire and have feelings, sadness and joy. According to him, the idea that the whole nature is akin not only has a vital-animal meaning but, to a certain extent, a mental meaning. Empedocles urged his disciples to abstain from consuming ensouled beings, since it is in the bodies of these beings that penalized souls reside. He believed that he himself was one of them who had been killed and eaten, and that it is by purification that prior sins in connection with food should be treated. Empedocles' case shows that humans are living beings that err, and that they owe to animals justice based on mutual kinship. Aside from living a pure life, practicing the recommended katharmoi, and abstaining from flesh in any version, the path to the salvation of the soul leads through two additional dimensions. The first is being revealed in the important phrase of the sage from Acragas that one should fast from evil. And secondly, the wealth of divine thoughts is connected with being happy, just as those who have vague opinions about the gods are wretched. Eventually, the "Sicilian Muse" believed that if people live in a holy and just manner, they shall be blessed in this life, even more so after leaving this one, because they will achieve happiness that will not be temporarily, and be able to rest for eternity.

Keywords: Empedocles; ensoulment; whole nature is akin; justice; katharmoi; abstaining; incarnation; happiness

The search of antecedents in levelling the differences between humans and other living beings, stems from the very origins of science, i.e., from the “fathers” of philosophy, on the basis of whose extant fragmentary manuscripts it can be established that they anticipated most of the latter modalities of non-anthropocentric approaches. In short, the standing point of venerable Presocratics belongs to an age when there was no serious distinction between the body and the soul, the organic and the inorganic.¹ Rather, they were inclined to accept some kind of mixture of corporeal and mental elements, as in their time it was difficult to imagine the body (σῶμα) without a soul (ψυχή) or the soul without matter (ὕλη). The first originators, consequently, understood thinking (φρόνησις) as something corporeal similar² to sensation (αἴσθησις),³ and generally believed that something can be understood and perceived by what is similar to it (γινώσκεισθαι γὰρ τῷ ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον).⁴ As an anticipated consequence of this approach comes the assertion by certain Greek thinkers of this era that not only humans, but also all other beings have consciousness, intellect, and are able to think.⁵

Any research as this one that focuses on Empedocles can only reveal that he believes that the wit in men increases according to what is present (πρὸς παρεὸν γὰρ μῆτις ἀέξεται ἀνθρώποισιν),⁶ and his fragment 108 serves to confirm the thesis that thought⁷ is corporal and under the influence of

¹ As it is evident from DK 86B7, Aristotle, *De anima*, 405a 19-21, and Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 1: 24, for example. Consult: Željko Kaluđerović, *Bioetički kaleidoskop* (Zagreb: Pergamena, Znanstveni centar izvrsnosti za integrativnu bioetiku, 2021), 21-38.

² On the notion of similarity and the various ways it has been perceived and examined, see Virginia John Grigoriadou, Frank A. Coutelieris, and Kostas Theologou, “History of the Concept of Similarity in Natural Sciences,” *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (2021): 101-123.

³ See: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1009b 12-31; Aristotle, *De anima*, 404a 29-30, and 427a 17-22.

⁴ Consult: Aristotle, *De anima*, 404b 8-405b 10, and 405b 13-19.

⁵ Parts of this paper have been published over the previous years in several shorter or longer editions and interpretations. Changes in content and style in the version at hand were made in order to summarize the text, to reflect necessary refinements caused by subsequent insights, due to the availability of additional literature and my own translation solutions, both of important terms and concepts and certain quotations from the source material, as well as for the purpose of achieving a clearer and more fluid presentation.

⁶ DK 31B106.

⁷ Theophrastus, in his comments on Empedocles, says the people in the last instance, think by their own blood, because in it all body parts and all the elements are most completely blended (διὸ καὶ τῷ αἵματι μάλιστα φρονεῖν ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ μάλιστα κεκράσθαι (ἐστὶ) τὰ στοιχεῖα τῶν μερῶν). DK 31A86, 10. Sicilian himself speaks as if the organ of cognition is blood. DK 31B105.3: “For the blood about the hearth is thought for men” (αἷμα γὰρ ἀνθρώποις περικάρδιόν ἐστι νόημα). Translated in: Jonathan Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 156. See besides: DK 31A76; Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and the Belief in Immortality among the Greeks* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1925), 380.

corporal changes: “Insofar as they become different, to that extent always does their thought too present different objects.”⁸

The view that for “Sicilian Muse” (Σικελαί [...] Μοῦσαι)⁹ thought and sensation¹⁰ are only special cases of the universal principle that the like impacts the like, is well illustrated in the following fragment: “For by earth we see earth, by water water, by ether bright ether, and by fire destructive fire, Love by Love and Strife by dismal Strife.”¹¹

The thinker from Acragas also claims that all beings think, namely that they have understanding or consciousness, and adds that this is so by the will of chance (τῇδε μὲν οὖν ἰότητι Τύχης πεφρόνηκεν ἅπαντα).¹² Related to this is his claim from the end of fragment 110: “That they all have thinking and [have] [its] share of thought.”¹³

In the introduction to this fragment it is even possible to find the thesis that all parts of fire (πυρὸς), whether they are visible or not, can have thinking (φρόνησιν) and the ability to think (γνώμην), rather than a share of thought (νόματος). Sextus Empiricus adds: “It is even more astounding that Empedocles held that everything has a discernment facility, not only living beings but plants as well.”¹⁴

⁸ Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 156. The Greek text reads: ὅσσον <γ> ἀλλοῖοι μετέφυν, τόσον ἄρ σφισιν αἰεὶ καὶ τὸ φρονεῖν ἀλλοῖα παρίσταται. DK 31B108. These two fragments (DK 31B106 and DK 31B108) are again mentioned in Aristotle’s manuscript *De anima* (*Περὶ ψυχῆς*), 427a 23-25.

⁹ As Plato called Empedocles in the *Sophist*. Plato, *Sophist*, 242d-243a. In Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, 1: 714-715; 726-732, similarly, Lucretius celebrates Empedocles as the most outstanding representative of the rich Sicilian soil.

¹⁰ Consult: Aristotle, *De anima*, 417b 19-26; Anthony A. Long, “Thinking and Sense-Perception in Empedocles: Mysticism or Materialism?” *The Classical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1966): 256-276.

¹¹ Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 154. The Greek text reads: γαίῃ μὲν γὰρ γαῖαν ὁπώπαμεν, ὕδατι δ’ ὕδωρ, αἰθέρι δ’ αἰθέρα δῖον, ἀτὰρ πυρὶ πῦρ ἀίδηλον, στοργὴν δὲ στοργῇ, νεῖκος δὲ τε νεϊκεῖ λυγρῶι. DK 31B109. See: DK 31B107. Consult more about the “roots of everything” (πάντων ῥιζώματα), videlicet, Love and Strife (Φιλία καὶ Νεῖκος) in the co-authored study: Željko Kaluđerović, and Orhan Jašić, “Empedoklovi koreni svega, Ljubav i Mržnja,” *Pedagoška stvarnost* 60, no. 2 (2014): 216-229.

¹² DK 31B103.

¹³ The Greek text reads: πάντα γὰρ ἔσθι φρόνησιν ἔχειν καὶ νόματος αἴσαν. DK 31B110. Translated by Željko Kaluđerović. See: DK 31A86, 23. Empedocles’ view, can be relatively easily correlated with Parmenides’ view that “all things have some kind of cognition.” (πᾶν τὸ ὄν ἔχειν τινὰ γνώσιν). DK 28A46 (translated by Željko Kaluđerović). As far as Eleatic philosopher is concerned, specifically the relevance of his views for subsequent establishment of non-anthropocentrism, paradigmatic is fragment 16 (DK 28B16).

¹⁴ The Greek text reads: “Ἐμπεδοκλῆς ἔτι παραδοξότερον πάντα ἡξίου λογικὰ τυγχάνειν καὶ οὐ ζῶια μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ φυτὰ.” DK 31B110. Translated by Željko Kaluđerović. That this is not such an unusual view as Sextus Empiricus writes, is confirmed by passages of Pythagoras (DK 21B7), quoted paragraphs of Parmenides (DK 28A46; DK 28B16), as well as fragments from Anaxagoras (DK 59B12; DK 59A101; DK 59A115; DK 59A116), Archelaus (DK 60A4),

The philosopher from Sicily, moreover, in the (Pseudo) Aristotelian manuscript *On Plants* (*Περὶ φυτῶν*)¹⁵ is presented, together with Anaxagoras and Democritus, as a proponent of the thesis that plants (*φυτά*)¹⁶ have both mind (*νοῦν*) and the ability to think (*γινῶσιν*): “Anaxagoras, however, as well as Democritus and Abrucalis, said that [plants] have mind and intelligence.”¹⁷ In addition: “Anaxagoras, then, along with Abrucalis [i.e., Empedocles], said that they [namely plants] are driven by desire and argued that they have feelings, sadness and joy.”¹⁸

These views show that according to Empedocles, who even more explicitly asserted it than Pythagoras,¹⁹ the idea of kinship of all living beings²⁰ not only has a vital-animal meaning, but to a certain extent a mental meaning also.

Diogenes of Apollonia (DK 64B4), and Democritus (DK 68A117; DK 28A45; DK 68B5, 7; DK 68B198; DK 68B257). The thesis that, according to Empedocles (as well as Parmenides and Democritus), all animals have a kind of ability to think also appears in the secondary literature (καθ' οὗς οὐδὲν ἂν εἴη ζῶιον ἄλογον κυρίως) (DK 28A45). Consult: DK 31A96.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *On Plants*, 815b 16-17.

¹⁶ See again the following fragments about plants (and trees): DK 31B77; DK 31B78; DK 31B79; DK 31B80; DK 31B81.

¹⁷ The Latin text reads: “Anaxagoras autem et Democritus et Abr. illas intellectum intelligentiamque habere dicebant.” DK 31A70. Translated by Željko Kaluđerović. “Abr.” is abbreviation of “Abrucalis” and refers to Empedocles. Aristotle, *On Plants*, 815b 16-17, actually says: ὁ δὲ Ἀναξαγόρας καὶ ὁ Δημόκριτος καὶ ὁ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς καὶ νοῦν καὶ γινῶσιν εἶπον ἔχειν τὰ φυτά.

¹⁸ The Latin text reads: “Anaxagoras autem et Abrucalis [d.i. Empedocles] desiderio eas [näml. plantas] moveri dicunt, sentire quoque et tritari delectarique asserunt.” DK 31A70. Translated by Željko Kaluđerović. Aristotle, *On Plants*, 815a 15-18, says: “Ἀναξαγόρας μὲν οὖν καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς ἐπιθυμία ταῦτα κινεῖσθαι λέγουσιν, αἰσθάνεσθαι τε καὶ λυπεῖσθαι καὶ ἡδεσθαι δια εἰσιόνται.” Anaxagoras also asserts that plants are animals (ζῷα εἶναι), and as evidence of his claim that plants can feel joy and sorrow, he mentions the shedding and growth of their leaves (τῇ τε ἀπορροῇ τῶν φύλλων καὶ τῇ αὐξήσει τοῦτο ἐκλαμάνων). DK 59A117; Aristotle, *On Plants*, 815a 18-20.

¹⁹ Pythagoras' recognition of his friend's soul (*φίλου ἀνέρος ἐστὶν ψυχὴ [...]* ἔγνων) embodied in a dog (*σκύλακος*) (DK 21B7) illustrates the transfer of personal identity on the *ψυχή*, which means that a personality somehow survives in the migrations of the soul (*παλιγγενεσία*) and that there is a continuity of identity (Consult: DK 31B129, and the final pages of this article). The conclusion that can be derived, at least implicitly, is that ensouled (living) beings (*ἐμψύχων*), therefore animals, but also certain plants, in a sense, are conscious beings. See, Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, *From Dawn till Dusk: Bioethical Insights into the Beginning and the End of Life* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2019), 24-29.

²⁰ The phrase “all nature is akin” (*φύσεως ἀπάσης συγγενοῦς οὐσης*) appears in Plato, *Meno*, 81a-d, truthfully attributed to priests and poets. The same idea and conception of the world as *cosmos* is also found in an instructive section in the dialogue Plato, *Gorgias*, 507e, in which the words “wise men” (*σοφοί*) at the beginning of the passage probably refer to the Pythagoreans and perhaps to Empedocles. For the concept of kinship in the Pythagoreans and the Stoics see Michail Mantzanas, “The Concept of Moral Conscience in Ancient Greek Philosophy,” *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (2020): 65-86.

In his verses the poet (ἐποποιός)²¹ and wonder-worker (μάντιν)²² Empedocles also advocates bloodless sacrifices by spilling water, honey, oil and wine on the ground, i.e., he writes about the old times when love and compassion for the kin were above anything else, about abstinence from killing, and about treating other living beings as members of one's own household. Instead of putting living beings, viz. animals, to the knife, people sought to propitiate queen Cypris (Κύπρις βασίλεια, Aphrodite) by sacrificing²³ myrrh, frankincense, honey, and simulacra of animals: "And painted animals and subtly perfumed oils."²⁴

In these times everything used to be tame and gentle (κτίλα) towards man, including beasts (θῆρες) and birds (οἰωνοί).²⁵ The sacrifices which the philosopher from Acragas (Ακράγαντας) mentions do not include the destruction of plants²⁶ either, which is also probably due to the fact that in fragment 117 he claims: "For already have I become a boy and a girl and a bush and a bird and a silent fish in the sea."²⁷

Empedocles believes that trees represent a primordial form of life (*first living things*, πρῶτα τὰ δένδρα τῶν ζώων),²⁸ which had

²¹ DK 31A2.

²² DK 31A1.

²³ Similarly, Porphyry notes that only those sacrifices should be made that do not hurt anyone because sacrifices, more than anything else, must be harmless to everyone. For sacrifice (θυσία), he reports, as its name implies, is something holy (όσία) (ή γαρ θυσία, όσία τίς έστι κατὰ τοῦνομα). Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, 2: 12.

²⁴ Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 160. The Greek text reads: γραπτοῖς τε ζώοισι μύροισι τε δαιδαλεόδοις. DK 31B128. Plato writes correspondingly in the *Laws* talking about the mores of ancient people and their Orphic way of life, consuming only what is non-ensouled (not alive: ἀψύχων) and abstaining from everything ensouled (alive: ἐμψύχων). Plato, *Laws*, 782c-d.: "They honored their gods with cakes and meal soaked in honey and other such pure sacrifices, but abstained from flesh, counting it criminal to eat it" (πέλανοι δὲ καὶ μέλιτι καρποὶ δεδευμένοι καὶ τοιαῦτα ἄλλα ἀγνὰ θύματα, σαρκῶν δ' ἀπείχοντο ὥς οὐχ ὅσιον ὄν ἐσθίειν).

²⁵ DK 31B130.

²⁶ John Burnet, quoting and paraphrasing Aristotle, *On Plants*, 817b 35, (DK 31A70), writes that plants arose in an imperfect state of the world, that is, at a time when Strife was not so prevalent as to differentiate the sexes. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 242.

²⁷ Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 157. The Greek text reads: ἤδη γάρ ποτ' ἐγὼ γενόμεν κοῦρός τε κόρη τε θάμνος τ' οἰωνός τε καὶ ἔξαλος ἔλλοπος ἰχθύς. DK 31B117. This fragment confirms that the other Italian "Pythagorean" (Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 13: 54-55) believed in *palingenesia*, scilicet he held the view that one's soul may transmigrate both among humans and among animals and plants. In DK 31A31, 2, this principle is called *metempsychosis* (μετεμψωμάτῳσει). Consult DK 31B115, 7, and DK 31B127. Werner Jaeger says that the universal animization, which the Orphics taught about, here includes something comprehensive, which understands all things and is akin to all things. Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 147.

²⁸ DK 31A70.

survived even to his time. Moreover, trees had existed even before the Sun spread and the day and night were distinguished.²⁹ The doxographer Aëtius,³⁰ who conveys the thoughts of the “Milder Muses” (Μουσῶν [...] μαλακώτεραι),³¹ assumes an analogy between plant and animal life, and confirms it by using the adjective *living* (ζῶα) for trees, an adjective exclusively used for animals. One could assume that Empedocles was convinced that there was no sharp genetic difference between the plant and the animal world.³² Therefore, he doesn’t hesitate to proceed to comparisons and analogies that today may seem strange, at least. For example, he asserts that “tall olive trees [...] bear eggs first (ὠιοτοκεῖ μακρὰ δένδρεα πρῶτον ἐλαίας),”³³ i.e., seeds and eggs are of identical nature.³⁴ Or, that the hair, the leaves, the scales and the thick feathers of birds are the same thing (ταῦτὰ τρίχες καὶ φύλλα καὶ οἰωνῶν πτερὰ πυκνὰ),³⁵ while to the philosopher from Sicily the ear is a fleshy sprout (σάρκινος ὄζος).³⁶

²⁹ In the Bible, in the first book of Moses, *Genesis*, in comparison, it is said that the night and day, were distinguished and named on the first day and the Sun on the fourth day of creation, while grass, plants and trees were created not earlier than on the third day. See: *Genesis*, 1: 4-5, 1: 14-18, 1: 11-12.

³⁰ Aëtius’ thoughts are taken from the so-called *De Placita Philosophorum* (Συναγωγή τῶν Ἀρεσκόντων), 5: 26, 4; respectively from Hermann Diels, *Doxographi Graeci* (Berolini: Opus adademiae litterarum regiae Borussicae praemio ornatum. Typis et impensis G. Reimeri, 1879), 438.

³¹ Plato, *Sophist*, 242d.

³² Plutarch reports that Democritus’ disciples (and Anaxagoras’ and Plato’s disciples) thought that a plant is an animal that grows from the soil (ζῶα ἐγγεια). DK 59A116. Unnamed disciples of the aforementioned philosophers believed, in other words, that there was no substantial difference between plants and animals, except that the plants are rooted in the soil. In fragment DK 31B62, the “wind-stopper” (ἄλεξανέμας, κωλυσανέμας) from Sicily records that before men and women obtained their offspring through classic reproduction, there was an age when human-like beings arose from the earth, but without specific “limbs” such as sexual organs. DK 31A13, DK 31A14. Namely, today’s humans are the descendants of creatures that once emerged from the earth equipped with the means to prolong their species. Consult further: DK 31A72; David Furley, *The Greek Cosmologist*, Volume I: *The Formation of the Atomic Theory and its Earliest Critics* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2006), 96-97.

³³ DK 31B79.

³⁴ This is why Theophrastus said that the words of the founder of the *Italian* medical school (Galen, *Method of Medicine*, 1: 1) and rhetoric (Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 9: 57) were not wrong (Theophrastus, *De causis plantarum*, 1: 7, 1). On the dilemmas of whether the physician (ιατρός or maybe ιατρό-μαντις “the psysician-seer”) from Acragas (DK 31B112.10-12) really grounded a medical school or not, as well as on the attempt to base medicine on philosophical postulates, see: James Longrigg, “Philosophy and Medicine: Some Early Interactions,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 67 (1963): 147-175.

³⁵ DK 31B82.

³⁶ DK 31B99.

In the fragment 140 Empedocles stipulates that one should abstain wholly from the leaves of laurel (δάφνης φύλλων ἅπο πάμπαν ἔχεσθαι) possibly aiming at reducing the consumption of laurel, while his reference to *wretches, utter wretches* (δειλοί, πάνδειλοι) in the next fragment³⁷ may possibly have the same aim, since it bans even touching broad beans (κύαμος)³⁸ with bare hands. Laurel (lat. *Laurus nobilis*), Apollo's sacred plant (alongside palm and olive), is considered the king of plants, exactly as the lion is the king of animals. Empedocles argues that, within their own species, laurel and lion are the best habitats for the human soul (ἐν θήρεσσι λέοντες ὀρειλεχέες χαμαιεῦναι γίγνονται, δάφναι δ' ἐνὶ δένδρεσιν ἡυκόμοισιν).³⁹

Empedocles urges his disciples to abstain from consuming any ensouled (living) being (ἐμψύχων), since eaten bodies of living beings (ζώων) are where penalized souls (ψυχῶν κεκολασμένων) reside. He believes that he himself is one of them, the one who has been killed and eaten, and that it is by purification (καθαρμῶν) that prior sins (ἁμαρτίας) in connection with food (τροφὴν) should be treated.⁴⁰ In one of the remaining fragments of his work *Purifications* (Καθαρμοί),⁴¹ Empedocles claims that to sacrifice a bull and eat its parts is *the greatest of abominations* (μύσος [...] μέγιστον) for man.⁴² Anyone who gets his hands dirty with blood shall experience the fate of the *evil daimones* (δαίμονες οἷτε), that is for 30,000 years⁴³ he shall wander outcast far away from the blissful, leading a hard life, and shall incarnate in the forms of many mortals. He believes that exactly this is what he himself

³⁷ DK 31B141.

³⁸ A list of possible explanations for why the Pythagoreans abstained from broad beans (lat. *Vicia faba*) can be found in Laetius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 24: 69.

³⁹ DK 31B127.

⁴⁰ Consult DK 31B139: "Alas that the pitiless day <did not destroy> me first, <before> with my claws I practised the terrible deeds of eating" (οἷμοι ὅτι οὐ πρόσθεν με διώλεσε νηλεὲς ἦμαρ, πρὶν σκέτλι ἔργα βορᾶς περὶ χεῖλεσι μητίσασθαι). Translated in Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 144. Shortly before citing this fragment, Porphyry, following the Pythagorean trail, declares that those whose sensation (αἴσθησις) is averse to the destruction of beings of other species (ἄλλοφύλων ἄπτεσθαι ζώων ἀπέκλινεν), mind (νοῦς) evidently will abstain from injuring those of the same kind (πρόδηλος [...] ὁμοφύλων ἀφεξόμενος). Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Killing Animals* 2: 31. Compare: Ibid., 3: 20.

⁴¹ On the themes and dilemmas regarding the poem *Katharmoi*, see: Maureen Rosemary Wright, "Empedocles," in *Routledge History of Philosophy Volume 1: From the Beginning to Plato*, ed. Christopher C. W. Taylor, 161-191 (London, and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 162-164. Compare: Stephen T. Newmyer, "Animal Emotions in the Presocratics," *Vichiana* 60, no. 2 (2023): 11-25.

⁴² DK 31B128.

⁴³ This τρίακτα χιλιάδες χρόνια is three times ten thousand years, while ἐτῶν μυρίων (one *myriad*) according to Plato (*Phaedrus*, 248e) is the time required for the soul to return to the place it came from. See: DK 31B119; DK 31B120; DK 31B121.

currently experiences: “Such is the road I now follow, an exile from the gods and a wanderer.”⁴⁴ The subject of being exiled from the divine home is also taken up afterwards by Plotinus⁴⁵ and Porphyry,⁴⁶ while to Plutarch⁴⁷ it serves as a consolation in the face of political persecution.⁴⁸ The upshot is, according to the sage from Acragas (Ἀκραγαντῖνος σοφός),⁴⁹ that the sin responsible for the end of the golden era of tranquility and general leniency has been killing and eating animals.

Empedocles’ approach sheds light on the view that men are living beings that make mistakes and that they owe to animals the justice that is based on their mutual kinship. When Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* (τέχνη ῥητορική)⁵⁰ distinguishes between particular (ἴδιον) and universal laws (νόμον [...] κοινόν), chooses to call the later *laws of nature* (κατὰ φύσιν). The explanation of the laws of nature is associated with the general understanding of what is just and what is unjust in harmony with nature, which, according to him, has been recognized by all nations.⁵¹ The Stagiritis believes that with Empedocles it is just that very kind of law, i.e., that the philosopher from Μεγάλη Ἑλλάς was referring to that right when forbidding the killing of ensouled (living) beings, since it would be contrary to reason if for some this was considered just, and for others unjust (τοῦτο γὰρ οὐ τισὶ μὲν δίκαιον τισὶ δ’ οὐ δίκαιον).⁵² Empedocles and Pythagoras claim that there can be only one legal norm that applies to all living beings, and that those who have hurt any living creature

⁴⁴ Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 113. The Greek text reads: τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης. DK 31B115. Geoffrey S. Kirk, and John E. Raven think that Strife (νεῖκεϊ) is the cause of man’s fall. Geoffrey S. Kirk, and John E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 353.

⁴⁵ Plotinus, *Enneads*, 1: 6, 8; 4: 8, 1. For more on this line of thought see Anthony Arthur Long, and Despina Vertzagia, “Antiquity Revisited: A Discussion with Anthony Arthur Long,” *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (2020): 111-122.

⁴⁶ Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, 1: 30.

⁴⁷ Plutarch, *On Exile*, 607c; *De Iside et Osiride*, 361c.

⁴⁸ Compare also: DK 31B121; DK 31C.

⁴⁹ DK 31B134.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1373b 6-17. This is one of a total of two places in the preserved corpus of Stagiritis, where fragments from *Katharmoi* are quoted. The second reference is found in Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1457b 13-15 (this allegation refers to the following tags: DK 31B138, and DK 31B143).

⁵¹ In this context, Aristotle cites an example from Sophocles’ *Antigone* (456-457): “Not of today or yesterday it is [law of nature], But lives eternal: none can date its birth” (οὐ γὰρ τι νῦν γε καὶ χθές, ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ ποτε ζῇ τοῦτο, κοῦδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου φάνη). Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1373b 12-13. Translated in English by Rhys Roberts in *The Complete Works of Aristotle II*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 2187.

⁵² Regarding Aristotle’s own concept of animals, consult the author’s text: Željko Kaluđerović, “‘The Master of Those who Know’ and ‘Those’ who cannot Know,” In *Formal Speeches* (Athens: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2023).

shall receive punishments that cannot be redeemed: “But this, a law for all, through the broad ether ever extends and through the boundless sunlight.”⁵³

Their followers repeat that men are kin not only to each other or to the gods, but also to living beings that lack the gift of reason (ἄλογα τῶν ζώων). What is common to all and connects them is breath (πνεῦμα), a kind of soul that permeates throughout the entire *cosmos* and unites men with the rest of the creation.⁵⁴ Hence, when humans indulge in killing and eating animal flesh, they commit injustice and are disrespectful to the deities (ἀσεβήσομεν) to the same extent as when they kill their own relatives (συγγενεῖς). For that reason the Acragantian philosopher (as well as the philosopher of Croton) advise humans to abstain from feeding on or killing ensouled (living) beings, both arguing that “those who drench altars with warm blood of the blessed.”⁵⁵ commit sacrilege.

The doctrine of the transmigration of the soul (μετενσωματουμένης)⁵⁶ implies that humans are literally killing their relatives (*bereave them of life*, θυμὸν ἀπορραΐσαντε), to wit, that the

⁵³ DK 31B135, and Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 158. The Greek text reads: ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πάντων νόμιμον διὰ τ' εὐρυμέδοντος αἰθέρος ἡνεκέως τέταται διὰ ἀπλέτου αὐγῆς. This passage is a kind of introduction to the following two fragments (DK 31B136, and DK 31B137).

⁵⁴ See: DK 58B30. According to Richard Sorabji, there are three grounds for our kinship with animals: same elements (Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, 24: 108; 30: 169), same breath (Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians*, 9: 127-129), and reincarnation (DK 31B117; Plutarch, *On the Eating of Flesh*, 997e; Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians*, 9: 129). Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 131. This view constitutes a form of metaphysical realism, namely the view that “the world consists of some fixed totality of mind-independent objects such that there is exactly one true and complete description of the way the world is.” See Åke Gafvelin, “No God, no God's Eye: A Quasi-Putnamian Argument for Monotheism,” *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (2021): 83-100.

⁵⁵ DK 31B136. Translated by Željko Kaluđerović. The Greek text reads: βωμὸν ἐρεῦθοντας μακάρων θερμοῖσι φόνουσιν. About “a man of immense knowledge” (ἀνὴρ περιώσια εἰδώς). DK 31B129, 1. Iamblichus reports in a related way (Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, 24): “And he himself [Pythagoras] lived after this manner, abstaining from animal food, and adoring altars undefiled with blood” (καὶ αὐτὸς οὕτως ἔζησεν, ἀπεχόμενος τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ζῴων τροφῆς καὶ τοὺς ἀναιμάκτους βωμοὺς προσκυνῶν).

⁵⁶ Literally this word (μετενσωματόμαι) means “to be put into another body (of the soul).” In *The Histories* (2: 123), Herodotus conveys the information that supposedly, the Egyptians were the first to think about immortality and the transmigration of the soul. Interesting is his note, near the end of the paragraph, that this opinion was adopted by certain Hellenes, some earlier and some later, and that they behaved as if they invented it themselves. Despite knowing their names (Pythagoras or Empedocles?), the “father” of history writes that he will not mention or name them (Consult in addition: DK 14,8). Carl A. Huffman believes that, apart from the version about the Egyptians, it is also possible that Pythagoras himself is the creator of that doctrine and that, according to him, it is more likely that its origin is from India. Carl A. Huffman, “The Pythagorean Tradition,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. Anthony A. Long, 66-87 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 70.

one who eats flesh (σάρκαας ἔδουσιν) may eat one's son, exactly as the son may eat his own father, or that children their mother in her new form (μορφὴν [...] ἀλλάξαντα).⁵⁷

On the other hand, for some, the series of incarnations has a different ending. Aside from living a pure life, practicing the recommended *katharmoi*, and abstaining from flesh in any version, the path to the salvation of the soul leads to two additional dimensions. As for the first, as Plutarch claims, it is tremendous and divine the saying of Empedocles that one should *fast from evil* (τὸ νηστεῦσαι κακότητος).⁵⁸ And as to the second, the wealth of divine thoughts (θείων πραπίδων) is connected with being happy (ὄλβιος), just as those who have vague opinions about the gods (σκοτόεσσα θεῶν [...] δόξα) are wretched (δειλός).⁵⁹

If, therefore, one becomes clearly aware of the nature of the divinity, this means, given the aforementioned attraction of like by like,⁶⁰ that to know the divine is to be assimilated to it, and that there must be a divine element in one. In other words, to know the divine means to become divine, and the divine cannot be registered by any of our bodily senses, or "Cannot be brought close in our eyes or grasped by our hands, by which the greatest highway of persuasion leads to the mind of men."⁶¹ This happens because: "For it is not furnished with a human head on its limbs, there are no two branches springing from its back, no feet, no swift legs, no hairy genitals."⁶²

In the fifth line of the same fragment one can find the connection of the *pneuma* with the criticism of the poet's stories about anthropomorphic gods,⁶³ referring to the holy (ιερά) and

⁵⁷ DK 31B137.

⁵⁸ DK 31B144. The sentence is taken from Plutarch's work *On the Control of Anger*, 464b.

⁵⁹ DK 31B132. In this fragment, there are indications of the contrast between Parmenides' "Way of Truth" (ἀλήθεια) and "Way of Seeming" (δόξα), light (φάος), and night (νύξ). DK 28B9. Compare as well the table of contraries attributed to Alcmaeon of Croton. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 986a 23-26, but also Democritus' distinction between "genuine" (γνήσιη) and "dark" (σκοτίη) forms of knowledge (γνώμης), DK 68B11.

⁶⁰ See: DK 31A86.1.

⁶¹ DK 31B133, Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 119. The Greek text reads: οὐκ ἔστιν πελάσασθαι ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἐφικτόν ἡμετέροις ἢ χερσὶ λαβεῖν, ἥτις τε μεγίστη πειθοῦς ἀνθρώποισιν ἀμαξίτος εἰς φρένα πίπτει.

⁶² DK 31B134, Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 140. The Greek text reads: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀνδρομέη κεφαλῇ κατὰ γυῖα κέασται, οὐ μὲν ἀπαι νώτοις δύο κλάδοι αἰσσονται, οὐ πόδες, οὐ θοὰ γούνα, οὐ μήδεα λαχνήντα. Consult: DK 31A23; Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 8: 57.

⁶³ Liken with Xenophanes' fragments DK 21B14, DK 21B15 and DK 21B16.

ineffable (ἄθέσφατος) mind (φρήν): “Rushing with rapid thought over the whole world.”⁶⁴

Empedocles writes that souls who have achieved a high stage of purification, especially those who have reached the level of apotheosis, are incarnated in the highest forms of humanity: “Finally, they are seers and hymnodists and doctors and princes among earth-dwelling men; and then they arise as gods, highest in honour.”⁶⁵

This fragment, and to a certain extent some others,⁶⁶ implies that the so-called δαίμων⁶⁷ is the host of personal identity;⁶⁸ the body is not. It is only *an unrecognizable garment of flesh* (σαρκῶν ἀλλογνώτι [...] χιτῶν),⁶⁹ which the *daimon* wears and discards. The term δαίμων⁷⁰ is in a sense equivalent to the term *soul*.⁷¹ By calling the soul *daimon*

⁶⁴ DK 31B134, Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 140. The Greek text reads: φροντίσι κόσμον ἅπαντα κατὰίσσουσα θεοῖσιν. This fifth line is emphasized in a quotation from Sextus Empiricus’ work *Against the Mathematicians*, 9: 127-128. (DK 31B136).

⁶⁵ DK 31B146, Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 157. The Greek text reads: εἰς δὲ τέλος μάντιες τε καὶ ὕμνοπόλοι καὶ ἱηροὶ καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται, ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῇσι φέριστοι. In the introduction to this fragment, Clement writes that the Acragantian even claimed that the souls of sages become gods (τῶν σοφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεοὺς γίνεσθαι). Compare with: DK 31B21, 12.

⁶⁶ DK 31B115, 7.; DK 31B117; DK 31B121; DK 31B127.

⁶⁷ The Greek masculine and feminine noun δαίμων has several groups of meanings: “god,” “goddess,” “the Deity,” “the Divine power,” “by chance,” “the power controlling the destiny of individuals,” “fortune,” “the good or evil genius,” “souls of men of the golden age,” “departed souls,” “ghost,” “spiritual or semi-divine being,” “evil spirit, demon.” See: Henry G. Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 365-366.

⁶⁸ Consult: Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers: The Arguments of the Philosophers* (London, and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 82. Some authors (see Kirk, and Raven, 357) think that fragment DK 31B133 and the two lines of fragment DK 31B134, both on trail of the philosophically-minded poet from Colophon (DK 21B23, DK 21B24, DK 21B25, DK 21B26), may equally suggest the opposite. Maureen Rosemary Wright explicitly states that there is no implication that the *daimon* is an immortal soul that persists as an identifiable individual. Maureen Rosemary Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995), 273-274.

⁶⁹ DK 31B126.

⁷⁰ *Daimon* appears in various forms in the following places: DK 31A14 (δαίμόνια); DK 31A31 (δαίμόνων); DK 31B9, DK 31B10 (δυσδαίμονα); DK 31B59 (δαίμονι δαίμων, δαίμων); DK 31B115 (δαίμονες οἷτε, δαίμονας); DK 31B116 (δαίμονας); DK 31B122 (δαίμονες); DK 31B126 (δαίμων); DK 31B147 (εὐδαιμόνιαν).

⁷¹ See: William K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, Volume 2: *The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 263-265. Guthrie, more precisely, with some restraint, writes that it is one of the two dimensions of the notion of the soul. The *daimon* is the divine aspect in man that is alien to the body (Another dimension of understanding the soul is that it combines faculties of sensation and thinking, which depend on the blood and other bodily organs).

rather than a *psyche*,⁷² the Sicilian philosopher probably wanted to emphasize the divine nature of man.⁷³

Eventually, if people live in a holy (ὁσίως) and just (δικαίως) manner, they shall be blessed (μακάριοι) in this life, and will be even more blessed (μακαρώτεροι) after leaving this one, because they will achieve happiness (εὐδαιμονίαν) that will not be temporary, and will rest eternally, as *Empedocles' philosophical poem puts it* (ἡ φιλόσοφος Εὐπεδοκλέους λέγει ποιητική): "At the same hearth and table as the other immortals, relieved of mortal pains, tireless."⁷⁴

The bottomline is that Empedocles was convinced that there is an intrinsic affinity of the entire φύσις,⁷⁵ therefore without coming up with many specific norms and regulations, but based upon deep belief in his closeness with other *empsycha*, he refused to harm and feed upon them. By acknowledging similar or identical emotional and intellectual traits to all living beings, this legendary figure from *Magna Graecia*, who spoke of himself as if he were *an immortal god, no longer mortal* (θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός),⁷⁶ paved the way for a huge shift in the scientific, philosophical, and legal appreciation of the status of non-human living beings, a shift that reached its peak during the last half of the previous century.⁷⁷

⁷² The word ψυχὴν is found only once in the preserved fragments of the Acragantian philosopher (DK 31B138), and is commonly thought to mean "life" there. Consult: Richard D. McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates* (Indianapolis, and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), 286.

⁷³ Eric R. Dodds states that the *daimon*'s function is to be the bearer of man's potential divinity and actual guilt. Eric R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951), 153.

⁷⁴ DK 31B147, Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 157. The Greek text reads: ἀθανάτοις ἄλλοισιν ὁμέεσσι, αὐτοτράπεζοι ἐόντες, ἀνδρείων ἀγέων ἀπόκληροι, ἀτειρεῖς. See: DK 31B21, 12. Allegedly this fragment, especially its first part, suggests the survival of the individual soul too after it has escaped from the cycle of birth. Francis M. Cornford believes that individuality does not reside in the four known elements (water, fire, earth, and air) but in mixed portions of Love and Strife, which remain combined as long as the soul is impure, and migrates to other bodies. Francis M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 239.

⁷⁵ Several times, both in secondary and original fragments (DK 31A14; DK 31A22; DK 31B61; DK 31B66; DK 31B72), it is given explicitly that Sicilian is a philosopher of nature (φυσικός; φυσιολόγον). For relatively recent discoveries related to his poem *On Nature*, consult: Richard Janko, "Empedocles, *On Nature* I 233-364: A New Reconstruction of P. Strasb. gr. Inv. 1665-6," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 150 (2004): 1-26. The notable *Strasbourg Papyrus*, material that brings new insights to the study of Empedocles, can be found together with a translation of other fragments by Richard D. McKirahan in: *A Presocratic Reader*, ed. Patricia Curd, 75-99 (Indianapolis, and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2011).

⁷⁶ DK 31B112, 4.

⁷⁷ Unlike Empedocles concept and the ideas of several other ancient thinkers, current legislations most commonly establish the basic principles of animal welfare protection on the

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reputed patocentric concept. They speak of the “universality of pain,” and besides the pain, suffering, fear, and stress, it is usually added that animals can feel panic as well. See: Željko Kaluđerović, “Animal Protection and Welfare: Contemporary Examinations,” in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 81-101 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022).

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