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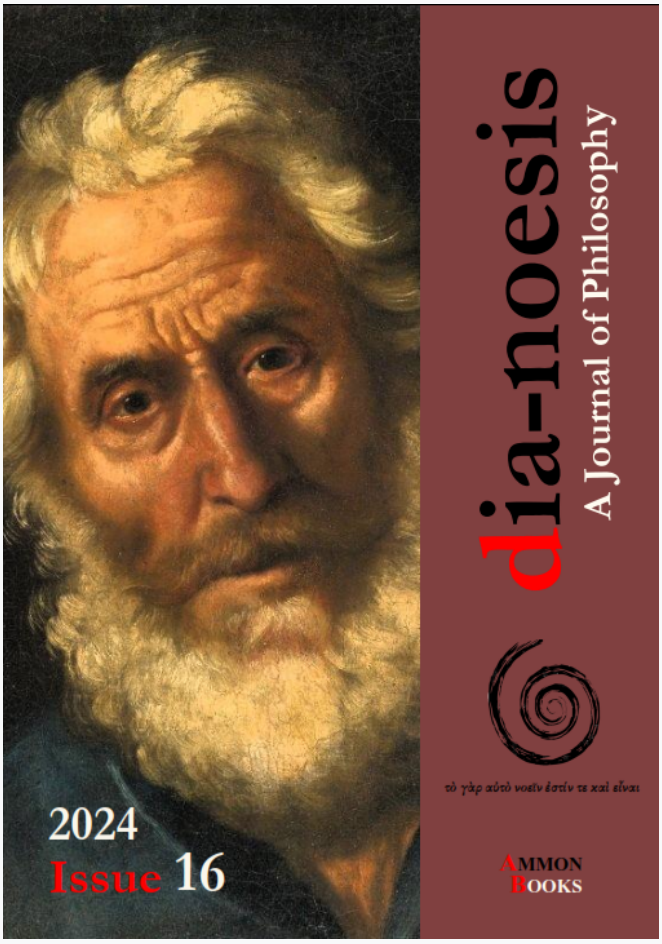

The image of Aphrodite in Empedocles

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Abstract

Aphrodite is one of the important deities of the Greek pantheon. But she is not the only one and at first glance does not seem to be the most honoured and powerful. In the Homeric epic and hymns she is presented as a narcissistic, capricious and passion-prone goddess. She is mostly associated with beauty and love charms. It might seem that this was enough for Empedocles to identify her with one of the two active powers – Love. However, in Empedocles' poem the image of Aphrodite is very complex and, in many ways, differs from the traditional view of her. She acts as a god-craftsman, is involved in such activities as metal casting, pottery, and artwork. The main question I will try to answer is the following – can we find the origins of this complex image in the literary and cultural tradition known in Empedocles' time, or did he make a radical turn and invent a new previously unknown idea of the deity?

Keywords: Empedocles, Aphrodite, Ancient Greek epic poetry, Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, Near East goddesses, religious practice, archaeological data on Aphrodite.

There are two powers in Empedocles' cosmic cycle – Love and Strife. Empedocles gives them different names. In many fragments Love is called Aphrodite. We can see it almost at the beginning of the poem in fr. B 17 DK = D 73 LM, which says that: "and by whom they have loving thoughts and perform deeds of union, calling her 'Joy' as by

name and 'Aphrodite'" (transl. Laks, Most 2016). Plutarch says (*Isis and Osiris* 48, 370d) that this beneficent power Empedocles calls Love, Friendship and Harmony (Concord) (B 18 DK = D 65 LM). This active power is called Aphrodite in B 22 DK = D 101 LM, where she likens the roots of everything (fire, water, earth and air) inducing them to make love to each other. This fragment is supported by a testimony from Plutarch (*On the face on the Moon* 12, 926d-927a, B 27 DK = D 96 + D 98 LM) according to which all these roots were unmixed, indifferent to each other and lonely, until the desire rushed to the nature, and the Love was born in them, Aphrodite and Eros.

In several fragments, Love is presented under the name of Cypris with the new function of artificer (demiurge). These fragments are short, but quite informative. From the fragment B 73 DK = D 199 LM we can conclude that Aphrodite acts as a potter. The fragments B 86 DK and B 87 DK = D 213-214 LM hint at the fact that Aphrodite creates a human body in a manner a sculptor would create a statue. Close in content are the fragments B 75 DK = D 200 LM and B 96 DK = D 192 LM, where there are some anatomical observations associated with the creation of some parts of the human body or other living things. In B 35 DK = D 75 LM we find a verb literally meaning 'smelt metal', 'cast of bronze statues', and in the main context of a quite voluminous fragment it points to the work of Aphrodite as a metallurgist. The verb χέω gives us an idea of how exactly she creates different forms of living beings – she smelts or casts them in forms (τῶν δέ τε μισγομένων χεῖτ' ἔθνεα μυρία θνητῶν).

Another feature of Aphrodite appears in the part of the poem that deals with the purification and rebirth of souls. In B 128 DK = D 25 LM Cypris is proclaimed the only deity to whom no bloody sacrifices are ever made, because, as Porphyry explains (*On abstinence* II, 20), when Love and a sense of kinship rule, no one kills anyone, considering all animals to be kin.

After a brief review of the functions and roles that Aphrodite performs in Empedocles, the question inevitably arises – how did such a multifaceted and powerful deity

come into being? Does she have a prototype in the mythological tradition before Empedocles or is it his personal invention? And why Aphrodite and not Athena, Demeter, Artemis or Hera? To answer these questions, we have to turn to Homer and Hesiod, classical and Roman historians, poets and writers, in order to consider their testimonies for cult practice. We will consult with archaeological data and museum artifacts as well. Here we go.

In Homeric epics and Hymns, Aphrodite is responsible for all the attractions of the gods and people to each other. Her power does not spread only on three goddesses – Athena, Artemis and Hestia (*Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* V, 7-33). Zeus is constantly in the power of Aphrodite's spell. Helen is literally chained to Paris. On the one hand, it is seen how Helen tries to resist the power of Aphrodite, on the other, she can do nothing about it (*Iliad* III, 390-448). One of the remarkable features of this plot is the scene where Aphrodite appears in her angry manifestation, shows her irritation and promises to punish Helen for her disobedience. This trait, from my point of view, does not correspond to the image of Aphrodite in Empedocles, where she is the exact opposite of any hatred, but in the epic, hymns and poetry disobedience to Aphrodite is always fraught with negative actions on her part towards man. In other place of the *Iliad* (XIV, 192-212) Hera asks Aphrodite for her belt, for two reasons, one is true, the other false, but both are equally important to us. False reason is that Hera wants to reconnect her parents Oceanus and Tethys marriage bonds, because they have long been in discord and long need a hug. Thus, the idea is voiced that the power of Aphrodite removes discord. On the one hand, this is similar to what we see in Empedocles, that the use of this force is very basic and limited. The functions of Aphrodite in Empedocles are not limited to sexual attraction. However, if we assume that the Oceanus and Tethys are figurative representations of such physical phenomena as water and earth, then we will see a picture quite in the spirit of Empedocles' philosophy: Aphrodite restores the lost connection between the elements. Hera's true intention however was to seduce Zeus in order to prevent him from

making another military intervention. The forces of Aphrodite here again comes down to bed needs, because the very description of her belt makes that clear: "Curiously-wrought, wherein are fashioned all manner of allurements; therein is love, therein desire, therein dalliance – beguilement that steals the wits even of the wise" (*Iliad* XIV, 215-217, transl. A.T. Murray).

So, do we find in the epic description of Aphrodite's character any clear indications, useful for future development of her image in a philosophical direction, any prerequisites for transformation of this figure into a more powerful creature? It is primarily its binding force, a force that makes one aggregate, against which neither gods, nor men can resist, a force that tames wild animals and makes them compliant. However, let's look at other situations, which, practically cross out the possibility of Empedocles' borrowing from Homer.

A mere mortal can wound Aphrodite. Convinced by Athena not to be afraid of Aphrodite, Diomedes boldly chases Aphrodite, catches up with the goddess and wounds her. One more reason for such a crazy pursuit is the confidence or some knowledge on Diomedes' part that Aphrodite is a weak goddess, not of those who take part in battles like Athena or Enio (*Iliad* V, 330-334). Aphrodite's weakness also manifests itself in the way she falls to her knees in front of her mother Dione, complains to her and cries and asks her to heal her wound. However, not only Aphrodite suffered at the hands of mortals. Several cases when it happened with other gods are listed further in V, 375–405, among them the mighty Ares, Hera and Hades. Elsewhere, Aphrodite and Ares, fleeing the battlefield, are caught up by Athena, who at the call of Hera throws them to the ground (*Iliad* XXI, 420-426). I do not think it could have inspired Empedocles.

And that is not all. Aphrodite in the Homer tradition can not only send love charms, but also experience their influence, and not on her own will. The Homeric hymn to Aphrodite contains the story of how she was thrown by Zeus into a state of love obsession with a shepherd Anchises. At the very beginning of the hymn, we learn the purpose for

which it was done. It turns out that Zeus wanted to teach Aphrodite that she should not boast about her art before other gods (*Hymn to Aphrodite* V, 48-50). How much Aphrodite is saddened by this is shown by her following words: "His name shall be Aeneas (Αἰνείας), because I felt awful grief (αἰνόν) in that I laid me in the bed of a mortal man"[1] (*Hymn to Aphrodite* V, 198-199, transl. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White). Aphrodite continues to lament and towards the end of the hymn she openly admits her defeat:

> "And now because of you I shall have great shame among the deathless gods henceforth, continually. For until now they feared my jibes and the wiles by which, or soon or late, [250] I mated all the immortals with mortal women, making them all subject to my will. But now my mouth shall no more have this power among the gods; for very great has been my madness, my miserable and dreadful madness, and I went astray out of my mind..." (*Hymn to Aphrodite* V, 247–254, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White).

Two things catch our attention in this part of the hymn. The first is that Aphrodite is deprived of her power and influence, and the second is that she herself is at loss. Formerly she used to send madness on gods and mortals, but now she is not able to resist it herself. This may be related to the Phrygian great goddess Cybele, one of the properties of which is the ability to send madness and heal from it, for example, as it happened with Dionysus (Apollodorus, *Mythological Library* III, 5, 1). Moreover, Aphrodite appears before Anchises in the guise of a mere mortal, and says in the hymn that she is the daughter of King Otreus, the ruler of Phrygia (*Hymn to Aphrodite* V, 110-112). But in this story, Aphrodite loses her former power and advantage before other gods. Can we consider that the Homeric epics

[1] τῷ δὲ καὶ Αἰνείας ὄνομ' ἔσσεται, οὕνεκα μ' αἰνὸν ἔσχεν ἄχος, ἕνεκα βροτοῦ ἀνέρος ἔμπεσον εὐνῇ. A. Faulkner (2008, 257) supposes, that in given context 'Aeneas' means 'horrible' and comes from the expression αἰνὸν ἄχος – horrible distress.

and hymns already reflect the idea of two different Aphrodites, one earthly and one heavenly? In any case, from the image of Aphrodite as depicted in Homer Empedocles could hardly borrow much.

Let's move on to another mythological story about Aphrodite, as presented in Hesiod's *Theogony*. The first thing to note is that Eros, usually the companion and aide of Aphrodite, is mentioned here among the first gods, and it seems that he has no parents. He is described as the "fairest among the deathless gods, who unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them" (*Theogony*, 120-122, transl. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White), and his functions listed here coincide with those that are usually attributed, as we have already seen, to Aphrodite; she is also the most beautiful, depriving of reason, and conquering the soul. The action of Eros is not described further in detail, but it is assumed that he forces the gods to mate and produce offspring. What is meant is that if Eros had not been born in the beginning, all other generations would not have been possible. Aphrodite herself appears among the first generations of gods, when Cronos, having cut off the fertile organ of Uranus, deprived him of his generating power, and probably the power in general, taking after him a leading position among the gods. This story needs detailed consideration and interpretation.

First, Aphrodite, like the first gods, is born without parents, coming out of the foam formed by the waves produced by the severed member of Uranus. This places her among the first gods who also appeared in the process of self-origination. Secondly, Aphrodite, having appeared from the foam (ἀφρός = σπέρμα, cf. Diogenes of Apollonia, A 24 DK), inherits the irresistible erotic power of Uranus, who could not stop in his love desire to 'cover' Gaia every night (*Theogony*, 127 ἵνα μιν περὶ πάντα καλύπτοι). Many different beings were to be born as a result of this, but Uranus locked them in Gaia's womb, from which she suffered greatly. The further story and its end is known: Aphrodite appears from the sea foam accompanied from the beginning by Eros, and she has been given "the portion allotted to her

amongst men and undying gods, – the whisperings of maidens and smiles and deceits with sweet delight and love and graciousness" (*Theogony* 203-205, transl. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White). That is, she is the kind of creature that can control this irresistible and dangerous force, and that's what Homer's Aphrodite was proud of until Zeus played a cruel trick on her. Hesiod also mentions Aphrodite's connection with the shepherd Anchises, but this story is only an example among the many gods' similarities to mortals, and looks like a natural event.

From this we can conclude the following. It seems that Aphrodite in Hesiod is more powerful goddess than in Homer. In general, it can be said to embody the source of the most important driving force in nature, the force of love attraction. Aphrodite is inextricably linked to Eros. And I dare to assume here that at the beginning of the story about the creation of the world, where Eros is established as one of the unborn gods (*Theogony*, 120-122), Aphrodite is as if invisibly present. This assumption can be supported by the similarity of the functions attributed to Eros and Aphrodite. In the above lines of *Theogony* it is said that Eros "unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them" (transl. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White). Let us recall a recent example with the belt of Aphrodite from *Iliad*, the power of which deprives the mind of even the reasonable (XIV, 215-217). Vered Lev Kenaan (2010, 46) draws attention to the fact that Eros is called by the Hesiod the most beautiful of all eternal gods (*Theogony*, 120 - Ἔρος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν θεοῖσι), which should mean the very first, not yet manifested introduction of beauty into the emerging world. Manifested beauty emerges together with Aphrodite, and this symbolizes the second stage of creation. It's also important that Aphrodite has no parents. The above features of Aphrodite give ample reason to believe that Hesiod could be a reliable source for further philosophical reflections of Empedocles. And although the Hesiod's actions of Aphrodite are still described in terms of down-to-earth love amenities, there are also many things that significantly distinguish her image from this of Homer.

For the first time Aphrodite "Urania" is found in Herodotus (I, 105), where he describes the Scythians' invasion of the Syrian city of Askalon and mentions the looting of the temple of Aphrodite. According to Herodotus, it was the oldest temple of the goddess, and to Cyprus her veneration came later together with the natives of Syria. It is important to note here that the identification of Aphrodite with Astarte (whose temple was in fact plundered by the Scythians) is a commonplace among many ancient authors (e.g., Pausanias, *Description of Greece* I, 14, 5).[2] I will not develop this subject further, it is a more important to concentrate only on what could have been the starting point for Empedocles in choosing a deity. The very epithet "Urania" may open the desired possibility for us. Probably the origin of this word is due to the fact that Aphrodite is genetically linked to Uranus. That is why sometimes the epithet may be translated as "heavenly".[3] However, the connection with Uranus is manifested in some images of Aphrodite not in the form of a beautiful girl. As Pausanias reports (*Description of Greece* I, 19, 1) – in Athens next to the place that citizens call "Gardens" is the temple of Aphrodite "Urania" and a statue of Aphrodite, which looks like a rectangular stone. Non-iconic image of Aphrodite was also found in Paphos on Cyprus, in the oldest place of her worship. Tacitus informs us that "The image of the goddess does not bear the human shape; it is a rounded mass rising

[2] More details on the identification of Aphrodite with various Eastern goddesses can be found in the work of Julia Ustinova (2005), as well as in some chapters of a large collection devoted entirely to Aphrodite (Smith, Pickup 2010). Marcovich calls her an emigrant goddess, and denies the origin of her name from the word 'foam' (Marcovich 1996).

[3] Plato gave this word an ethical colouring, denoting by it spiritual love for a man. This is patronised by Aphrodite Urania, in contrast to the earthy bodily love for a woman, Aphrodite Pandemos (*Symp*. 180c-185d). Xenophon (*Symp*. VIII, 9) and Lucian in his work *Amores* argues in roughly the same style. On the civic role of the 'popular' Aphrodite, see Pirenne-Delforge 2010, 14-15, where the importance of Aphrodite as a unifying force in trade and political interactions is emphasized, which contradicts the Platonic interpretation of the function of Aphrodite Pandemos as a visualization of man's attraction to woman, to everything earthy and primitive.

like a cone from a broad base to a small circumference. The meaning of this is doubtful" (*History*, II, 3, trans. A. J. Church, W. J. Brodribb). On the one hand, it could symbolize the phallus of Uranus, which fell into the sea and created the foam from which Aphrodite came out, on the other – Eros, who acts as a not yet manifested appearance and beauty of Aphrodite. This fact certainly adds to the universality of the image of Aphrodite.

The phallic interpretation of the non-iconic image of Aphrodite is enhanced by the aspect pointed out by Nano Marinatos (2000). She believes that sexuality, which is clearly expressed in images of naked goddesses and which is emphasized in every way in texts related to Aphrodite, should not be read flatly and unilaterally. On the contrary, it testifies to great power, but above all to danger, and first of all to men. Let us recall Herodotus' story about the Scythians punished by Aphrodite for looting her temple by the so-called "female" disease. It is believed that he meant impotence, although castration (Herodotus mentions Ἐνάρεας in this place, I, 105, 4) or homosexuality (since homosexual men are recorded as servants in the temple of Ishtar) are equally possible. Aphrodite has long been associated with Ishtar (see Ustinova 2005; Herodotus *History*, I, 199; Lucian *On the Syrian Goddess*), therefore the power to turn men into women applies to her as well. Besides, Macrobius (*Saturnalia* III, 8, 1-3) describes the statue of Venus in Cyprus, who was with female figure and clothing, but at the same time bearded and with male sexual organs, and was revered both as a male and a female deity (see also Winbladh 2012).[4] In general, it should be noted that Greek deities were perceived not simply as individuals or personifications of any qualities, but as

[4] Macrobius also reports that according to Aristophanes she was called Ἀφρόδιτον. The Nationalmuseum in Stockholm has a unique herm of Hermaphrodites - the upper part of the herm depicts a woman (goddess) lifting her skirt and revealing what is underneath, namely the male genitals. In the Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia in Reggio Calabria one can see a terracotta figure of a girl lifting her skirt to expose the male genitals (the 4th cent. BCE, Locri). Such images become more numerous in the Roman period.

forces before which man has no protection. The only thing man could do was to obey them.

To understand more clearly why Empedocles chooses Aphrodite from a large list of goddesses, we must turn to the religious customs of Sicily of the archaic and classical periods.

In Sicily, on Mount Eryx (modern Erice), there was the shrine of Aphrodite. It was founded by the Phoenicians around the 9–8th centuries BCE, and it is believed that Astarte was originally worshipped here, and only from the 5th century BCE, after the Greek conquest of western Sicily, it was reestablished as a sanctuary of Aphrodite.[5] No detailed information about this place from the early authors has come down to us, but Claudius Aelianus, the writer of the 2nd–3rd centuries CE, tells an interesting story. On Mount Eryx, he writes in *On the nature of animals* IV, 2, a festival called Anagogia ("sailing away") is held. The name of the festival comes from the idea that during these days Aphrodite goes from there to Libya. Usually there are a lot of pigeons in Eryx, but during these days they disappear and people say that they accompany Aphrodite as they are considered her favorite animals. But on the ninth day, a shining pigeon (πορφυρᾶν)[6] of special beauty arrives from the sea. It is followed by others, which means Aphrodite's return, so the end of the festival is called Catagogia ("return").

Aphrodite's affinity with different oriental goddesses, such as Ishtar, who was revered in Babylon, Atargatis in Assyrians, Astarta in Phoenicians, has already been mentioned above.[7] The departure of Aphrodite to Libya,[8]

[5] The Romans venerated her as Venus Erycina, and Christians built the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin nearby. Cf. Marcovich 1996, 48: "even today in many village churches on Cyprus, Aphrodite's island, the Virgin Mary is being invoked as Panagía Aphrodítissa, that is, 'the most holy Aphrodite'".

[6] Here Aelianus adds: Anacreontes of Teos (fr. 2 West) describes Aphrodite as 'shining' (ὥσπερ οὖν τὴν Ἀφροδίτην ὁ Τήιος ἡμῖν Ἀνακρέων ᾄδει, πορφυρέην που λέγων). And further: the dove could be golden, just as Homer sings of Aphrodite (*Iliad* V, 427).

[7] For more details on Aphrodite's connection with Near Eastern goddesses, the origin of her name, and her paths to Greece and Rome, see Marcovich 1996, 45-46.

thus, may mean her brief return home, and emphasize her origin and the very connection with the oriental goddesses. Secondly, Herodotus (II, 55) has a story "that two black doves had come flying from Thebes in Egypt, one to Libya and one to Dodona; [2] the latter settled on an oak tree, and there uttered human speech, declaring that a place of divination from Zeus must be made there; the people of Dodona understood that the message was divine, and therefore established the oracular shrine. [3] The dove which came to Libya told the Libyans (they say) to make an oracle of Ammon; this also is sacred to Zeus" (transl. A. D. Godley).[9] Dodona is the oldest oracle in Greece, where they asked to fulfill the prophecies of Zeus and Dione. The name of the latter can be translated simply as "deity", or be a female version of the name of Zeus.[10] Dione is otherwise known to us from the Homer epic as the mother of Aphrodite. However, some researchers (Dakaris 1963, Vandenberg 2007, 29-30) suggest that the name of Dione began to be used as a substitute for the goddess who was worshiped here in ancient times, before the arrival of the Greeks on these lands. This goddess is believed to be the Great Mother or Gaia.[11]

[8] In Herodotus Libya was a rather vague concept. Nevertheless, it is a region of the southern coast of Africa, bordering Egypt, where there were many Phoenician colonies.

[9] On the one hand, Herodotus himself explains below why the Dodonians are speaking about doves (II, 57), on the other hand, the connection of Aphrodite with doves is attested from very ancient times. Homer mentions it several times. The goddess is depicted with doves on alabaster from Cyprus (kept in Paris, LIMC 74; 570 BCE), she holds doves on a statue dedicated to her in Corinth (LIMC 66; 490 BCE) and on a bronze statuette from Epirus (Athens, LIMC 125; 450 BCE).

[10] In the archaeological museum of Ioannina, the visitor will find many bronze plates on which questions were written to the oracle. Addresses to both Zeus and Dione are present on almost every one of them.

[11] Dakaris, who excavated in Dodona, dates the beginning of the cult to around 2000 BCE on the basis of ceramic finds. He also points to the close connection of doves with the Cretan-Mycenaean religion, where doves were honoured as a symbol of deity and sacred animals. Zeus first appears in Dodona in the 13th century BCE. Dakaris also discovered three different levels of cultic activity, the beginning of which he considers

Thus, the story of the departure and return of Aphrodite to Eryx, accompanied by pigeons, took us into a very distant past, and opened another possible interpretation of the image of Aphrodite, according to which she was associated with the most ancient autochthonous female deity, whose cult was probably displaced by the new Olympic goddess. I do not rule out the fact that as a native of Sicily, Empedocles had access to this kind of information. No one doubts that he was familiar with the works of Homer and Hesiod, but his knowledge of the oral tradition, which has not reached us, or reached us in a seriously distorted form, cannot be excluded. I assume that Empedocles by virtue of the education and versatile interest could possess the information that in ancient times the most powerful creature was not Zeus, but a certain goddess connected with the earth and its interior, passion and birth, disobedience of which is dangerous for the man and can lead to loss of reason. And Aphrodite, by its nature and origin, is very suitable for this role.

Aelian's next testimony has, I think, some relation to Empedocles' fragment B 128 DK = D 25 LM, where Cypris is revered by a special offering:

> She it was whose favor they won with pious images,
> Painted animals and artfully scented perfumes,
> Sacrifices of unmixed myrrh and of fragrant incense,
> Casting onto the ground libations of blond honey.
> The altar was not drenched with the unmixed blood of bulls...
> (transl. A. Laks, G. Most)

Aelian explains (X, 50) that every day people come to Mount Eryx to make a sacrifice in the temple of Aphrodite. The largest altar is outside, and the fire burns on it all day until nightfall. At dawn, however, there is not a single

to be the worship of the sacred oak tree. This was followed by the worship of the earth goddess Gaia, and only then, from the thirteenth century onwards, Zeus. Dakaris' work (Dakaris 1963) has remained unavailable to me; this information is obtained from Vandenberg (2007, 29).

smouldering charcoal or ash left on the altar, nor any parts of the animals that are underburned, but it is covered with dew and fresh grass. And so, it happens every night. Despite the fact that animal sacrifices are mentioned here, an important addition is the story that in the morning the altar looks purified, and there are no traces of murder on it. The Roman historian Tacitus (the first–second centuries CE) also has similar information. In the second book of his *History* he tells that in Cyprus, in the oldest temple of the goddess in Paphos, it was forbidden to pour blood on the altars, only prayers and pure flames should be raised from the altars (II, 3). In other words, it is possible to sacrifice animals (although only males), but the blood should not touch the altar. This custom, which probably dates back to the most ancient times, could be reflected in the statement of Empedocles in B 128 DK: "The altar was not drenched with the unmixed blood of bulls".

So, my assumption is that if such stories with the purification of the altar or special restrictions on its use were popular in the times of Empedocles, then there is one step left from them to what Empedocles will teach about – bloodless and non-violent sacrifices.

Non-violent indeed, because, according to Aelian's testimony, animals come to the altar freely, without enforcement. Those who were going to make sacrifices needed to express their strong desire and ability to pay. Only then the goddess herself brought the animals to the altar. But it was important not to be stingy and pay honestly. For those who wanted to save money, the goddess took the animals and the sacrifice became ineffective. The idea that animals are under the goddess' protection and the sacrifice is made without violence leads us closer to Empedocles. The fact that Aphrodite has power over and patronizes animals can already be seen in the part of the Homeric hymn that describes how she goes on a date to Anchises accompanied by wild animals (*Hymn V to Aphrodite*, 68-74):

> "So she came to many-fountained Ida, the mother of wild creatures and went straight to the homestead

> across the mountains. After her [70] came grey wolves, fawning on her, and grim-eyed lions, and bears, and fleet leopards, ravenous for deer: and she was glad in heart to see them, and put desire in their breasts, so that they all mated, two together, about the shadowy coombes" (trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White).

The listed features of Aphrodite are related both to the Phrygian Great Goddess (Cybele, Rhea) and to Astarta, who in ancient religion and iconography has features of a patroness of wild animals (Marinatos 2000, 11-13). Thus, we have two testimonies of Aphrodite as the patroness of animals, which should be seen as a sign of great power and control over nature.

The most difficult, it seems to me, is to explain how Aphrodite became in Empedocles a demiurge. In the beginning of the article I enumerated the fragments describing how she makes various objects and body parts of living creatures with her hands, acting as an artist, potter, sculptor, and metallurgist. Will it be possible to find hints at all this in literary or archaeological materials?

A large-scale work by the writer of the fifth century CE Nonnus of Panopolis comes to the aid. In *Dionysiaca* he talks about many gods, including Aphrodite, who, being preoccupied with the process of handicraft (namely weaving), ceased to pay attention to her magic belt (XXIV, 234-330). In the result, fields ceased to bear fruit, beasts ceased to bring forth offspring, and people stopped to sing love songs, play musical instruments and make love. Aphrodite weaved poorly, ineptly, but very enthusiastically. And she didn't even notice how she enjoyed the anger of Athena, who in this type of activity was not considered to be superior. It was only after Athena had summoned all the gods and made a laughing-stock of Aphrodite the latter stopped weaving. Of course, weaving is not listed among the activities of Aphrodite in Empedocles, but we can generalize this story and gather useful information for this study – it reflects the handicraft side of the image of Aphrodite. Probably, such stories also had circulation in the times of Empedocles and

opened before him a wide field for further development of Aphrodite's image.

The lawful husband of Aphrodite is lame god-craftsman Hephaestus. Aphrodite in hymns and poetry differs from other goddesses in that she is always adorned with rich jewelry, which skilful master has made for her. Markovich believes that this reflects the influence of Phoenician craftsmanship in making jewelry (Marcovich 1996, 52). However, this does not mean that Aphrodite herself begins to create something out of metal, while in the fragment B 35 DK = D 75 LM it is possible to subtract this aspect of Aphrodite's activity – after Strife gradually recedes and Love finds itself in the middle of a vortex, a huge number of mortal creatures start *to melt out* of separate wandering parts (τῶν δέ τε μισγομένων χεῖτ' ἔθνεα μυρία θνητῶν). If this fragment can be read in the context of demiurgical activity of Aphrodite, then I have to admit that her occupation with foundry is an innovation of Empedocles. To date, I have not been able to find parallels to this in the written and material culture of the times of Empedocles and the preceding tradition.

In conclusion, I would like to draw the attention of reader to another interesting, though rather dark, moment. Empedocles' special attitude towards living beings and his doctrine of the rebirth of *daimones* place him in the context of the Orphic tradition (Riedweg 1995, Betegh 2001), which gives us another opportunity for searching parallels. In the Orphic hymn to the Night, Cypris is glorified as the beginning of all things:

I shall sing of Night,
mother of gods and men;
we call Night Kypris,
she gave birth to all.
Hear, O blessed goddess, 3
jet-black and starlit,
for you delight in the quiet
and slumber-filled serenity.
(trans. A. N. Athanassakis and B. M. Wolkow)

Given that the hymns as they came to us date back to the second century CE, we must carefully draw parallels between them and the poem of Empedocles. However, Orphism in the fifth century BCE was already an established religion, and it is likely that many elements of the later hymns can be traced back to the earlier tradition. The identification of Aphrodite with Night, which in Hesiod was the first offspring of the primordial Chaos, clearly sets her apart from the general list of deities.

Conclusion. In his poem Empedocles created a splendid image of a deity whose main function is to fit together disparate, apathetic particles wandering in space. This deity is not faceless at all, it is endowed with special features of a demiurge, who makes different organs with her own hands and creates a living organism out of them. Besides, it is a goddess who does not accept bloody sacrifices and violence. And she has a name. It is Aphrodite. Empedocles creates a new deity endowed with moral traits, whose cult is designed to change the attitude towards the value of life not only of man but also of animals. Some features of this deity could be borrowed from the Homeric epic and hymns, from Hesiod's *Theogony*, and from oriental myths. However, the study makes it clear that the image of Aphrodite as a demiurge drawn by Empedocles is not found in the tradition that precedes him.

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