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## Lions and *promoi*: Final Phase of Exile for Empedocles' *daimones*

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### Abstract

In Empedocles, the seers, poets, doctors and *promoi* of fr. 146 DK, poised for return from exile to the company of the Blessed, no more represent an Empedoclean ideal than do the lions of fr. 127. Seers, poets and *promoi* are implicated in the anathema of bloodshed; in particular, the *promoi* ('battle chiefs') are ill-suited to a world of waxing Love. As with the other *daimones*, their exile will last through 30,000 seasons, a sentence that Empedocles' purifications cannot shorten. The lives of the seers, poets, doctors and *promoi* are lived in a world of waxing Strife; their prestige is owed to their status in that world.

### Keywords

Empedocles – *daimones* – purification – lions – *promoi* – Strife

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## 1 Introduction

N. C. McClelland, *Encyclopedia of Reincarnation and Karma*, writes:<sup>1</sup>

In his work *Purifications*, of which only a part has survived, Empedocles describes the descent of the soul from an original state of unity and blessedness into the rebirth cycle due to sin and the lengthy process of purification needed for it to ascend back to life among the gods. This process begins with the soul first going through many lives in the vegetable realm until it is reborn as a laurel, the highest form in that realm. From this tree the soul goes into the animal realm until it is reborn as a lion and from there it can be reborn into a human form. Empedocles understood corporeal existence as punishment for the original sin of killing for food or sacrificial rites. Such killing, according to Empedocles, was the equivalent to murder because human souls were reborn into animals and vice versus [sic], therefore, in killing animals, sooner or later, we would kill (murder) a body inhabited by a human soul. Also, according to Empedocles, as well as the later Platonists, the soul could only be liberated from this bodily rebirth by living a pious, philosophical, and vegetarian life style.

The above passage gives us the ‘vulgate’ version of Empedocles’ account of reincarnation. As to the purifications specifically advocated by Empedocles and his account of the ascent toward divine existence, McClelland’s version passes over in silence some problems in the text of which he claims to give a résumé. Those problems are our point of departure; from here on out, our goal will be a clarification of what the message of Empedocles really is.

Below are three passages from the poem called *Katharmoi* (*Purifications*) that form the background for McClelland’s remarks, and to which we will now direct particular attention.<sup>2</sup>

1 *Encyclopedia of Reincarnation and Karma* (Jefferson / London, 2010), 87.

2 For the fragments of the Presocratics, we follow the numbering of H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* 6th edn. (Berlin, 1951) [DK]. We use the abbreviation ‘fr’ for ‘fragment’. ‘DK’ is not added when we refer to a fragment under the B section of DK. We use ‘B’ plus a number given by DK when we want to specify the context of the fragment and the fragment itself. An updated bibliography concerning the fragments of Empedocles can be found at <http://sites.google.com/site/empedoclesacragas/bibliography-to-b-fragments>. For the sources of the Presocratics, see <http://www.placita.org/>.

## Fr. 115.1-12:

ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,	1
αἰδίδιον, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὄρκοις·	
εὐτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνωι φίλα γυῖα μίηηι,	3
...	
δαίμονες οἷτε μακραιῶνος λελάχασι βίοιο,	5
τρῖς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,	6
...	
αιθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,	9
πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὐδας ἀπέπτυσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς	
ἡελίου φαέθοντος, ὁ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·	
ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.	12

It's a fact of necessity, an ancient decree of the gods,<sup>3</sup>

Eternal, sealed by expansive oaths:

When anyone, through his errors, soils his own limbs with blood

...

O *daimones* who have obtained a share in a long life,  
that he [= the guilty Blessed One] wanders thirty thousand seasons far  
from the Blessed ones,

...

The force of *aithēr* pursues [the exiles] into the sea,  
the sea spits them out onto the earth's floor, the earth spits them into the rays  
of the sun's splendor, and that one hurls them into the whirlwinds of *aithēr*;  
each receives them from each, and all hate them.

## Fr. 127:

ἐν θήρεσσι λέοντες ὀρειλεχέες χαμαιεῦναι  
γίγνονται, δάφναι δ' ἐνὶ δένδρεσιν ἠυκόμοισιν.

3 For these passages we decided to reproduce the text of Diels-Kranz, first because of its wide acceptance, and secondly because the points at which we might deviate from that edition in order to side with the readings of M. Rashed ('Le proème des *Catharmes* d'Empédocle. Reconstitution et commentaire', *Elenchos* 29, 2008, 7-37 at 32-3) have no bearing on the development of our arguments. (Rashed's edition retains the manuscript reading *φόνωι* rather than the emendation *φόνωι* for fr. 115.3, with the translation: 'Quand l'un des mortels, par ses erreurs, dans sa fuite, souille ses propres membres.')

Among beasts, they become lions bedding on the ground in the mountains,  
And among trees with lovely tresses, they become laurels.

Fr. 146:

εἰς δὲ τέλος μάντεις τε καὶ ὕμνοπόλοι καὶ ἰητροὶ  
καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται,  
ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμήϊσι φέριστοι.

Toward the end they turn into seers and composers of hymns and doctors  
And battle chiefs, for earth-dwelling humans,  
Whence they spring up as gods, the greatest in honors.

## 2 The Exile, the Reincarnations, and the Emergence from Exile

Empedocles believes in reincarnation. He also believes in an ‘oracle of Necessity’ which would impose on one of the Blessed Ones living in a celestial abode an earthly exile of 30,000 seasons as punishment for an offense he had committed (fr. 115.6: τρίς μιν μυριάς ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλλάγησθαι). That exile consists of a series of reincarnations as various living beings here on earth. The exiled individual who is thus reincarnated is called, in Empedocles’ language, a *daimōn*. We have no precise knowledge of the Blessed One’s offense; at most, there is general agreement that the offense is connected to a murder, but that connection is subject to interpretation. The ‘oracle of Necessity’ is endorsed by the gods (fr. 115.1: θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν). Hippolytus attests that those gods are the four elements (fire, water, earth, air) and the two great powers (Hate,<sup>4</sup> Love) that rule the world.<sup>5</sup> They are not the traditional Olympians, nor are they the Blessed Ones. Applying the divine names assigned by Empedocles (fr. 6;

4 Throughout this paper, we will translate the genderless, negative *Neikos* variously as ‘Strife’ or ‘Hate’, depending on the context.

5 Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 7.29, pp. 23.6-24.1 Marcovich. Contrary to the opinion of J. Bollack (*Purifications*, Paris, 2003, 62), there is no reason to doubt what Hippolytus says. More recently, C. Santaniello also parts company with Hippolytus (‘Θεός, Δαίμων, Φρῆν Ἰερή: Empedocles and the Divine’, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 75, 2012/3, pp. 301-13 at 305): ‘It is very likely that the banished δαίμονες belonged to the number of the gods who made the decree.’ In contrast, C. Gallavotti (*Empedocle: Poema fisico e lustrale*, Milan, 1975, 272) retains Hippolytus’ language: ‘θεῶν: non sono gli dei olimpici . . . , ma gli dei della cosmologia empedoclea, gli elementi e le forze.’ However, Gallavotti joins those who assume that the gods’ decree concerns human violence: ‘In altre parole, il θεῶν ψήφισμα è la legge naturale che governa la vita dell’universo e la sua conservazione; tale legge fisica non deve essere turbata

17.19-20), we would call them Zeus, Hera, *Aidōneus*, *Nēstis*, *Philotēs* and *Neikos*. Those, then, would be the gods who track the exile decreed against a Blessed One, for they are stakeholders in his punishment (fr. 115.9-12). His earthly incarnations are therefore under observation by the entire universe. (Odysseus' wanderings, followed by some of the gods, would be one of the poetic models that influenced Empedocles in that regard.) If the specific interest of each of those powers eludes us, we can at least guess which of them, above all, presides over the Blessed One's exile: it is *Neikos*—Hate, Strife. Indeed, separation (in this case, separation from the heavenly abode) is his hallmark. Hatred of the exiled one by *Aithēr*, by the sea, by the earth, by the sun (fr. 115.9-12)—that hatred is the work of *Neikos*. As for Love, it is difficult to accept the idea that Love imposes an exile made up of sufferings and hostility on one of its living creatures.<sup>6</sup> Among the exile's last earthly lives before the return to the celestial abode, there are some lives that enjoy a certain prestige: lions, laurels (fr. 127), seers, composers of hymns, doctors and *promoi*, which (for reasons developed below) we translate 'battle chiefs' (fr. 146). A good many modern commentators consider the four human types of fr. 146 to be under the influence of *Philotēs*—ready, like Empedocles himself, to come out of exile. On closer examination, however, things are not so simple, and that is what we intend to show.

### 3 The Lions

In fr. 127, which we cited in our introduction, Empedocles declares that, among various animal and vegetable lives, those of lions and of laurels are to be envied. We assume that the exiled one has therefore reached one of the last stages of his exile when he exists as a laurel, and then as a lion—or perhaps as a lion and then as a laurel; for Empedocles, we do not know what chronological order, if any, is to be observed. In another fragment, which probably comes not long after fr. 127, Empedocles indicates that at the end of exile—so just before passage into the heavenly abode—the exile's lives among men are the lives of seers, composers of hymns, doctors and *promoi* (fr. 146). We do not know if each of the four types of life leads directly to the celestial abode, or if in fact all four need to occur in series (and, in that case, in what order?). It has

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da violenze umane.' But that is nowhere attested. How could Strife, which takes part in the decree, countenance the sort of decree that would run contrary to its own policy?

6 There remains the possibility, however, that Love puts up with the idea of exile to the extent that that exile presupposes or validates the existence of Love's own creations—all the ephemeral lives that will embody the *daimōn*.

often been thought, and it is still thought, that the enviable lives that signal the impending end of exile are the lives that are purified of Hate and consecrated to Love—<sup>7</sup> a view that goes back to Clement of Alexandria's insertion of our fr. 146 into his *Stromata*, at 4.23.150.1.1-2, where he affirms that people on the threshold of divinity are sages (σοφοί), obviously aligned with Love and not with Hate: φησὶ δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς τῶν σοφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεοὺς γίνεσθαι ὧδέ πως γράφων . . . (fr. 146 follows). That view imposes, in our opinion, an angelic and over-simplified vision on what Empedocles is actually saying.

The strongest indication that there is no 'angelism' in Empedocles is found in his ennobling of lions (fr. 127.1). We have no reason to suppose that, contrary to traditional depictions of lions, Empedocles took lions to be beings purified of Hate and full of Love. If, in one of his fables (which may or may not pre-date Empedocles), Aesop introduced a lion who was as mild and as just as a human,<sup>8</sup> it would be naïve to think that Empedocles had that model in mind. Empedocles, like everyone else, would undoubtedly see in lions animals who are especially powerful, ferocious, and with pitiless hearts, as Hesiod could say (*Theogony* 833),<sup>9</sup> and can be kings in their own domain.<sup>10</sup> In other words, from Empedocles' perspective, lions would more likely be representatives of Hate than of Love.

7 McClelland (above n. 1, p. 87) says: 'the lengthy process of purification. . . begins with the soul first going through many lives in the vegetable realm until it is reborn as a laurel, the highest form in that realm. From this tree the soul goes into the animal realm until it is reborn as a lion . . . the soul could only be liberated from this bodily rebirth by living a pious, philosophical, and vegetarian life style.' How could the lion be in 'the lengthy process of purification' linked with 'vegetarian life style'?

8 Aesop, *Fables* 334, 336 Perry (the Hare and the Lion's justice).

9 The Nemean Lion, whom Hesiod (*Theogony* 329) calls 'a plague for humans', held sway in two mountains near Nemea. In Pindar, *Isthmian* 4.45-7, the lion is recognized for its courage in combat. The lion is also associated with the divine predator Artemis, viz. *Iliad* 21.483-6 (trans. Lattimore): 'Zeus has made you [sc. Artemis] a lion among women, and given you leave to kill any at your pleasure. . . you hunt down the ravening beasts in the mountains and deer of the wilds.' E. Rohde, in *Psyche: Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen* (Freiburg / Leipzig, 1894), treating the notion of purer and better births over the course of incarnations, included a footnote on Empedocles fr. 127 (474 n. 3): 'Phantastisch v. 448f. (Löwe, Lorbeer).' Indeed, lions are an astounding phenomenon, if the reincarnation in question conforms to supposed Empedoclean Love-oriented standards, with 'purer and better births over the course of incarnations'!

10 If the eagle is king of birds of the air (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 114 and 136), the lion is king of beasts of the land: Aesop, *Fables* 145, 258, 334, 336, 339, 514 Perry.

If we did not have fr. 127 (whose authenticity is beyond doubt),<sup>11</sup> we would be free to imagine an Empedocles who would specify a vegetarian animal, like the bee, the horse, or the bull for the top of the transmigrational ladder among land-dwelling creatures.<sup>12</sup> But there is no arguing with the evidence: Empedocles has specified instead a great carnivore.

Modern commentators do not get themselves mired in this detail, and when some few give it their brief notice, it is to deflect attention from the negative image of the carnivore. We need only cite the comment of N. van der Ben on λέοντες in fr. 127.1: 'The law forbidding bloodshed naturally only applies to rational beings; the traditionally high rank of the lion in the animal kingdom therefore is not surprising here.'<sup>13</sup> Referring to his comment on πάντων in fr. 135.1, this scholar adds: 'men; not of course animals whose ἀλληλοφαγία has become completely involuntary and natural; cf. fr. 28 (127 DK.) where the lion appears as the highest kind among animals. Cf. Hesiod, *Erga*, 276ff.' Van der Ben assumes that, for Empedocles, on the model of Hesiod, what applies to humans (and gods) does not apply to animals. But that would be to draw a line between human and non-human living beings, a line that Empedocles' belief in reincarnation would tend to blur. It would make it harder to comprehend fr. 139, now clarified by the Strasbourg papyrus (d.5-6 MP) and the edition of O. Primavesi:<sup>14</sup>

Ὀϊμοὶ ὄτ(ι) οὐ πρόσθεν με διώλεσε νηλεὲς ἦμαρ,  
 πρὶν χηλαῖς σχέτλι' ἔργα βορᾶς πέρι μητρίσασθαι;

In that fragment, Empedocles recalls indirectly that he had been an animal with claws (χηλαῖς), a carnivore. Why, then, does he regret the 'pitiless day' (νηλεὲς ἦμαρ) when he had to use his claws to feed himself, since nature obliged him to do so? If animals devouring each other is not judged by the law of justice that Zeus has prescribed for humans (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 275-9, cited by van der Ben), if that devouring is found inscribed in the laws of nature, why does Empedocles imagine that he could have done otherwise?

11 Aelian, *On the Characteristics of Animals* 12.7 is our only source for fr. 127. He reports the deification of lions in Egypt before introducing and citing the verses of Empedocles. See further below.

12 The bee produces honey, esteemed in fr. 128.7. The horse has nobility, and so is very like the human. In Empedocles' eyes, the bull is a victim of Hate in certain bloody sacrifices (fr. 128.8).

13 N. van der Ben, *The Proem of Empedocles' Peri physios: towards a new edition of all the fragments* (Amsterdam, 1975), 221.

14 O. Primavesi, 'Empedokles: Texte und Übersetzungen' in J. Mansfeld and O. Primavesi (eds.), *Die Vorsokratiker* (Stuttgart, 2011), 392-563 (see p. 484, fr. 87 Primavesi).

Furthermore, van der Ben apparently forgets that Empedocles does not at all believe—by contrast with Hesiod—that Zeus prevents violence in humans. For the record, let us recall that Zeus is named in fr. 128.2 among the gods in opposition to Cypris—gods who have none other than Ares in the lead. According to Empedocles, the power of Zeus over men is associated with blood that flows (fr. 128.8), whereas the real power that could prevent violence on the part of humans is that of Cypris.

Empedocles does not believe that the violence of certain animals is inevitable. In the world previously under the reign of Cypris, ‘all was tame and mild with regard to humans’ (fr. 130.1), and ‘goodwill shone brightly everywhere’ (fr. 130.2). It is in that world that one could imagine Aesop’s fable about the mild and just lion. However, we have no grounds for asserting that the lions of fr. 127 belong to the reign of Cypris—the case, as we will now show, is quite the contrary.

Let us examine the context of fr. 127, which has been furnished by Aelian, our sole testimony for those verses. Aelian speaks of the lions of Egypt. Those lions, he says, are considered to be close to the gods. The proximity of the lions to the divine leads Aelian to cite Empedocles. The following is A. F. Scholfield’s (Loeb) translation of Aelian’s *On the Characteristics of Animals* (Περὶ ζώων ιδιότητος) 12.7:

In Egypt they worship lions... The flesh of oxen is supplied to them daily... And if, after practicing his skill against the calf, the lion brings it down... he eats his fill and goes back to his own stall. The lion is a very fiery animal, and this is why the Egyptians connect him with Hephaestus (διάπυρον δέ ἐστι τὸ ζῶον ἰσχυρῶς, καὶ ἐντεῦθεν καὶ Ἡφαίστω ἀνήψαν αὐτὸ Αἰγύπτιοι) but, they say, he dislikes and shuns the fire from without because of the great fire within himself (τὸ δὲ ἔξωθεν πῦρ δυσωπεῖται καὶ φεύγει πλήθει τοῦ ἔνδοθεν φασιν). And since he is of a very fiery nature, they say the lion is the house of the sun (οἶκον Ἡλίου)... sharing (so the Egyptians say) to some extent the lot of the gods. And further, they appear in dreams to those whom the god regards with favor, and utter prophecies, and those who have committed perjury they punish, not after some delay but immediately, for the god inspires them with a righteous indignation. Empedocles maintains that if his lot transforms a man into an animal, then it is best for him to transmigrate into a lion... [fr. 127 follows].

The intimate connection of the lion with fire, as reported by Aelian, is striking. That connection is no stranger to the thought of the ancient Greeks, as in Euripides’ *Bacchae* 1018-19 and Sophocles, fr. 150.2 Radt. Aelian uses

Hephaestus to talk about fire, as does Empedocles in fr. 96.3 and fr. 98.2. The lion cannot stand the sight of external fire, and shuns it because he is full of fire inside himself. Now, Empedocles, according to Theophrastus (*De sensibus* 8 = 31 A86.8 DK) identified the same type of reaction: ‘the animals that have fire in excess are dim of sight <by day>, since the fire within—increased still further by the daylight—covers and occupies the passages of water.’<sup>15</sup> This view shows up again in the Empedoclean theory of compensations, mentioned in regard to animal habitats (cf. 31 A73 DK). What are we to conclude from the context of fr. 127, as provided by Aelian? Our impression is that Aelian is citing Empedocles appropriately in relation to his account of the lions of Egypt, indicating at the same time that he knows that author not only for the two verses he cites, but also for other verses that must belong to his poem on nature (*Physika*) and must deal with the theory of compensations. And so the lions of Empedocles would not be different from the lions of Egypt. We have no reason to suspect that Empedocles’ lions lived in days of old when Love held sway, and it is clear that Aelian’s lions are ferocious beasts of the present time: ‘And if, after practising his skill against the calf, the lion brings it down . . . he eats his fill.’ There is nothing in Aelian to suggest locating the Egyptian lions in a world where ‘all was tame and mild with regard to humans’ (fr. 130.1) and where ‘goodwill shone brightly everywhere’ (fr. 130.2). Aelian adds: ‘Those who have committed perjury they punish, not after some delay but immediately, for the god inspires them with a righteous indignation.’ And there is more.

In Empedocles, fire is often the ally of Strife. It separates (fr. 62.2). It is called  $\pi\upsilon\rho$  ἀίδηλον in fr. 109.2, which definitely needs to be read in its original Homeric sense as ‘fire the destroyer’. Plutarch associates fire with destructive Strife in Empedocles (*De primo frigido* 952B = B19). If fire is, as we believe, a generic term for every manifestation of Zeus, who is in fr. 6 a root of everything, then fire is the lightning that is *argēs*, conceived traditionally as a weapon of destruction in the hands of the Olympian. Finally, Aristotle, in the first book of the *Metaphysics* (A, 994a7), alluded to Empedocles when he reported that the sun is moved by Strife.<sup>16</sup> But let us not infer from these observations that

15 Tr. G. M. Stratton, *Theophrastus and the Greek Physiological Psychology before Aristotle* (London, 1917) 73.

16 *Metaphysics* 994a7: τὸν δὲ ἥλιον ὑπὸ τοῦ νεΐκουσ. Not in Diels-Kranz. Comment by W. D. Ross in *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford, 1924), 216: ‘994<sup>a</sup>6-7. The reference to Strife shows that Aristotle is taking an illustration from the cosmology of Empedocles. According to this, the sun was  $\pi\upsilon\rho$ ὸς ἄθροισμα μέγα (Diog. Laert. viii. 77). I.e. it was formed by Strife, which leads to the segregation of the elements from each other and the aggregation of each together. The same impulse which formed it was doubtless thought to give it its motion. And the sun in turn, being fire, acts on the other elements (cf. A. 984<sup>b</sup>6, 985<sup>b</sup>1), and in particular on air (Aet. ii.8.2).’

for Empedocles fire is always associated with Strife. It would not be difficult to find several examples of Love using fire to pursue her own goals;<sup>17</sup> but in a world-phase that does not belong to the era of Queen Cypris (fr. 128.3), fire is often at the service of Strife. In any case, we see that lions—those of Egypt certainly, and those of Empedocles in all probability—are associated with fire, which is itself associated with Strife.

#### 4 Seers and Poets

Fr. 146 has been transmitted to us by two authors: Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-220) and Theodoretus of Cyrrhus (393-460). We suspect that Theodoretus has in fact done no more here than reproduce what he found in Clement.<sup>18</sup> Here are the two contexts:

τούτω δυνατὸν τῷ τρόπῳ τὸν γνωστικὸν ἤδη γενέσθαι θεόν· ἐγὼ εἶπα· θεοὶ ἔστε καὶ υἱοὶ ὑψίστου· φησὶ δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς τῶν σοφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεοῦς γίνεσθαι ὧδέ πως γράφων·

εἰς δὲ τέλος μάντις τε καὶ ὕμνοπόλοι καὶ ἱητροὶ  
καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται·

ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῆσι φέριστοι. (Clement, *Stromata* 4.23.149.8.4-150.1.5)

Εἰ δὲ ἀναισθήτως αὐτοὺς ἔχειν τῶν γινομένων νομίζετε καὶ μὴ θείας τινὸς καὶ τρισολβίας ὄντως λήξεως ἀπολαύσαι, Πίνδαρος ὁ λυρικός ταύτην ὑμῶν ἐκβαλέτω τὴν δόξαν, λέγων ὧδί·

ψυχὰι δ' . . . εὐσεβῶν, ἐν οὐρανοῖς ναίουσαι,  
μολπαῖς μάκαρα μέγαν ἀείδουσ' ἐν ὕμνοισι.

Εἰ δὲ τῶν εὐσεβῶς βεβιωκότων οὐρανὸς ἐνδιαίτημα, ταύτην ἔχουσι τὴν λήξιν οἱ μάρτυρες· τούτων γὰρ οὐδὲν εὐσεβέστερον· καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς δὲ ὁ Ἀκραγαντίνος οὕτω φησὶν·

εἰς δὲ τέλος μάντις τε καὶ ὕμνοπόλοι καὶ ἱητροὶ  
καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται·

17 See M. R. Wright, *Empedocles: The extant fragments* (New Haven / London, 1981), 24-5.

18 Thanks to Clement of Alexandria, we have 46 verses of Empedocles, 14 of which we would not have known without him. It may be assumed that Clement had direct access to the Agrigentine's poems, or at least to a sufficiently compendious anthology. Theodoretus leaves us nine lines of Empedocles, none of them uniquely reported by him. We also suspect that the lines attributed to Pindar that Theodoretus cites in *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 8.35 are only repeated from Clement (*Stromata* 4.26.167.3).

ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῆσι φέριστοι.

Εἰ δὲ μάντις καὶ ἰατροὺς τοσαύτης ἔφησεν ἐκεῖνος ἀξιοῦσθαι τιμῆς, τί ἂν εἴποι τις περὶ τῶν τοσαύτην ἐπιδειξαμένων ὑπὲρ εὐσεβείας ἀνδρείαν, οἷς τοῦργον οὐ μόνον ἀνδρείαν ἀλλὰ καὶ δικαιοσύνην καὶ σωφροσύνην καὶ σοφίαν καὶ φρόνησιν μαρτυρεῖ; (Theodoretus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 8.34.10-37.4)

The presentation of the four types of people—seers, composers of hymns, doctors, *promoi*—in these contexts has, as it turns out, an honorific function. Clement follows up a citation of Psalm 81:6 (LXX), which sees gods in humans, with a citation of Empedocles, where ‘the souls of wise men’ become gods (τῶν σοφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεοὺς γίνεσθαι). Theodoretus assumes that Empedocles’ four human types have lived pious lives (εὐσεβῶς, εὐσεβέστερον, εὐσεβείας).

Since the first years of the nineteenth century, a good many commentators on fr. 146 have concluded that the humans who are close to becoming divine are the purified ones—purified in the sense of the purifications urged by Empedocles—or are simply the best people, ‘best’ in the Empedoclean sense. These commentators see a continuity between those humans and the Blessed Ones who are gods, just as it is with Clement, who believes in the premise of Psalm 81:6—a possible proximity of humans, sons of the Most High, to the Most High himself.

There would have been an excellent reason to believe that the four types of humans approaching divinization are sages, pious, and purified in keeping with the Empedoclean ethic. That reason would be the fact that Empedocles, certainly sage, pious, and purified in keeping with his own ethic, is a man who will be reborn in the form of a god.<sup>19</sup> It is possible to think, then, that the four types of humans and Empedocles are but one.<sup>20</sup>

19 The idea that emergence from exile depends on human action, and that a reduction in the period of exile (a ‘shortcut’) is the reward for virtuous behavior (in the Empedoclean sense), is a common conception. C. Osborne goes even further. According to her (‘Empedocles Recycled’, *Classical Quarterly* 37, 1987, 24-50 at 41), ‘The cosmic alternation of one and many is not a separate story from the katharmoi; it is upon these ritual exiles (katharmoi) and their capacity to choose between a life of bloodshed and discord or one of purity and unanimity that the cosmic changes depend.’ That viewpoint would necessitate a kind of circular reasoning: since the sin triggering the exile is connected to a murder, avoiding murder during the exile will wipe out the sin and end the exile.

20 The notion that Empedocles integrates in himself the four types of humans in fr. 146 seems to appear for the first time in A. Bouché-Leclercq (*Histoire de la divination dans l’Antiquité*, Paris, 1879, i. 32), and is later articulated by Rohde in *Psyche* (n. 9 above), perhaps independently of Bouché-Leclercq. It has gained wide acceptance since then; cf. B. Inwood, *The Poem of Empedocles* (Toronto, 1992), 64 n. 155: ‘136/146 exactly matches the lofty status Empedocles has already achieved in his own life: a prophet, poet, doctor, and

Nevertheless, the words *μάντις*, *ύμνοπόλοι* and *πρόμοι* (setting aside *ιητροί* for the moment) do not suggest by themselves, or in the eyes of Empedocles, that all humans who fall under those three rubrics are sages, pious, and purified in accord with Empedoclean standards.

The famous seer/*μάντις* Calchas pushed Agamemnon into making a bloody sacrifice (the murder of Iphigeneia) because he believed an offended deity could only be appeased by such a sacrifice.<sup>21</sup> One can always claim that Calchas is an isolated case. His story is unique; it would be unfair to have the great mass of seers fall under his shadow. On the other hand, even if we leave out of account the way Calchas distinguishes himself in the military expedition against Troy, it still makes sense to recall the regular practices of the people who are traditional seers, especially those in the service of the powerful elite, sometimes including their roles in military expeditions. First, let us quote W. Burkert on 'the art of the seer' in his work on Greek religion:<sup>22</sup>

Sacrifice, the execution of the sacred work, is followed with heightened attention; here everything is a sign: whether the animal goes willingly to the altar and bleeds to death quickly, whether the fire flames up swiftly and clearly, what happens at the burning in the fire, how the tail curls and the bladder bursts. In particular, the inspection of the livers of the victims developed into a special art: how the various lobes are formed and coloured is eagerly awaited and evaluated at every act of slaughter . . . The inspection of entrails is the prime task of the seers who accompany the armies into battle. Herds of victims are driven along expressly for *hiera* and *sphagia*—although also, of course, for provisioning. Without favourable sacrificial signs no battle is joined.

One might find an example of what Burkert relates in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 1255: the *manteis* kill animals in order to know the future, and do so in the presence of at least one *promos* (1244: Eteocles), if not the other

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political leader.' S. Trépanier, *Empedocles: An Interpretation* (New York / London, 2004), 74: 'these lines have an autobiographical ring to them, for the four summits of human excellence Empedocles mentions correspond to capacities he was thought to have united in his person.'

21 In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Calchas is surrounded by *promoi* (v. 200; see also the offices of *προφήται* and *πρόμοι* closely related in vv. 409-10).

22 W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge MA, 1985), 112-13.

(Polyneices).<sup>23</sup> The sacrificed animals afford an opportunity for expert examination of entrails (*hieroscopiē*), the smoke and fire of sacrifice, the way the skin cracks, noises, even reactions of the organs when exposed to fire (empyromancy).<sup>24</sup> Under no circumstances could Empedocles believe that the *manteis* who applied their art to bloody sacrifices had arrived at the final stage of a purification inspired by Love, the sort of purification he advocated. Those *manteis* who attended and occasionally commanded bloody sacrifices existed in large numbers well before Empedocles was born, during his lifetime, and for a long time after his death. Contrary to an oversimplified 'vulgate' version of what Empedocles is saying, those *manteis* are not to be exempted from the plural read in fr. 146. In fact, the plural implies a wide range of activities, including in particular the sort that Empedocles here opposes: divination in connection with animal sacrifices.

Moreover, in regard to seers in general: to the extent that they receive their gift from Apollo, and that Zeus inspires seers through Apollo, there is justification for taking a critical, Empedoclean stance with regard to them when

23 See also, Thucydides, *History* 6.69.2.4-5: ἔπειτα δὲ μάντιες τε σφάγια προύφερρον τὰ νομιζόμενα (during the battle of Syracuse).

24 The Iamidai of Olympia are a family of seers engaging in empyromancy and in the examination of parts of animals that were sacrificed in honor of Zeus: Pindar, *Olympian* 6; Herodotus 2.57; and Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 6.2.4 and 5 (tr. W. H. S. Jones and H. A. Omerod): 'Divination by kids, lambs or calves has, we all know, been established among men from ancient times, and the Cyprians have even discovered how to practise the art by means of pigs; but no peoples are wont to make any use of dogs in divining. So Thrasybulus apparently established a method of divination peculiar to himself, by means of the entrails of dogs. The diviners called Iamidae are descended from Iamus, who, Pindar says in an ode, was a son of Apollo and received the gift of divination from him.' Finally, Pausanias 8.10.5: 'The Elean seer Thrasybulus, the son of Aeneas, one of the Iamids. This man foretold a victory for the Mantineans and took a personal part in the fighting.' Regarding the art of the seers, see M. H. Jameson, 'Sacrifice before battle' in V. D. Hanson (ed.), *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience* (London, 1991), 197-227, esp. 204-17; F. T. van Straten, *Hiera Kala: Images of Animal Sacrifice in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Leiden / New York / Cologne, 1995), pp. 156-7; J. Dillery, 'Chresmologues and *Manteis*' in S. I. Johnston and P. T. Struck (eds.), *Mantikē: Studies in Ancient Divination* (Leiden / Boston, 2005), 167-233, esp. 169, 171-8, 200-9; D. Collins, 'Mapping the Entrails: The Practice of Greek Hepatoscopy', *American Journal of Philology* 129 (2008), 319-45; M. A. Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley / Los Angeles, 2008), 39-40; S. I. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, (Malden / Oxford, 2008), 116-18 ('*Manteis* in Battle'), 119-25 ('Healing and Related Activities'), 125-28 ('Reading the Entrails'); P. Struck, 'Animals and Divination' in G. Campbell (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life* (Oxford, 2014), 310-23.

Empedocles makes of Zeus *basileus* (the Zeus of tradition) a god reigning in the era of Hate and of bloody sacrifices (fr. 128), and in addition opposes Wisdom (Σόφη) to Ὀμφαίη (fr. 123.3), which is to be interpreted as the Utterance of Zeus *panomphaios*, identical with Zeus *basileus*.<sup>25</sup>

Turning our attention to the composers of hymns and singers of songs, we find that some poets (ὑμνοπόλοι)<sup>26</sup> glorify martial feats and promise immortality in human memory to the bloodiest heroes. So it is with Homer and Achilles.<sup>27</sup> So it is with the composer of the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*, bringing on an Apollo who loves perfect hecatombs.<sup>28</sup> It's the same with the composer of the *Hymn to Hermes*, who shows the god sacrificing several cows to the Immortals. Pindar also sang of bloody sacrifices. Of course, simply being a poet did not guarantee inspiration from Love exclusively—that is an obvious fact. But since previous commentary on fr. 146 has never risked saying what

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- 25 See J.-C. Picot, 'Sagesse face à Parole de Zeus: une nouvelle lecture du fr. 123.3 DK d'Empédocle', *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 30 (2012), 23-57. Editions of Empedocles have ordinarily chosen to reject the reading Σόφη (virtually unanimous in the manuscripts) when construing verse 3, in favor of the heavy-handed emendation Σώπη, which avoids devaluating Ὀμφαίη. The accepted text of this fragment with the emendation Σώπη (Silence), repeated by A. Motte, permits the latter to assert concerning fr. 122-3 ('Aspects du prophétisme grec' in *Prophéties et oracles II: En Égypte et en Grèce* = *Supplément Cahiers Évangile* 89, Paris, 1994, 41-78 at 75): 'Némertès est celle qui ne se trompe pas et qui ne trompe pas; elle est véridique, elle est de l'ordre de la parole prophétique: *omphè* signifie toujours la voix divine, la voix de l'oracle ou du prophète. *Asaphèia* est celle qui refuse de se dévoiler et de dévoiler; elle est du même ordre que l'obscurité et le silence.' Admittedly, from the perspective of common sense, divine speech (Ὀμφαίη) should be something good. But Σόφη is also divine. From the point of view of Empedocles, who does not honor Zeus as father of men and gods (fr. 6), and as king (fr. 128), who links fire and Strife (B19), and Zeus and fire (A33), who can link Ὀμφαίη to Zeus *panomphaios* (*Iliad* 8.250) and to the lie of Zeus in *Iliad* 2.41—for Empedocles, then, there was no reason to value *Omphaiē*, and several reasons to denigrate her.
- 26 Ὑμνοπόλοι in Empedocles is sometimes translated as 'minstrels' (LSJ; and by M. R. Wright)—singers and storytellers who should be distinguished from poets, i.e. from those who compose what is subsequently sung or recited. However, it seems arbitrary to want to exclude the poets, who can themselves recite their poems before an audience.
- 27 In *Iliad* 9.186-9, Homer actually gives us a glimpse of Achilles, the bloodiest of battle chiefs, as a *hymnopolos*, strumming his lyre and singing the *κλέα ἀνδρῶν*.
- 28 Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* 1, vv. 249, 260, 289. Apollo's appetite for hecatombs is also attested in the *Iliad*, e.g. 1.45, 99, 315, 443. A critique of Apollo, the god supposedly of noble virtues and moral superiority, is to be found in M. Detienne, 'L'Apollon meurtrier et les crimes de sang', *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 22 (1986), 7-17.

does not harmonize with the Empedoclean ethic, it is left for us now to expose the unvarnished truth.

We come at last to the paramount issue in our understanding of fr. 146, an issue that will nevertheless resolve itself when all the facts are brought forward: the problem of the *promoi*.

## 5 The *promoi*

We translate *πρόμοι* as ‘battle chiefs’, in order, first of all, to align it with *πρόμαχοι*, of which *promos* has always been an assumed abridgement.<sup>29</sup> The *promoi* are first and foremost warriors. In the *Iliad*, the term *promoi* covers a collection of their most prominent representatives. The challenge issued by Hector in *Iliad* 7.67-91 is addressed to a champion of the Achaeans, a *promos* (7.75) against whom he relishes the opportunity to do battle. Menelaus then offers himself (7.101, 116), but others are ready to stand in his place (7.162-8): Agamemnon, Diomedes, the two Ajaxes, Idomeneus, and still others including Odysseus. Those are the *promoi*. Now, everyone agrees that Empedocles often borrows his language from Homer. It would therefore be decidedly clumsy of the Agrigentine to utilize a word that unavoidably points back to those warrior chieftains in the *Iliad*, if his intention in using *promoi* was to signify only princes, kings, or leaders of men in times of peace—or ‘magistrates’, as we sometimes read.

The sense of ‘battle chief’ or ‘chief ready for battle’ in the word *promos* is not confined to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Outside of its appearance in fr. 146 of Empedocles, it appears nine times in the extant literature of the fifth century BC, i.e. during Empedocles’ own lifetime,<sup>30</sup> and in all but one instance it belongs to a context of warriors, battles, or feats of strength.<sup>31</sup> There

29 Cf. P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1968) s.v. *πρόμος*: ‘Aristarque enseigne que *πρόμος* est un ‘abrégement’ de *πρόμαχος* ce qui va bien avec le sens du mot chez Hom. et est morphologiquement acceptable, cf. *βούκος* à côté de *βουκόλος*.’

30 Post-fifth-century appearances of the word, as in Apollonius, *Argonautica* 2.21 and Lycophron, *Alexandra* 802, manifesting as they do the scholarly mannerism of the Hellenistic period (nostalgia for Homeric style and language), are hardly relevant to our argument.

31 Aeschylus, *Suppliants* 905, *Agamemnon* 200; Sophocles, *OT* 660, *Oedipus Coloneus* 884; Euripides, *Heraclidae* 670, *Troïades* 31, *Phoenissae* 1244, *Iphigeneia Aulidensis* 699; and Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusaë* 50. The one exception where a battle context is not specifically indicated is Euripides, *Iphigeneia Aulidensis* 699 (where *promos* refers to

are, therefore, but for one possible exception, no appearances of the word *promos* in the entire corpus of fifth-century Greek literature that do not preserve its Homeric sense. One cannot then claim that, at the time of Empedocles, *promos* was appropriate only for a peacetime context far removed from the plains of Troy—that it referred exclusively to someone outstanding for his merits, his competence, his talents, someone in the upper ranks of the social hierarchy—insisting that this peaceful sense had supplanted the connotation of war or violence bequeathed by the *Iliad*. The society of Empedocles' time was just as violent as the society that had known the Trojan war: think of the Persian wars, the Peloponnesian war, wars between cities, wars against the Carthaginians in Sicily. The word *promos* in Empedocles, as it was heard by his contemporaries, had lost none of its specific impact and historic function. It is not a catch-all expression designating the élite of human society in

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Aeacus, first king of Aegina). Ironically, despite that uniqueness (the only non-military one out of nine occurrences of the word *promos* in fifth-century Athenian drama), the passage became ideal for those who wanted to support the notion that *promoi* in Empedocles has no martial connotation; it was in fact the precedent used by S. Karsten in 1838 to support his interpretation. Three passages may at first sight seem ambiguous: (1) In Aeschylus, *Suppliants* 905, where the chorus of suppliants cries out *ὠ πόλεως ἀγοὶ πρόμοι, δάμναμαι*, their words are most likely a response to the violent, sacrilegious attempt to drag them from the altar of supplication (H. F. Johansen and E. W. Whittle, *Aeschylus: The Suppliants*, Copenhagen, 1980, vol. 3, comment on v. 905); they call therefore upon battle chiefs (*promoi*) to come to their defense, to answer violence with violence. (2) In Sophocles, *OT* 660, when the chorus swears by the sun as a *promos* (τὸν πάντων θεὸν πρόμον Ἄλιον), it swears (as Jebb points out in his commentary) by one who stands 'foremost in the heavenly ranks', 'in front of all the heavenly host'—so clearly, again, a martial context. J. Bollack, in his commentary to *Oedipus Tyrannus* (*L'Œdipe roi de Sophocle* vol. 2.1, Lille, 1990, 405-8), analyzes the sense of *promos*, and seems to conclude that the sun is a *promos* 'de par sa position avancée... dans l'ordre spatialisé du ciel... dans sa majesté visible'. We should note that, according to the Pythagorean Androcydes (as reported by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5.8.45.2.5-3.1), *Δαμναμενεὺς δὲ ὁ ἥλιος ὁ δαμάζων* ('Damnameneus is the sun, which overpowers'). The name *Δαμναμενεὺς* would connote a *promos* making a demonstration of his strength. And it may be relevant to remember Aristotle reporting Empedocles' view that the sun moved through Strife (n. 16 above). (3) In Aristophanes, *Thes.* 50, if Scaliger's emendation (*πράμος* to *πρόμος*) is right, and a slave of the tragic poet Agathon calls his master 'our *promos*', then the Homeric connotation is not absent, but only shifted to a metaphorical level. The poet is called 'our champion' or 'our contender' (*πρόμος ἡμέτερος*) probably because of Agathon's leading role in the fiercely-contested fight for the prize (a crown of ivy) awarded to the winning playwright in the City Dionysia. That dramatic contest was termed an *ἀγών*, often understood as 'struggle' or 'battle', with actors, chorus, choregete, and supporting crew seen as troops. See in general A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens* (Oxford, 1953), 55-100.

general. It is not, as R. Saetta Cottone would like it to be, a word that embraces seers, hymn-makers, and doctors all by itself: we are not dealing here with a 'polémique ouverte avec Homère'.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, a good many commentators on fr. 146 refuse to consider the possibility, within the context of the *Purifications*, of taking πρόμοι as 'warriors' or 'attack men', and are willing to keep only the sense 'peacetime princes'. Those commentators would like to discover in the four figures of fr. 146.1-2 people who live in accord with Empedocles' non-violent ethic—people who promote Love; such commentators prefer to accommodate their views to the honorific portrayal of human types furnished by Clement of Alexandria.<sup>33</sup> Let us quote, for example, van der Ben:<sup>34</sup>

πρόμοι: this is a typically Epic word, in Homer it being always equivalent to πρόμαχοι, which bloody profession of course is out of the question here. The word must denote '(political) leaders, statesmen' in general.

But van der Ben fails to explain why the 'bloody profession . . . is out of the question'. In his mind, as in the minds of so many others, the answer is obvious: the Blessed Ones are under the influence of Love; consequently, the gateway to the abode of the Blessed must also be under the influence of Love. If we follow van der Ben, we have no explanation for why Empedocles chose carnivorous lions (fr. 127.1) when vegetarian beasts might have been pleasing to Aphrodite; and we do not know why Empedocles chose a word equivalent to πρόμαχοι when he had meant to speak of peacetime leaders of men. How does it happen

32 R. Saetta Cottone, 'Aristophane et le théâtre du soleil. Le dieu d'Empédocle dans le chœur des *Nuées*' in A. Laks and R. Saetta Cottone (eds.), *Comédie et Philosophie: Socrate et les « Présocratiques » dans les Nuées d'Aristophane* (Paris, 2013), 61-85; cf. 65 n. 16: 'Le fragment 146 nomme les médecins, les poètes et les devins, en les présentant comme les catégories humaines les plus avancées dans le parcours de purification qui mène les démons (les « ils » de ce fragment) vers leur divinisation . . . La catégorie des πρόμοι, les « princes », nommée en quatrième position, englobe les trois catégories précédentes, dont elle représente en quelque sorte un accomplissement, en polémique ouverte avec Homère, où les πρόμοι étaient les héros sanguinaires, princes de la guerre. M. R. Wright, *Empedocles . . .*, p. 255, a insisté à juste titre sur le caractère « apollinien » des activités mentionnées dans ce fragment.'

33 For a representative list of scholarly comments on the *promoi* of fr. 146, from 1805 to the present, see <https://sites.google.com/site/empedoclesacragas/fr-146>. The overwhelming majority of those comments support a peaceful role for Empedocles' *promoi*.

34 *The Proem of Empedocles' Peri physios* (n. 13 above), 223.

that a great poet like Empedocles could not come up with an alternative to the provocative *promoi*, like βασιλείς (βασιλῆες), ἄρχοι, or ἄνακτες?<sup>35</sup>

An answer suggests itself in the two words that follow πρόμοι in fr. 146. The expression ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι echoes a passage in Homer (*Iliad* 1.266-72) where exceptional people are named—the divine Polyphemus (ἀντίθεον Πολύφημον) and godlike Theseus (ἐπιείκελον ἀθανάτοισιν)—and compared to earthly men (ἐπιχθονίων ἀνδρῶν, βροτοὶ ἐπιχθόνιοι):

κάρτιστοι δὴ κείνοι ἐπιχθονίων τράφεν ἀνδρῶν  
κάρτιστοι μὲν ἔσαν καὶ καρτίστοις ἐμάχοντο  
φηρσὶν ὄρεσκάοισι καὶ ἐκπάγλως ἀπόλεσσαν.

...

κείνοισι δ' ἄν οὐ τις  
τῶν οἱ νῦν βροτοὶ εἰσιν ἐπιχθόνιοι μαχέοιτο.

In the context of the *Iliad*, these strongest men (κάρτιστοι κείνοι) are warriors. If we are right about the echo, Empedocles would have substituted, as he began verse 2 of fr. 146, the πρόμοι for the κάρτιστοι κείνοι, and then ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι for ἐπιχθονίων ἀνδρῶν (identified later, v. 272: βροτοὶ ἐπιχθόνιοι).<sup>36</sup>

35 Let us at least suggest a formulation that might have avoided *promoi* without at the same time reshaping the first verse: ἀρχοὶ τ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται. In Homer, the word ἀρχοί is found several times in the first foot of a hexameter (*Iliad* 13.196; *Odyssey* 4.496, 629; 8.391; 21.187), which is also the case with the singular ἀρχός (*Odyssey* 8.162; *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 292). Cf. also Pindar, *Olympian* 7.71, *Pythian* 1.7, 4.194; *Nemean* 9.14. Few critics suggest that *promos* is a surprising word that has nothing of the positive impact of *basileus*. Nevertheless, outside the confines of Empedoclean scholarship, a few appropriate remarks can be found, e.g., B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago / London, 1999), 157: 'Most interesting here [= fr. 146] is the way Empedocles downgrades royal authority, which he lists fourth and for which he uses a slightly unusual term (*promoi*, "chiefs" or "princes", rather than *basileus*). Moreover it is the sole incarnation he does not claim for himself, and the ancient biographic tradition tells that he rejected the kingship of Acragas when it was offered to him.' And notice R. Beekes' sage remark in his *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden / Boston 2010), s.v. πρόμος: 'Since the word only means "champion" in Hom., we have to consider the possibility that πρόμος was shortened from πρόμαχος (already suggested by Aristarchus); the meaning "leader" would be due to a misunderstanding of the epic word.'

36 We should note, as a parallel, another possible influence—a passage in Pindar, *Olympian* 6.50-1, concerning the seer Iamos: περὶ θνατῶν δ' ἔσεσθαι μάντιν ἐπιχθονίοις / ἔξοχον (address of Apollo to Iamos)—interesting for the esteem shown to a seer among mortals (ἐπιχθονίοις).

The thought of Homeric battle-chiefs brings up the thought of Homer's association of those chiefs with lions, and leads to a direct linkage of lions with *promoi*. At *Iliad* 3.21-6, Menelaus, darling of Ares, is compared to a lion who devours a cadaver despite attacks from dogs and men. At 5.159-62, Diomedes, like a lion who leaps upon a herd of cows, kills two sons of Priam. Diomedes will again be compared to a lion at 10.485. At 5.297-9, it is Aeneas who is compared to a lion. At 11.113, 129 and 173, Agamemnon, the powerful prince, chief of men, is a lion on the attack. At 17.61-9, the glorious Menelaus is compared to a lion who kills a cow and terrifies dogs and shepherds. At 17.133, Ajax is equal to a lion. At 20.164 and 24.41 and 572, Achilles is equal to a lion. At *Odyssey* 6.130, Odysseus advances like a lion. Menelaus, Diomedes, Ajax, Achilles, Odysseus—all 'like lions' and all, indisputably, *promoi*.

The facts are undeniable. The historic sense of the words cannot be ignored: *manteis*, *hymnopoloi* and *promoi* include in particular those who kill (some *manteis*, some *promoi*), or who cause to kill (some *manteis*), or who esteem killing (some *hymnopoloi*). We reject the notion that, in the plural *manteis*, only those who do not cause killing are meant by Empedocles. We reject the notion that, in the plural *hymnopoloi*, only those who do not sing of bloody sacrifices are meant. And in the plural *promoi*, we reject the notion that only non-combatant *promoi* are meant. Translating *promoi* as 'princes' or 'leaders of men' or 'political chiefs' or 'political leaders' or 'statesmen' is just a way to deny the martial or offensive impact of the word, a way to evade the difficulty posed by this word within the scheme of salvation as designed by Empedocles.

A kindred relationship exists between *manteis* and *promoi*, as we have seen in the context of military campaigns;<sup>37</sup> indeed, there is such a relationship among the four human types named by Empedocles. Xenophon offers good evidence for this in *De republica Lacedaemoniorum* 13.6.3-7.5. In that text the king is named (ὁ βασιλεύς), together with those equals who live close to him, notably diviners (μάντεις), doctors (ιατροί), and flute players (αὐληταί). The king, who leads off the army's first division (λαβὼν τὸ ἄγχημα τῆς πρώτης μόρας ὁ βασιλεύς), would be a πρόμος, to use Empedocles' language. The seers and doctors are linked as in Empedocles. The flute-players, whom of course no one will confuse with ὑμνοπόλοι, could at least have music in common with them. We had already noted the presence of *manteis* in military operations, where the *promoi* whom they advise can find glory and/or death. To take it a step further: all four human types have the ability to take part in military operations; Empedocles himself suggests it when he uses a word as remarkable as *promoi*.

37 Sometimes a *mantis* is among the warriors: Herodotus 7.228 (the seer Megistias, dead in the battle against the Persians).

For Empedocles, human life is primarily a struggle. It is perhaps no accident that in fr. 148 (ἀμφιβρότην χθόνα), the adjective ἀμφίβροτος, which in Homer is used exclusively for the shield that covers the whole body (*Iliad* 2.389, 11.32), is applied in Empedocles not to a shield, but to the earth that forms the body that surrounds the soul.<sup>38</sup> The soul is for Empedocles like a combatant behind a shield, in a posture of combat, in an existence of combat.

It is of course possible that true sages exist among all those *manteis*, *hymnopoloi* and *promoi*. But his use of the plural does not support idealization. Empedocles does not compel us to understand an ideal *mantis*, an ideal *hymnopolos*, or an ideal *promos* in conformity to his ethic, an ethic favorable to Love. If it were claimed that Empedocles cites *manteis*, *hymnopoloi* and *promoi* not to designate men of the past or the present, but to predict men of the future under a new rubric associated with Love, we would be no more likely to be convinced. Nothing in the text of Empedocles suggests that the four types of men in fr. 146 refer to 'new' men with no comparison to men of the past or present.

Empedocles is not in tune with the value system that prevailed in the society in which he lived. For him, people who kill, or cause to kill, or celebrate killing signal the influence of Hate and should be condemned. The fact is, however, that they are not condemned. On the contrary: they are honored. Among the four human types in fr. 146.1-2, the doctors (ἰητροί) alone are free of ambiguity; it is difficult to see how they could be influenced by Hate. Because they seek to prolong life while alleviating suffering, doctors are under the aegis of Love. But only the doctors!

All in all, the final lives that are closest to the end of exile are not valued because of Love; far from it! They are valued because they are found in the highest ranks of the very society in which Empedocles lives. Among human lives, they are the lives of prominent men, of the élite. It is not Love that reigns on the last steps of the ladder of reincarnations. This is corroborated in Plutarch, who reports (*De defectu oraculorum* 420C-D) an objection of the Epicureans that would show that the end of exile is not reserved for men who are virtuous in the Empedoclean sense: 'The one thing that I have heard the Epicureans say with reference to the demigods introduced by Empedocles is that it is not possible, if they are bad and sinful, that they should be happy and of long life.'<sup>39</sup>

38 Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales* 5.8, 683E: ὅσον 'ἀμφιβρότην χθόνα' τὸ τῇ ψυχῇ περικείμενον σῶμα. The word ψυχῆ is not necessarily the word used by Empedocles.

39 ὁ μέντοι μόνον ἀκήκοα τῶν Ἐπικουρείων λεγόντων πρὸς τοὺς εἰσαγομένους ὑπ' Ἐμπεδοκλέους δαίμονας, ὡς οὐ δυνατὸν εἶναι φαῦλους καὶ ἀμαρτητικούς ὄντας μακαρίους καὶ μακράϊωνας (Loeb translation by F. C. Babbitt).

## 6 Would Empedocles have Considered himself a *mantis*, a *hymnopolos*, an *iētros*, or a *promos*?

Certain commentators on fr. 146 have emphasized that prophets, poets, and doctors represent three domains that have Apollo as their patron. Let us add that the laurel (fr. 127.2) is Apollo's tree, the tree that Empedocles enjoins us not to touch (fr. 140). But it says nothing about what Empedocles believes with regard to Apollo. Did Empedocles consider himself a *mantis*, a *hymnopolos*, an *iētros*—the three types of men that we have no difficulty associating with Apollo?

Empedocles is an *iētros*: a good many sources attest to it,<sup>40</sup> and we can easily understand his claiming to be a doctor. Empedocles is also a *hymnopolos*: his hexameters define him as a poet. He uses the word ὕμνοι to designate his own verses (fr. 35.1). If we keep to the strictest sense of 'hymn' in the word *hymnopolos*, we can also say that Empedocles is a *hymnopolos* because (if we rely on Diogenes Laertius' report) he wrote a *Hymn to Apollo*.

That leaves *mantis*. Fr. 112.10 proclaims the fact that people consult him like an oracle for his mantic knowledge (οἱ μὲν μαντοσυνέων κεχρημένοι); the fragment goes on to say that they look to his 'inspired utterance' (βᾶξις) to heal them of painful maladies. Nor does Empedocles call them fools or say anything to correct their impression of his powers, though he freely derides ignorance elsewhere (fr. 2, 11.1, 137.2 etc.).

Empedocles does seem to see himself as a sort of vehicle for divine expression—but a very different sort of vehicle, and inspired by a very different source from that of the traditional *mantis*! He very likely aligns himself with the *mantis* of fr. 129. That fragment, which, like fr. 146, belongs to the *Purifications*, pays honor to someone who appears to be a *mantis* from the past—though the word *mantis* is not used within the six lines that constitute the fragment.<sup>41</sup> That sage, whoever he was, confined his mantic feats to the exercise of his *πραπίδες*, the mind located in his diaphragm, rather than to acts that would be formally condemned by Empedocles, such as examining entrails of animals put to death for the purpose of divination. That ancient *mantis* has the ability to see up through ten or twenty human lifetimes—which is without doubt no small achievement. But Empedocles has a considerably greater knowledge: he

40 Hippocrates, *Ancient Medicine* 20; Celsus, *On Medicine* 1, *proem*, 2.11 (68 B300.10 DK); Satyrus ap. DL 8.58; Galen, *De methodo medendi* x. 6.3 Kühn; *Suda* π.675.

41 For a recent study of fr. 129, see C. Macris and P. Skarsouli, 'La sagesse et les pouvoirs du mystérieux τις du fragment 129 d'Empédocle', *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 75 (2012/13), 357-77.

sees the totality of cosmic cycles. Twenty human lifetimes are not much more than 1,000 years, while just to identify the criminal act that leads a Blessed One into exile and back requires embracing a period of many thousands of years. Because he can see beyond the exile's story, Empedocles is capable of vision many times more powerful than that of the exceptional *mantis* whose existence he reports, and who had long since arrived (in accord with fr. 146) at the last phase of his own exile.

We cannot affirm that Empedocles was himself also capable of divination with the aid of his own *πραπίδες*.<sup>42</sup> However, in the course of our studying the Agrigentine, we find ourselves increasingly convinced of two things: (1) Empedocles acquired his knowledge from his Muse, Calliope (fr. 3, 4, 131), who is no more the Calliope of Homer and Hesiod than Zeus of fr. 6 (one of the 'four roots of all things') is the Zeus of Homer and Hesiod;<sup>43</sup> (2) the knowledge acquired by Empedocles, thanks to that Muse, often contradicts the knowledge of Hesiod.<sup>44</sup> Of course Empedocles, like all seers, tells the past and the future; of course seers can also be inspired by a Muse or by Muses.<sup>45</sup> But

42 Nevertheless, the diaphragm (seat of the mind, *πραπίδες*) would have played an important role in the notion of divine inspiration as Empedocles conceived it: it would be the residence, in man, of Persephone-*Nēstis*, who is also Empedocles' Muse (see M. Rashed, 'De qui la clepsydre est-elle le nom? Une interprétation du fragment 100 d'Empédocle', *Revue des études grecques* 121, 2008, 443-68, esp. 456-64; J.-C. Picot, 'Water and bronze in the hands of Empedocles' Muse', *Organon* 41, 2009, 59-84, esp. 78-81).

43 See J.-C. Picot, 'L'Empédocle magique de P. Kingsley', *Revue de philosophie ancienne* 18 (2000), 25-86, esp. 46-8; 'Les cinq sources dont parle Empédocle', *Revue des études grecques* 117 (2004), 393-446, esp. 442-5 (with corrigenda in: *REG* 118, 2005, 322-5); 'Water and Bronze' (n. 42 above), 76-81; 'L'image du πινγυεύς dans les *Nuées*. Un Empédocle au charbon' in Laks and Saetta Cottone, *Comédie et Philosophie* (n. 32 above), 113-29, esp. 126-9.

44 Contradicting Hesiod are the *Sphairos*, the cyclic alternation of the powers of Love and Hate, and fr. 6, 128, 136 and 137.

45 Once the Muses have made him a poet, Hesiod claims for himself the same powers that Homer attributes to Calchas in *Iliad* 1.70—the ability to tell present, future, and past (*Theogony* 38: τὰ τ' ἔόντα τὰ τ' ἔσσόμενα πρό τ' ἔόντα), thanks to the gift of the Muses. On the same occasion, the Muses present their poet (Hesiod) with a branch of laurel—the tree sacred to Apollo (*Theogony* 30). See M. L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford, 1966), 166 on *Theogony* 32: 'The phrase expresses the close connexion between poetry and prophecy which is widespread in early literature. In the absence of written records, the ability to see into the distant past is no less marvellous than the ability to see into the future, and there is no reason for a sharp distinction between the two. Neither is possible without some form of divine revelation, for only the gods have the necessary first-hand knowledge.' But we are not to ignore the fact that the seer Calchas, held in esteem by Homer, could be

Empedocles disconnects himself from the mass of seers, is at odds with them regarding source of inspiration and range of knowledge. Given those circumstances, it will be hard to believe that Empedocles could identify himself as a traditional *mantis*. In transcending the status of even an exceptional *mantis* like the master of fr. 129, Empedocles could possibly have described himself instead with the word *prophētēs*, making it clear that he is the *pro-phētēs*, the spokesman or interpreter, of his Muse. That Muse keeps to the side of Wisdom (Σόφῆ), far from common, vulgar prophetic speech, far from *Omphaiē* (fr. 123.3). As to the sage of fr. 129 with his exceptional powers of vision into the past and the future, his presence in the *Purifications* could serve to demonstrate, especially to any *manteis* who might have been present when the poem was declaimed near the altar of Zeus at Olympia (DL 8.63), that those powers, far superior to those of the most notorious *manteis*, can be acquired without shedding a single drop of blood.

In short, Empedocles might have been able to see himself as a doctor, a poet and at least a non-traditional *mantis*, but hardly as a *promos* as that word was normally understood.<sup>46</sup> Commentaries that do not hesitate to make a *promos* of Empedocles (of course translated as ‘prince’ or ‘leader of men’ for the occasion) accomplish this through over-simplification and conflation. The four human types were already held in esteem by everyone who heard the poem at Olympia.<sup>47</sup> Nor was there doubt of that esteem in the minds of the public who heard Pindar name the men who were brought back to the light by

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precisely (in the eyes of Empedocles) the ill-inspired seer, the seer who is inspired by Hate to cause the murder of Iphigenia.

46 Conceivably, Empedocles might have seen himself as a *promos* in a metaphorical sense, in keeping with his view of human life itself as combat, with the soul wearing the body as a shield (fr. 148). In a similarly metaphorical sense, Aristophanes features ‘our champion’ Agathon as a *promos*, a chief combatant in the dramatic *agōn* of the City Dionysia (above, note 31). But this would be an exception to the generalized sense of *promos* which Empedocles implies in fr. 146 with the plural *promoi*.

47 It is hard to imagine that frs. 128, 136 and 137, which vehemently condemn bloody sacrifices, were declaimed at Olympia, where such sacrifices were performed one after another. Would Cleomenes, the rhapsode who lent his voice to the poems of Empedocles, have acquiesced in being involved with scandalous recitations that provoked the local authorities? Hardly likely. The *Purifications* declaimed at Olympia ought not therefore to have included frs. 128, 136 and 137. By contrast, frs. 127 and 146—socially and religiously ‘correct’ representations of the blessed state—could have had a very favorable reception. We should also bear in mind that the Olympian Games involved combat disciplines, physical prowess, and skills that promoted and maintained the excellence of *promoi*.

Persephone: famous kings, men of great strength, men of extreme wisdom.<sup>48</sup> But it is one thing to cite evidence of what an audience believed, and quite another to speak of what Empedocles believed. Pindar, court poet in the service of the nobility, is one thing; Empedocles is another.

There is a logic to the reincarnations, a logical line of progression. As it appears in fr. 127 and 146, that logic is determined neither exclusively by Hate nor exclusively by Love. Even if it is not ethical, living beings, whether they are guided more by Hate or more by Love, end up finishing their exile of 30,000 seasons in exactly the same way. Consequently, the commonly-held idea that progression up the ascending scale of lives corresponds to progression in the purification of the soul, or in personal choices in favor of the good, or in more and more virtuous behavior—that idea is far from being verified in the text of Empedocles. We are apparently confronted here with a mechanism in which advancement is made from the lowest to the highest *social status*, from the inferior, least prestigious beings to the superior, most prestigious beings like the gods, who have the richest honors (fr. 21.12, 23.8, 146.3). Honors are not reserved for Love. Hate has an equal portion (fr. 30)—and that needs to be said again and again to counter all the moralizing and angelic notions about Empedocles.

## 7 Purifications

The idea is widespread that the poem of the *Purifications* prescribes purificatory rituals to expedite departure from the cycle of reincarnations.<sup>49</sup> It would be possible, in other words, for a human to significantly reduce the time of exile by adopting the Empedoclean ethic. But such notions, inspired by the hope for quick salvation and the belief that instruction by Empedocles has an efficacy for individual destinies, have no basis in the texts that have come down to us.<sup>50</sup> Another related notion would have us think that Empedocles

48 Fr. 133 Bergk, reported by Plato (*Meno* 81b).

49 Cf. again McClelland's 'vulgate' as quoted at the beginning of this article: 'according to Empedocles, as well as the later Platonists, the soul could only be liberated from this bodily rebirth by living a pious, philosophical, and vegetarian life style.'

50 On the other hand, the idea of early release from the cycle of reincarnations can be found in Plato's *Phaedrus*. In section C ['Anklang'] of DK, just one text is reported, the *Phaedrus*. We do not deny that it can sometimes be useful to read the *Phaedrus* to understand Empedocles: for example, we should see in *Anankē* (fr. 115.1) a goddess after the fashion of *Adrasteia* (*Phaedrus* 248c2); we could also validly question whether the offense of a Blessed One is really a shedding of blood (in a state of Beatitude, no less!), and ask rather

wants to prohibit acts of bloodshed (fr. 136, 137) because such acts would replay among living humans the offensive act of a Blessed One that had provoked his exile from the celestial abode. That assumption also has no basis in our texts of Empedocles.<sup>51</sup> Its defenders may argue from logic, may appeal to common sense, may repeat that if Empedocles prohibits bloody acts, it is precisely because the exiled Blessed One had been himself a murderer—but in fact they are quite unable to offer one piece of evidence, or one verse, as formal proof that Empedocles actually shared their assumption. No proof exists that any Blessed One had committed an act of bloodshed during his life among the Blessed. By the same token, nothing justifies the notion that a bloody act—if there ever was one in the abode of the Blessed—would lead, in and of itself, to the automatic exile of its perpetrator.

Necessity and the six gods who rule the world supervise the orderly unfolding of punishment for the *daimones*, together with the succession of their multiple reincarnations, but those deities manifest no particular sympathy with human hopes. It is not the purpose of the Empedoclean ethic to reduce the period of exile appointed by the gods (30,000 seasons), since that period is not presented as something modifiable. The purpose is rather to manage the exile,<sup>52</sup> to reduce its agonies. It is within that context that the Empedoclean purifications have their place.

There still remains, however, one question that a reading of Plutarch forces us to pose: to what extent, if any, do other purifications take place during the period of exile, purifications that are apart from those recommended by Empedocles? In Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 361C, we read:

Empedocles also says that the *daimones* pay the penalty for their failures and offenses, *for the force of aithēr pursues them* [fr. 115.9-12] . . . *and hate them* until, having been in this way punished (κολασθέντες) and purified (καθαρθέντες), they take back again their natural place and status.

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what offense he might have committed against mindfulness and insight, as he does in Plato. But again, we should avoid conflation (as here, of Plato with Empedocles), and instead judge everything on a case-by-case basis.

51 Cf. G. Zuntz, *Persephone* (Oxford, 1971), 253: ‘the gods visualized by Empedocles—as later on by Epicurus—living “far from human sorrows” in timeless bliss cannot be imagined in the entanglement of passion;’ and 273: ‘If one cares to guess how exactly, in the myth, the Empedoclean god could have become guilty of murder, one may imagine that he accepted bloody sacrifice offered to him. The world of change could impinge upon the eternal and divine, if at all, by false worship.’

52 On that point, see J.-C. Picot, ‘Empédocle pouvait-il faire de la lune le séjour des Bienheureux?’, *Organon* 37 (2008), 9-37 at 36-7.

Let us have a closer look at what Plutarch is saying.<sup>53</sup> What do the punishment and purification consist of? This has to do with the inevitable fate imposed on the *daimones*—Blessed Ones gone wrong—by the gods referred to in fr. 115.1-2. We recall that those gods, as Hippolytus assures us, are the four elements—fire, water, earth, air—and the two powers, Hate and Love.<sup>54</sup> The fate of the *daimones* is to be tossed back and forth from the sky to the sea to the earth to the rays of the sun to the whirls of the sky again (fr. 115.9-11), encountering only hateful receptions (fr. 115.12) and being everywhere alienated. In that fate, there is no place for prohibitions against bloody sacrifices or eating meat—the two pillars of the Empedoclean ethic.<sup>55</sup> The fact is that we do not know what the gods of fr. 115.1 think of murder and meat-eating. We do not know if they all condemn it, as Empedocles does vehemently (fr. 136, 137). We can at least guess that Hate does not condemn murder; quite the contrary (fr. 122.2). So let's not risk conflating what the gods impose on the errant Blessed Ones to purify them, and what Empedocles advocates as purifications.

When it comes to 'purifications', we must distinguish between the purification decreed by the six eternal gods against the exiled Blessed Ones on the one hand and, on the other hand, the purifications prescribed by Empedocles for humans in order for them to abandon all types of violence and all traces of Hate, and to make a better life on earth for themselves and the exiled beings. Both kinds of purification have a common background: the process of reincarnation which links the Blessed Ones (long-lived beings, but mortal nevertheless) and

53 In the body of ancient texts at our disposal, only Celsus (quoted in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.53) yields another passage that would associate the emergence of the *daimones* from exile with a purification (8.53.6: ἐκκαθαροῦσθαι).

54 Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 7.29, pp. 23.6-24.1 Marcovich.

55 Hippolytus confirms what Plutarch says, and provides us with more details (*Refutatio* 7.29, pp. 18.3-22.8). The souls are displaced (μεταβαλλόμενοι) and punished (κολαζόμενοι) by Hate (ὑπὸ τοῦ νεύου). The idea of punishment by Hate is then repeated. The penalty is what is important. It is not clear how this punishment by Hate could be a purification in the interest of Love (the Power promoted by Empedocles). We learn only that Love has pitied the hated souls that have been tortured and punished; Love gathers them in. Empedocles' teaching, his 'purifications', involve abstaining from eating meat and from procreating. Those instructions are not given in connection with the subject of perjury (which was for Hippolytus the cause of exile: *Refutatio* 7.29, p. 16.1). They are given as protective measures, enabling us to avoid suffering even more effects of Hate, and to avoid contributing to its activity. Hippolytus does *not* go on to say that those instructions are what the gods of fr. 115.1 expect from men, or that they will avail, when followed, to shorten their exile.

the ephemeral beings (other mortals) in the sublunary world (along with the gnoseological and ethical implications of that process).

Purification imposed by the gods appears to be the intended outcome of concrete punishments (ephemeral lives with various tribulations, in the sea, on land, in the sun's rays). Plutarch does not say that purification is a phase that comes after punishment. On the contrary, he gives us to understand that purification *accompanies* punishment. In the long series of incarnations, and in the incessant rejection by the elements, this sort of purification manifests itself as a progressive reduction of the burden imposed by the primordial offense. The four types of humans in fr. 146 correspond to *daimones* who have (as Plutarch relates) payed for 'their faults and their deficiencies', who have been 'punished and purified', and who will recover directly after death 'their natural place and status', i.e. that of the blessed gods (fr. 115.6, 146.3, 147). In the light of our analysis of fr. 146, we conclude that the four human types in question have probably not undertaken the purificatory rituals endorsed by Empedocles. The *manteis*, *hymnopoloi*, *iētroi* and *promoi* have no concept of the ancient offense denounced by the Agrigentine. They cannot be consciously bothered by it—which leads us to conclude that they have no reason to engage in a purificatory rite to expiate it. In that case, if Plutarch says of the *daimones* that they have just been purified (καθαρέντες), it cannot be through a ritual, i.e. through an act in which the *daimones* have engaged voluntarily. We of course do not know how Plutarch understands this purification. We can, on the other hand, deduce what the purification decreed by the six gods might be from Empedocles' point of view, working from the data at our disposal and from the citation of fr. 115.9-12.

The abode of the Blessed is tainted when one of the Blessed commits the offense that is recognized as such by Necessity and the six gods. For protection of the beatified community, they react by removing the offender. The offending Blessed One is then exiled from the celestial abode of the Blessed (presumably the moon)<sup>56</sup> in the realm of *aithēr*. The first moment of the demonic cycle is the passage from *aithēr* to the sea (fr. 115.9)—obviously a fall. But it is at the same time the first act of purification: washing away contamination is a virtue of the sea (witness, in particular, Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 1193). Next, the *daimones*, hurled onto the land, become plants. Certain plants have purificatory functions: the laurel, the fig tree, the sea squill. The laurel, highly esteemed on the ladder of incarnations that reaches to the blessed gods (fr. 127.2), could represent a prescribed transition from the vegetal domain to the domain of land animals and humans. In addition to being plunged into the

56 See Picot, 'Empédocle' (n. 52 above).

sea (numerous times, undoubtedly), in addition to being capable of becoming plants with purificatory qualities, the *daimones* live in exile for such a long time (30,000 seasons) that that time itself acts as a purifying factor.<sup>57</sup> The efficacy of purification is to be judged by the standard of the gods who have punished the Blessed One—by the standard, in other words, of the gods who guide and observe reincarnations, who supervise the execution of the sentence. From the gods' perspective, then, the purification that really matters in the exile and its succession of incarnations would be the payment of the temporal penalty; retribution for demonic offenses and deficiencies can only be accomplished through serving the full time of the sentence. There is no other way. There is no ritual, no ethic. Only when the time of punishment, with prescribed transformations in the sea, on land and in the rays of the sun, has run out, will the sentence have been served.

Proximity to divine status (e.g. the four human types of fr. 146) does not necessarily mean that everyone in that proximity is almost divine like the Blessed Ones. The Blessed Ones are divine like the *daimones* are divine; no ethical judgment is implied. All, of course, will agree that Empedocles is almost divine. But that does not permit us to conclude that all people in the four categories listed in fr. 146.1-2 are almost divine. The god who perjures himself in Hesiod endures harsh trials, in two different phases, up through the end of his sentence. The transition from those trials back to the Immortals, back to their councils and banquets, is sudden.<sup>58</sup> Empedocles would not have imagined the end of exile for his *daimones* any differently.

The naming of specific human types who enjoy a certain prestige in Greek society is not an innovation on the part of Empedocles. Two references are often cited in comments on fr. 146: (1) Homer, *Odyssey* 17.384-5, and (2) Pindar, fr. 133 Bergk (= 133 Race). It is probable that Empedocles writes in the wake of those two authors. For that reason, we ought to add that neither in Homer nor in Pindar is there a hint at rites of purification. The analogy with Pindar is all the more interesting because the types he mentions (kings, strong men, wise men) reappear in the light of day after a fixed period of time (nine years) in which their souls were detained by Persephone—undoubtedly in Hades. The return to the light is suggestive of reincarnation; the kings are suggestive of

57 See Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 286: χρόνος καθαίρει πάντα γηράσκων ὁμοῦ (a play on words would read 'destroys', καθαίρει, instead of 'purifies', καθαίρει).

58 *Theogony* 790-804. In Hesiod, the perjurer endures two phases during his exile, and not just one. In Empedocles, the perjurer endures three phases at least: in the sea, on the earth, in the light of the sun.

*promoi*; and the nine years are suggestive of the 30,000 seasons, again without reference to an early release for some, no matter what good reason may apply.

## 8 The Era of the *promoi*

To which period of the cosmic cycle do the four types of functions in fr. 146 belong? Since Empedocles puts those functions in the society in which he lives, our question becomes: in which period of the cosmic cycle does Empedocles live? This last point has been subject to debate. Certain Empedoclean specialists say that Empedocles is living during the era of waxing Love, because for them there is no zoogony in the era of waxing Hate. Others say that a zoogony does exist in the period of waxing Hate, and that it is precisely in that period that we all, like Empedocles, live. Now, there is a good deal of material, whether in fragments or in testimonia, that permits us to conclude that Empedocles believed he was living in the era of waxing Hate, namely:

- Fr. 128, which treats of two epochs: the reign of Cypris in a distant past, and the reign of male gods from Cronos to Ares, set in a less distant past and enduring to the present. Fr. 128 is a retake of the Hesiodic fall of the races, along with Hesiod's pessimism.<sup>59</sup>
- Fr. 62, which sees the division of the sexes in humans (developing from an original whole nature) as the prelude to our existence as humans. That fragment, with its tearful introduction, is presented pessimistically.
- Empedocles says that he is a fugitive (far from the gods) putting his confidence in furious Hate (fr. 115.13-14).
- Aristotle reports that, according to Empedocles, the universe remains the same, ruled now by Hate and formerly by Love (*On Generation and Corruption* 334a5-7).
- Hippolytus (*Refutatio* 7.29, pp. 12.3-13.1, 14.7-15.1, 15.2-5) calls animal, vegetal and human life a product of Hate, the *dēmiourgos*, which tears our lives away from the *Sphairos*.

The reading of fr. 146 that we have just presented does not exclude killers—many *manteis*, many *promoi* prominent among them—from the list of men who are honored and called to become, without delay, Blessed Ones in a

59 See J.-C. Picot, 'Les dieux du fr. 128 et le mythe des races', *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 74 (2012/13), 339-56.

celestial abode. Our reading is in harmony with the esteem shown to social functions that are valued in a world of waxing Hate.

Becoming a blessed god is not a destiny reserved only for disciples of Empedocles. Conceding that Empedocles probably does consider himself among the four human types mentioned, there seems to be no question, when we look to his ethic, as to his identification with one type: the *iētros*—and, with some reservations, the *hymnopolos*.

Putting the four types of functions in fr. 146 in the world of waxing Hate has a consequence for the theory of double zoogony. According to that theory, the events that take place in the period of waxing Love are the same as those that occur in the period of waxing Hate, and *vice versa*. But that cannot be so for the last phase of exile for all the *daimones*. During the period of waxing Love, the human types at the end of their exile belong to a society largely influenced by Love, a society in which the armored *promoi* (to mention only them) would not be held in honor. Empedocles did not name the human types of that society likely to be near to the Blessed Ones. We can, however, surmise with confidence that if he had named them, he would not have named the *promoi*. In accordance with fr. 128.5, he would perhaps have nominated the painters of animals for that honor. And speaking of animals, we would also guess that the lion would not have been as honored as he is in fr. 127—nor the eagle, nor the hawk. Aphrodite loves doves, ducks, rabbits.