RECONSTRUCTING EMPEDOCLES' THOUGHT

To understand Empedocles' thought, one must view his work as a unified whole of religion and physics. Only a few interpreters, however, recognize rebirth as a positive doctrine within Empedocles' physics and attempt to reconcile its details with the cosmological account. This study shows how rebirth underlies Empedocles' cosmic system, being a structuring principle of his physics. It reconstructs the proem to his physical poem and then shows that claims to disembodied existence, individual identity and personal survival at death(s) prove central to his physics; that knowledge of the cosmos is a major path to escape rebirth; that purifications are essential to understanding the world and changing one's being, and that the cosmic cycle, with its ethical import, is the ideal backdrop for Empedocles' doctrine of rebirth. This title is part of the Flip it Open Programme and may also be available Open Access. Check our website Cambridge Core for details.

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