CHAPTER 4

Divine Beings

Having dealt in Chapter 3 with the concept of δαίμων introduced in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), its divine status and its relation to Empedocles' belief in rebirth, in this chapter I will look into further concepts, most of them introduced in the proemial fragments, which translate the Empedoclean notion of godhood. This investigation is important for at least two reasons. On the one hand, it is a very controversial question of Empedocles studies as to who (or what) can be considered as true gods in his physical system and which entities can be assumed to be truly divine: are the six principles (the four elements and the two forces of Love and Strife), in virtue of their being fundamental entities of reality, the only truly physical gods? Or can the Sphairos, the 'most perfect' form of the universe under Love's unification, be considered not only as divine as well, but also as the major deity in Empedocles' system? What about the Muse and the other gods he invokes in fragment B 3 (= EMP D 44 Laks-Most)? And if the principles, the Sphairos and the Muse can rightly be considered gods, what makes then different entities equally divine?

On the other hand, since Empedocles' doctrine of rebirth includes the final promise of a divine reward, as has been established in Chapter 2, it is crucial to understand what is meant by 'divine'. In other words, a definition of the divine in Empedocles' thought is essential to fully understand his notion of rebirth. The exploration of the key terms in relation to the notion of the divine therefore forms a fundamental basis for the coming chapters, the aim of which is to further define the details of Empedocles' doctrine of rebirth in order to reconcile them with the principles of his natural philosophy.

In what follows, I will analyze those entities Empedocles refers to explicitly as gods, that is, attributing to them terms such as θεός (*theos*) or δαίμων[1] (*daimon*) or calling them by the names of traditional deities.

[1] As we have seen in the previous chapter, Empedocles employs the terms θεός and δαίμων as synonymous with the meaning of 'god'.

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These include different divine beings ranging from the four elements and Love and Strife, to the ideal form of the universe formed by Love at the height of her dominion, namely the Sphairos and, closely related to it, the Holy Mind (not presented in the proem). However, as we have already seen in Chapter 2, Empedocles envisaged the existence of other divine beings, not only the Muse (B 3 [= EMP D 44 Laks-Most]) but also for instance the underworld goddess who dresses the souls with a new body (B 126 [= EMP D 19 Laks-Most]) or the so-called 'long-lived gods' (B 21.8 [= EMP D 77a.8 Laks-Most] and B 23.8 [= EMP D 60.8 Laks-Most]). Moreover, as we have seen, a novel aspect of his philosophy is that he ascribes to himself divine nature and wisdom, while divine knowledge and powers are also promised to those who rigorously follow his teachings, purify themselves and are released from rebirths. Below, I will identify what makes these diverse beings all equally divine, aiming at defining more precisely the Empedoclean idea of 'godhood'.

To this end, this chapter embarks on an in-depth analysis of all those concepts to which divine qualities are ascribed and is therefore structured according to these concepts, so that I will consider the elements in Section 4.1,[2] Love and Strife in Section 4.2,[3] the Sphairos in Section 4.3,[4] the Holy Mind in Section 4.4[5] and, finally, the so-called long-lived gods in Section 4.5.[6] Within this last group, I would argue we include (traditional) gods, either referred to as a group[7] or those individually mentioned by the names Zeus, Kronos and Poseidon;[8] the Muse and more specifically Calliope;[9] deities who guide souls in the underworld, among whom we

[2] Called by the names of gods: Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus and Nestis, in B 6 (= EMP D 57 Laks-Most).

[3] B 59.1 (= EMP D 149.1 Laks-Most). Love and Strife are also called by the name of deities: Love is also called Aphrodite, Cypris and Harmonia (B 17.24 [= EMP D 73.254 Laks-Most], B 66 [= EMP D 159 Laks-Most]; B 71.4 [= EMP D 61.4 Laks-Most], B 73.1 [= EMP D 199.1 Laks-Most], etc.), whereas Strife coincides with Kotos or Eris (B 21.7 [= EMP D 77a.7], B 20.4 [= EMP D 73.305]). See also Ares and Kydoimos in B 128 (= EMP D 25 Laks-Most), on which see n.8 below.

[4] B 31 (= EMP D 95 Laks-Most). See also Simpl. *Phys*. 1124.1.

[5] B 134 (= EMP D 93 Laks-Most).

[6] B 21.12 (= EMP D 77a.12 Laks-Most), B 23.8 (= EMP D 60.8 Laks-Most), PStrasb. a(ii) 2 (= EMP D 73.273 Laks-Most).

[7] B 3.1 (= EMP D 44.1 Laks-Most), B 115.1 (= EMP D 10.1 Laks-Most), B 131.4 (= EMP D 7.4 Laks-Most) and B 132 (= EMP D 8 Laks-Most).

[8] B 128 (= EMP D 25 Laks-Most). It is worth noting that in this fragment further gods, such as Ares and Kydoimos are mentioned alongside Zeus, Kronos and Poseidon. I would argue, however, that Ares and possibly Kydoimos are two names to indicate Strife, just like Cypris or Aphrodite are names for Love.

[9] In B 131 (= EMP D 7 Laks-Most), the Muse is called 'immortal', an epithet that defines deities in epic poetry. In B 3 (= EMP D 44 Laks-Most), the Muse can be considered as one of the θεοί that Empedocles invokes immediately before.

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may number Pythagoras;[10] a goddess in the underworld who dresses souls with new bodies;[11] guilty and exiled gods[12] and thus Empedocles' himself;[13] and, finally, those who escape rebirths.[14]

We will see that although, in a general sense, all members of the five groups are divine, each of them is divine for different reasons; yet members across several groups also share common qualities. Thus, my methodological strategy here is to pinpoint those particular aspects that make the divine nature of each group different from the other, while indicating in parallel the common aspects they share as gods, in order to more precisely delineate an Empedoclean notion of the divine. In this respect, the main result of this investigation is that, with regard to living beings, we can confidently say that for them to be (or become) gods means to have a divine status that is modelled upon the divine characteristics of the Sphairos, the perfect form of the universe. These characteristics are associated with Love in contrast to Strife and comprehend purity, stability (continuity), symmetry and beauty, blissfulness and perfect knowledge.

In this sense, the divine nature of the Sphairos represents the ideal form of godhood in Empedocles' cosmos to which all integrated beings aspire. As we will see in Chapter 7, the achievement of this kind of godhood by the individual has remarkable repercussions on the cosmic level. Thus, in conclusion, the result worked out here will not only provide us with a definition of the divine in Empedocles that helps us better understand his doctrine of rebirth; it will also represent necessary groundwork to the central argument of this book.

4.1 The Four Elements

The first type of entity I will consider is the four elements, because it is here that we can most easily see the way in which Empedocles refers to aspects of his physical system with divine terms. As we have seen in Chapter 2.7, in fragment B 6 (= EMP D 57 Laks-Most) Empedocles introduces the

[10] Gods who guide the souls are identified with the subject of B 120 (= EMP D 16 Laks-Most) by Porphyry, *De antro nymph*. 8.61.19. For his identification with Pythagoras, see Chapter 2.2.2.

[11] B 126 (= EMP D 19 Laks-Most). [12] B 115.5 (= EMP D 10.5 Laks-Most).

[13] B 115.13 (= EMP D 10.13 Laks-Most), B 112.4 (= EMP D 4.4 Laks-Most) and B 23.11 (= EMP D 60.11 Laks-Most), with my discussion in Chapter 1.4.

[14] B 146–47 (= EMP D 39 and D 40 Laks-Most). It is worth noting that Empedocles' sources talk of Empedoclean personified powers inhabiting the underworld as δαίμονες, see B 121 (= EMP D 24 Laks-Most) and B 122–23 (= EMP D 21 and D 22 Laks-Most), with my discussion in Chapter 2.2.3. As we do not have any other clues to explore the divine nature of these personified powers, they will not be investigated as relevant items of Empedocles' concept of godhood in this chapter.

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elements as four divine roots corresponding to two pairs of gods and goddesses: Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus and Nestis.[15] While the plant metaphor in this fragment already suggests some essential qualities of the four elements – the elements like the roots of a plant are what sustains and nourishes life – in order to understand why fire, air, water and earth are equated to important gods of the Greek pantheon (and, thereby, to explore what makes their godhood) we need to focus on their working in the cycle.

This working is presented for the first time not in the proem, but rather within the cosmological exposition beginning with fragment B 17 (= EMP D 73.233–66 Laks-Most). Precisely at lines 16–18 (= EMP D 73.247–49 Laks-Most) and 27–35 (= EMP D 73.258–66) we read:

δίπλ' ἐρέω· τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἓν ηὐξήθη μόνον εἶναι
ἐκ πλεόνων, τοτὲ δ' αὖ διέφυ πλέον' ἐξ ἑνὸς εἶναι,
πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ ἠέρος ἄπλετον ὕψος
. . .
ταῦτα γὰρ ἶσά τε πάντα καὶ ἥλικα γένναν ἔασι,
τιμῆς δ' ἄλλης ἄλλο μέδει, πάρα δ' ἦθος ἑκάστωι,
ἐν δὲ μέρει κρατέουσι περιπλομένοιο χρόνοιο.
καὶ πρὸς τοῖς οὔτ' ἄρ τι ἐπιγίνεται οὐδ' ἀπολήγει·
εἴτε γὰρ ἐφθείροντο διαμπερές, οὐκέτ' ἂν ἦσαν·
τοῦτο δ' ἐπαυξήσειε τὸ πᾶν τί κε; καὶ πόθεν ἐλθόν;
πῆι δέ κε κἠξαπόλοιτο, ἐπεὶ τῶνδ' οὐδὲν ἔρημον;
ἀλλ' αὐτ(ὰ) ἔστιν ταῦτα, δι' ἀλλήλων δὲ θέοντα
γίγνεται ἄλλοτε ἄλλα καὶ ἠνεκὲς αἰὲν ὁμοῖα.

A twofold tale I shall tell: at one time they [i.e., the elements] grew to be only one
out of many, at another time again they grew apart to be many out of one:
fire and water and earth and the immense height of air
. . .
For these are all equal and identical in birth,
but each one presides over a different honour, according to its own character,
and by turns they dominate while the time revolves.
And besides these, nothing at all is added nor is lacking;
for if they perished entirely, they would no longer be.
And this whole here, what could increase it, and coming from where?
And how could it be completely destroyed, since nothing is empty of these?
But these things alone are; yet running through each other
they become now this, now that, and each time are continually the same.

[15] For the correspondence of each god with a specific element and for a general interpretation of the fragment, see Chapter 2.7.

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The lines of B 17.16–18 (= EMP D 73.247–49 Laks-Most)[16] tell us that the elements of 'fire and water and earth and the immense height of air' work in a cosmic cycle in which they are alternately and regularly united into one thing alone and are separated into many things again. Moreover, lines 30–33 (= EMP D 73.261–64 Laks-Most) point out that they comprise the total quantity of matter in the world. In fact, nothing can be added to the whole that is made out of them, nor can any one of the elements be lacking in any way. Indeed, Empedocles rejects the possibility that any of the elements could utterly dissolve or that anything else outside the totality could increase it on the basis of three arguments, lucidly reconstructed by Inwood:[17]

> (1) If there were or had been a steady and progressive destruction of one or more of the basic entities, then they would have disappeared completely by now – assuming the passage of an indefinitely long period of time. (2) Nothing outside the totality could be a source for additional growth – since ex hypothesi the totality is all that there is. (3) And there is no way that the totality could be destroyed, since nothing is now empty of these entities. Only this third argument requires elaboration: to be destroyed would have to mean . . . getting rid of what is by moving it to some other place – but that is impossible, since all possible places are already full of what is, in some form or another.

These three basic arguments represent Empedocles' version of the principle of the conservation of matter, namely the fact that the elements are quantitatively invariable. By virtue of this invariability and the fact that they are the ingredients of cyclic changes from one to many and from many to one (B 17.16–17 [= EMP D 73.247–48 Laks-Most]), they are also the foundations of the physical world.

Furthermore, (1) establishes that they are indestructible, which entails that they will forever be. However, this does not entail that they will forever have *the same shape*. In fact, by running through each other, the four elements become different at different times (δι' ἀλλήλων δὲ θέοντα / γίγνεται ἄλλοτε ἄλλα: B 17.35 [= EMP D 73.266 Laks-Most]). Thus, by mixing with each other, they become the immense variety of animate and inanimate things we can see in the world. However, although mixture and exchange among mixed things (B 8.2 [= EMP D 53.2 Laks-Most]) produce an infinite number of new things, each of them is ultimately to be traced back to the four elements as its basic ingredients. This explains quite well

[16] Lines 16–17 repeat verbatim Empedocles' initial claim at B 17.1–2 (= EMP D 73.233–34 Laks-Most).
[17] Inwood (2001: 25–26).

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the plant metaphor we saw above: the elements can be compared to 'roots' because, being the basic components of all living beings we can see in the world, they enable and sustain life.

Moreover, in B 17.27 (= EMP D 73.258 Laks-Most) we find the claim that the elements are all identical in *birth*. This idea is expressed in a context in which Empedocles aims to dispel any doubts about the fact that all four elements are equally fundamental. In this respect, he first describes the elements as all equal (ταῦτα γὰρ ἶσά τε πάντα), thereby suggesting that none is greater in size than the others. Second, they are said to be all identical in birth, which indicates that none of them is temporally or ontologically prior to the others.[18] Third, the elements are said to dominate in turn in the cosmic cycle. While I shall return to the analysis of this third claim soon, it is worth observing that the characteristic of being fundamental entities may well accord with the idea of their dominion at some point in the cycle. This idea can be taken as comparable (indeed, it could derive from) the notion we find in traditional theogonies, in which regal power and dominion are usually accorded to gods who are temporally and/or ontologically prior to their fellow divine beings. It follows that both the characteristic of being fundamental entities and that of their dominion at some point in the cycle can be taken as aspects of their divine nature.

The elements' characteristic of being fundamental entities of the physical system and, consequently, their divine nature has generally been taken as Empedocles' reply to Parmenides' monism.[19] According to this standard reading, the four elements are divine entities – indeed, they are often taken as being the most divine (sometimes even the only truly divine) entities in Empedocles' universe – because they are thought individually to replicate the attributes of Parmenides' *what-is*. More precisely, they are thought to be ingenerated, indestructible and qualitatively unalterable.

In light of this standard reading, the aforementioned notion of identical elements in birth (ἥλικα γέννην) – more generally the idea of fundamental principles coming into being – is surprising, to say the least. However, Rowett, in an influential 1987 article, highlighted that Aristotle, by discussing Empedocles' elements at the end of his *On*

[18] Although being all equally fundamental, each has distinct prerogatives and characteristics. The line is very likely a reference to the individual qualities of each element; the fact, in other words, that fire is connected with heat and brightness, water with cold and darkness, air is said to have a warm, bright and moist nature, whereas earth is associated with heavy and solid things. See B 21.3–6 (= EMP D 77a.3–6 Laks-Most).

[19] Guthrie (1965: 138–47) exemplifies this approach.

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Generation and Corruption 1.1, states that they lose their properties when they are united in the Sphairos and *are genuinely reborn* from it when cosmology begins again. More recently, Palmer has shown that, in contrast to the standard interpretation, 'the Empedoclean roots have their own life cycles and undergo their own transformations like virtually everything else in his system'.[20] In this respect, as we will see below, Empedocles relates the fact that the elements mix with each other and transform themselves into integrated beings to their unsteadfast lifetime[21] and even to their death in the cycle, which at first reading may be an astonishing notion given that the elements are already declared to be indestructible, as we have seen above.

On second reading, however, it agrees with the Empedoclean conception that processes of birth and death, hence life cycles, do not entail any creation (from nothing) or disruption (into nothing) strictly speaking, but really are mixture, interchange of mixed things and separation of elements.[22] Moreover, the idea that the elements have their own life cycles does not contradict the notion that they are eternal. In fact, it can be said that being eternal requires the quantitative invariance of the elements – namely, the fact that they comprise the fixed and total quantity of matter in the universe – but is also compatible with their qualitative mutability.[23] In other words, because the elements persist in the same amount in the cosmic cycle, they are eternal, although, in contrast to Parmenides' *what-is*, they do not endure endlessly as one and the same form or, simply put, they are not eternally unchangeable. This means that the divine character of the elements accords first with their (quantitative) persistence in the cycle and second with their having a life cycle.

The quantitative persistence of the elements in the cosmos, however, does not exhaust the issue of what it means for them to be eternal. In particular, the fact that elements have a life cycle raises further questions about their being immortal – a problematic notion, as already recognized by A. Long. Exploring the Empedoclean representations of immortal entities, Long concluded that Empedocles worked out a novel notion of immortality, which does not entail endless duration, but the ability of a given entity to continue, as one and the same organism, over a long but finite period.[24]

[20] Rowett's hypothesis has recently been taken up and developed by Palmer (2009: 260–317).
[21] See B 17.11 (= EMP D 73.242 Laks-Most): τῆι μὲν γίγνονταί τε καὶ οὔ σφισιν ἔμπεδος αἰών. See also B 26.10 (= EMP D 77b.10 Laks-Most).
[22] See B 8 (= EMP D 53 Laks-Most) and 9 (= EMP D 54 Laks-Most) in Chapter 2.8.
[23] Palmer (2009: 296). [24] A. Long (2017; 2019: 22–27).

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The equivocal character of Empedocles' notion of immortality is highlighted by the lines of B 35 (= EMP D 75 Laks-Most), in which Empedocles argues that the elements can be seen as both mortal and immortal entities. Specifically, B 35 (= EMP D 75 Laks-Most) describes the moment in the cosmic cycle when Love begins expanding her influence among the elements after Strife's disruption of the Sphairos. 'When Strife has reached the deepest depth of the vortex, and Love has come to be in the centre of the whirl' under her influence, the elements start coming together. Love's intervention among the elements causes these to come together willingly. 'And while they were mixing, myriad tribes of mortals spread out.' Empedocles adds:

> αἶψα δὲ θνήτ' ἐφύοντο, τὰ πρὶν μάθον ἀθάνατ' εἶναι,
> ζωρά θ' ἃ πρὶν, κερόωντο,[25] διαλλάξαντα κελεύθους.
> τῶν δέ τε μισγομένων χεῖτ' ἤθνεα μυρία θνητῶν,
> παντοίαις ἰδέῃσιν ἀρηρότα, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι.
>
> (B 35.14–17 [= EMP D 75.14–17 Laks-Most])

> And immediately were born as mortals those things [i.e., the elements] that earlier had learned to be immortals,
> and those that earlier had been unblended were mixing, interchanging their paths.
> And while they were mixing, myriad tribes of mortals spread out,
> joined together in forms of all kinds, a wonder to see.

Under the influence of Love, the elements, which until then have been (indeed, have learned to be) immortal und unblended, grew mortal and

[25] The line in Diels-Kranz reads ζωρά τε τὰ πρὶν ἄκρητα, διαλλάξαντα κελεύθους, but both their text and sense are doubtful. The phrase τε τὰ πρὶν ἄκρητα is the version transmitted by Plutarch's and Athenaeus' manuscripts, whereas Simplicius has τε τὰ πρὶν ἄκριτα. Aristotle, moreover, transmits the line as ζῷα τε τὰ πρὶν κεκρῆτο. Aristotle's version presents two problems: ζῷα is very likely a banalization of ζωρά, derived from the context speaking about the myriads of mortals arisen by elemental mixtures. Moreover, the perfect κεκρῆτο is difficult to explain in light of the imperfect ἐφύοντο in the previous line. Given the whole context of the fragment and, above all, the preceding line establishing an opposition between θνήτα and ἀθάνατα, this line is expected to provide an analogous opposition between 'blended' and 'unblended'. Yet, despite a passage of Philum. *Ven.* 2.3, 4.2, in which ζωρότερος is opposed to ἄκρατος οἶνος, ζωρά and ἄκρητα are attested with the same meaning of 'unblended'. My correction ζωρά θ' ἃ πρὶν, κερόωντο restores both a grammatically sound text, with κερόωντο as a good counterpart to the previous ἐφύοντο, and the opposition expected in the line between things unblended that were gradually blending. It is worth noting, moreover, that the imperfect tense κερόωντο is attested in *Od.* 8.470, where the thing that is mixed is wine. This invites the reading that, by alluding to the domain of wine-mixing through both the Homeric reminiscence κερόωντο and the adjective ζωρός, generally used to describe pure wine (i.e., wine without water), Empedocles could indirectly be suggesting that his elemental mixtures are comparable to the mixing of liquid substances.

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mixed. As Empedocles tells us in the last two lines of the fragment, elemental mixtures give rise to 'myriad tribes of mortals'. The inference is that the elements are said *to be born as mortals* when they are mixed as all kinds of mortal beings through the renewed power of Love,[26] which in turn implies that they are immortal when they stay unblended under Strife's influence.[27]

Some lines of fragment B 26 (= EMP D 77b Laks-Most) add further information to this picture.

ἐν δὲ μέρει κρατέουσι περιπλομένοιο κύκλοιο,
καὶ φθίνει εἰς ἄλληλα καὶ αὔξεται ἐν μέρει αἴσης.
αὐτὰ γὰρ ἔστιν ταῦτα, δι᾽ ἀλλήλων δὲ θέοντα
γίνοντ(αι) ἄνθρωποί τε καὶ ἄλλων ἔθνεα θηρῶν
ἄλλοτε μὲν Φιλότητι συνερχόμεν᾽ εἰς ἕνα κόσμον, 5
ἄλλοτε δ᾽ αὖ δίχ᾽ ἕκαστα φορούμενα Νείκεος ἔχθει,
εἰσόκεν ἓν συμφύντα τὸ πᾶν ὑπένερθε γένηται.
οὕτως ᾗ μὲν ἓν ἐκ πλεόνων μεμάθηκε φύεσθαι,
ἠδὲ πάλιν διαφύντος ἑνὸς πλέον᾽ ἐκτελέθουσι,
τῇ μὲν γίγνονταί τε καὶ οὔ σφισιν ἔμπεδος αἰών· 10
ᾗ δὲ τάδ᾽ ἀλλάσσοντα διαμπερὲς οὐδαμὰ λήγει,
ταύτῃ δ᾽ αἰὲν ἔασιν ἀκίνητοι κατὰ κύκλον.

[26] A. Long (2017: 9–12) argues that, whereas the four elements seem to be the only possible referent for things being first immortal and then growing mortal, given that their mortality is connected to mixture, the reference here may well be to the portions of the same element that compose a single-element body. These single-element bodies

> include vast masses, such as the sun, moon, sea and sky . . . The contrast between 'immortal' and 'mortal' in B 35.14 is between the contrasting conditions of one and the same portion of an element. First, together with other portions of the same element, it belonged, as an 'immortal', to a single-element body; then, under the influence of Love, it is mixed and becomes a constituent of a 'mortal' . . . 'Immortality' thus marks the condition of the portion when it belonged to a specific, single-element body, by contrast with a sequence of mortal compounds (at p. 11).

I tend to agree with Long that the contrast in B 35.14 (= EMP D 75.14 Laks-Most) between 'immortal' and 'mortal' refers to what he calls a single-element body (e.g., the sky) in contrast to portions of the same elements mixed in compounds (e.g., air mixed in bones). It is worth noting that Empedocles takes single-element bodies, such as the sky, rain, sun and the like, as visible witnesses of the four elements.

[27] B 35.8–9 (= EMP D 75.8–9 Laks-Most) states that, in the first stages of Love's increase, Strife still has a great power over the elements, being able to hold things unmixed and suspended. 'For not yet blamelessly, / had it withdrawn completely to the farthest limits of the cycle.' This is a clear indication that the elements stay unblended in our world as well. It follows that, in our world too, portions of the elements that are not mixed in compounds are to be considered as immortal. In this respect, I would argue that the immortal nature of the elements in our world is related to their status as vast cosmic masses, such as the sky, sun, sea and the like. This invites the reading that, in line with a well attested tradition, Empedocles considered not only the more abstract notion of the elements, but also their concrete form of cosmic masses, as gods.

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And by turns they [i.e., the elements] dominate while the cycle revolves,
and they perish and grow into one another in their decreed turns.
For in themselves they are the same, but in running through each other
they become human beings and the tribes of other beasts,
sometimes when coming together because of Love into one order,
sometimes when being severally borne apart again because of Strife's hostility,
until growing together to be one, the totality, they are subdued.
Thus, insofar as they have learned to grow as one out of many
and inversely, when the one grows apart, they become many,
to that extent they come to be, and they do not have a steadfast lifetime;
but insofar as they do not cease to alternate continually,
to that extent they always are unchangeable in their circle.

Through these lines, Empedocles depicts the working of the elements in the cosmic cycle as an alternation between their dominance and growth on the one hand and their subjection and death on the other.[28] As we learn, the elements become all kinds of living beings by running through each other, while they are subdued when they come together as one, being thoroughly compounded in the Sphairos by Love's power. Elsewhere we are told that in the Sphairos 'neither the swift limbs of the sun can be distinguished' (B 27.1 [= EMP D 89 Laks-Most]). By understanding the 'limbs of the sun' as representing the element of fire (see B 21.3 [= EMP D 77a Laks-Most]) and by assuming that what pertains to fire pertains to the other elements, it follows that the subordination of the elements in the Sphairos (B 26.7 [= EMP D 77b.7]) coincides with the loss of their distinct characteristics when they are united into the One. In other words, the elements are said to be subdued and die when they lose their specific properties. In parallel, they can be said to be born and dominate when they are distinguished as four separate elements, each with its characteristics. B 26 (= EMP D 77b Laks-Most) tells us that this occurs due to Strife's disruption of the Sphairos. By adding the information we gained from B 35 (= EMP D 75 Laks-Most), quoted above, we can fairly conclude that, because of Strife's influence, the elements remaining unmixed have their part of dominion in the cycle and, as inasmuch as they do not undergo mixtures and changes, they also stay immortal.

To wrap up my investigation to this point, Empedocles is explicit both about the fact that the elements are quantitatively stable and that they are

[28] On this fragment and Empedocles' cosmic cycle more generally see Chapter 7.1. On the meaning of φθίνω (or φθίω) as 'to decay', 'to wane', 'to pass away' and 'to perish', in contrast to the translation 'to grow smaller' proposed by Verdenius (1948: 12–13) and defended by Guthrie (1965: 147), see Palmer (2009: 284). Laks-Most (2016: 435) translate φθίνει as 'they decrease'.

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not eternally unchangeable, but are born, perish and undergo myriad qualitative changes. As we have seen, Empedocles leaves little doubt that the four roots have their own life cycles, as they periodically *die* and lose their identity and properties when they grow together as one in the Sphairos, while they are *(re)born* as elements when they are separated from the One due to Strife. Moreover, as they also lose their specific properties when they are mixed as myriad different things, each with qualities of its own, the elements can be taken as dying when they are born as compounded living beings (in fact, they are called 'mortal' when they mix to form living beings in B 35.14 [= EMP D 75.14 Laks-Most]).[29]

Although we can conclude with Palmer that 'the clear and cumulative impression of these various statements is that the roots are . . . subject to generation and destruction', Empedocles does not withhold immortality from them. In fact, when they stay unmixed and persist as fire, air, water and earth under Strife's influence, they are called 'immortal' and are even said to dominate in the cosmic cycle. Moreover, although they are transformed by mixture into myriad compounds, at B 17.13 (= EMP D 73.244 Laks-Most) and again in B 26.12 (= EMP D 77b.12 Laks-Most) they are nonetheless defined as 'always unchanged in their cycle', αἰὲν ἔασιν ἀκίνητοι κατὰ κύκλον.

Scholars generally interpret ἀκίνητοι (*akinetoi*) with reference to the regularity of the elements' changes. Accordingly, the elements are always immutable in the cycle because they alternately and regularly come together and are separated in an endless alternation. In Empedocles studies, the elements' characterization as ἀκίνητοι is usually taken as further evidence that they exist in the strong Parmenidean sense.[30] The claim to be αἰὲν ἔασιν

[29] As we will see more thoroughly in the next chapter, processes of birth and death are described as transformations produced by mixtures of elements and exchanges of mixtures (see B 8.3 [= EMP D 53.3 Laks-Most]: μίξις τε διάλλαξίς τε μιγέντων). Moreover, as Empedocles puts it in B 21.13–14 (= EMP D 77a.13–14 Laks-Most), 'by running through each other, they [i.e., the elements] become different in their shape, for mixture changes them', τὰ γὰρ διὰ κρᾶσις ἀμείβει. It must be said, however, that this half-line, in the form in which it is written here, is the result of an emendation of the corrupted text in the manuscript tradition of Simplicius. Specifically, whereas ἀμείβει is certain, what precedes it in Simplicius' manuscripts is not and Diels-Kranz's critical apparatus accounts for the variant readings as follows: τογον διάκρισις D: τόγον διάκραισις E: lac. F. Diels' conjectural correction is τόσον διά κρῆσις, accepted by the majority of editors and commentators. However, Wright pointed out that there is no parallel in Empedocles' fragments for a similar use of τόσον without a corresponding relative. In her critical apparatus, moreover, Wright proposed as a possible conjecture τὰ γὰρ διά κρῆσις, although she did not print it in the text (see Wright 1995: 101). From Laks-Most's critical apparatus, moreover, we apprehend that the Aldine edition read τὰ γάρ which, together with the expression διὰ κρᾶσις, can make good sense of the line. This reconstruction of the text was already proposed by Palmer (2009: 293).

[30] See, e.g., Inwood (2001: 30).

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ἀκίνητοι κατὰ κύκλον in B 17.13 (= EMP D 73.244 Laks-Most) is slightly modified in the conclusion of the fragment (B 17.35 [= EMP D 73.266 Laks-Most]), in which the elements, despite all various changes they undergo by running through each other (that is, by mixture) and becoming all living beings, are said to be 'always continually the same', ἠνεκὲς αἰὲν ὁμοῖα. Wright comments upon the phrase, noting that 'the Eleatic argument for self-consistency . . . is applied to the individual roots, completing the point made in line 28 – each root has its own τιμῆς and ἦθος, which are preserved inviolate through the various arrangements and rearrangements of parts in the formation of θνητά'.[31] As we have seen above, however, the interpretation of Empedocles' elements replicating Parmenides' *what-is* is untenable in light of his own verses, which rather foreground the elements' qualitative mutability, as they do not endure endlessly as one and the same form.

In light of this finding, I would question Wright's notion of elements preserving their τιμῆς and ἦθος inviolate through their various arrangements and rearrangements as living compounds. As we have seen above, Empedocles is clear enough about elements dying – that is, losing their specific and identifying qualities – when they are mixed as mortal forms. Rather, I would argue that by the idea of elements being unchanged *kata kyklon* and being therefore always continually the same, Empedocles aims to emphasize the particular nature of their life cycles, upon which their special status as fundamental entities and their divine nature rest. According to this reading, *kata kyklon* in B 17.13 (= EMP D 73.244 Laks-Most) and B 26.12 (= EMP D 77b.12 Laks-Most) does not refer to the cosmic cycle in general, but rather to the elements' particular life cycle: they are 'unchanged *in their cycle*'. Moreover, the variation of the otherwise analogous B 17.35 (= EMP D 73.266), ταύτῃ δ' αἰὲν ἔασιν ἠνεκὲς αἰὲν ὁμοῖα, suggests that, despite their continuous transformations into all kinds of living compounds, these being forms of mortals or of the One/Sphairos, the elements are always ultimately and regularly reborn as the same four kinds of fundamental principles. In this way, they regain the τιμῆς and ἦθος that characterize each of them and, by means of these, they are every time reborn as 'themselves'.

Thus, I would contend that in B 17.13 (= EMP D 73.244 Laks-Most), B 26.12 (= EMP D 77b.12 Laks-Most) and B 17.35 (= EMP D 73.266 Laks-Most), Empedocles typifies the elemental life cycles in contrast to the life cycles and transformations ordinary mortals undergo. Whereas the latter

[31] Wright (1995: 172).

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take on a new form of body each time they are reborn, the former are always reborn as themselves again. As Palmer points out:

> Although both fire, water, earth, and air as well as their compounds [. . .] all experience generation and destruction, nevertheless fire, water, earth, and air, *unlike* their compounds, will upon the dissolution of those compounds regain the identities previously lost when they perished in the compounds' formation. . . . fire, water, earth, and air are regenerated once again as what they were before, that is, as fire, water, earth, and air. This is the manner of persistence Empedocles appears to have in mind when he specifies the respect in which the roots are changeless.[32]

In other words, although the elements have a life cycle just like the compounds formed out of them, in contrast to those compounds, the elements will every time be reborn as themselves again, no matter how often they interchange, lose their identities and die by mixtures. It is in this respect that they can be said to persist unchanged. In doing so, they can be considered immortal, according to Long's definition, and are more ontologically basic within Empedocles' physical system than the compounds formed from them. This finally assures that they are divine.

To sum up, the divine nature of the four elements essentially consists in their being ontologically fundamental entities of Empedocles' physical system. Moreover, Empedocles assures that the total amount of each of them never decreases or increases in the cosmic cycle, but persists unaffected. Indeed, the elements comprise the fixed and total quantity of matter in the universe. Furthermore, they are the basic components of every existing thing. Thus, everything in the cosmos, as it comes to be from and always dissolves into the four elements, can be traced back to them. It follows that they are prior to, and more ontologically basic, than the compounds formed from them.

However, despite their quantitative invariance, the four elements are qualitatively mutable: by running through and mixing with each other, they lose their characteristics and transform themselves into integrated beings with new qualities of their own. More precisely, each of the elements has its own life cycle. This determines that they die when, by being united in compounds, they lose their identities and are genuinely born again as 'themselves' from the Sphairos, when the cosmological process begins anew. As we have seen, their qualitative variability is such that despite their life cycles and the myriad transformations in all kinds of compounds they undergo, they still persist unchanged in their cycle.

[32] Palmer (2016: 51).

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Which means that they are reborn every time as fire, air, water and earth, with those same qualities they had before undergoing changes. For this reason, they can be said to be immortal, as each is able to persist as one and the same entity over a long period.

In conclusion, Empedocles' conception of godhood with reference to the four elements foregrounds the idea of their persistence, which characterizes them as fundamental entities of his physical system. Their persistence is quantitative, in that they comprise the fixed and total amount of matter in the universe. But it is also qualitative, in that their cycle ensures that, despite their innumerable transformations into all kinds of mortal forms, they are always reborn each time as each of the same four elements. Incidentally, it is worth noting that their being divine agrees with the notion of elements having a life cycle like virtually everything else in the cosmos. It follows that godhood is not denied, in principle, to those beings, such as men and women, who have their own life cycle, provided, however, that their cycle entails the possibility that they remain unchanged for a certain (rather long) period. By virtue of this conclusion, my goal in this chapter is thus precisely to understand what divinity entails in reference to human beings striving to become gods.

4.2 Love and Strife

Having established the correlation between the status of the elements as fundamental principles of the physical world and their divine nature, and having identified this in the way they persist in the cosmic cycle, I will now turn to the second kind of entity that Empedocles explicitly refers to as gods or calls by the names of traditional deities: Love and Strife. Here I will look at those verses that delve into their action upon the four elements and their function in the cosmic cycle. This will allow me to define their godhood in contrast to that of fire, air, water and earth and to show that their divine nature is more in line with the traditional notion of gods as immortal (and eternally unchanged) beings.

As we have seen in Chapter 2.7, Empedocles introduces the principles of Love and Strife for the first time through the lines of B 16 (= EMP D 63 Laks-Most) as two entities that persist through the history of time. While I will return to this fundamental characteristic later in this section, where we will see that it reflects a quality that is ascribed to traditional gods, it is first necessary to draw attention to the dichotomy that guides the Empedoclean description of these two principles in his physical exposition. In fact, Love and Strife are made antithetical principles that act on the

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elements and influence their functioning in opposite ways. Empedocles links Love with a positive principle working on the elements and striving to bring all things to one form alone, the Sphairos. In contrast, Strife is made the negative principle that destroys the Sphairos, tearing the elements apart and producing the Many.[33] Because of their impact on the elements and the cycle, Love and Strife have also been considered cosmic forces or powers.

Related to this, continuing along the lines of the antithetical description of the two principles, Love is usually associated with a unifying power in contrast to the separating force of Strife, as for instance in B 17.7–8 (= EMP D 73.239–40 Laks-Most): . . . Φιλότητι συνερχόμεν' εἰς ἓν ἅπαντα, / . . . δίχ' ἕκαστα φορεύμενα Νείκεος ἔχθει.[34] Additionally, Love's unifying action is emphasized through verbs with the prefix συν-, such as συν-έρχομαι (B 17.7 [= EMP D 73.239 Laks-Most], B 20.2 [= EMP D 73.303 Laks-Most], B 26.5 [= EMP D 77b.5 Laks-Most], B 35.5 [= EMP D 75.5 Laks-Most]), συν-βαίνω (B 21.8 [= EMP D 77a.8 Laks-Most]), συν-φύομαι (B 26.7 [= EMP D 77b.7 Laks-Most]) and συν-ίστημι (B 35.6 [= EMP D 75.6 Laks-Most]). Moreover, Love is usually associated with the notion of 'one' (thing, cosmos, etc.),[35] whereas Strife is typically connected with the concept of 'many' or plurality.[36] The prefix δια- seems to be particularly linked to the notion of plurality and change: see δι-έφυ (B 17.2 = B 17.10 [= EMP D 73.234 = 73.241 Laks-Most]), δια-φύντος (B 26.9 [= EMP D 77b.9 Laks-Most]), δι-αλλάσσοντα; δι-αλλάξαντα (B 17.12 [= EMP D 73.243 Laks-Most], B 35.16 [= EMP D 75.16 Laks-Most]), δια-τμηθέντα (B 20.4 [= EMP D 73.305 Laks-Most]), διά-μορφα (B 21.7 [= EMP D 77a.7 Laks-Most]) and δι-έχουσι (B 22.6 [= EMP D 101.6 Laks-Most]).

Nevertheless, Aristotle noted that the ability to unify things also pertains to Strife, while Love too can separate. Specifically, Aristotle observes that Strife separates the One, but unifies each element with its homologous portions, thereby forming four homogeneous elemental masses. In parallel,

[33] In Chapter 7.1 I will delve into the opposition of these principles with reference to their effects on the cosmic cycle.

[34] See analogously B 20.2–5 (= EMP D 73.303–6 Laks-Most), B 22.5–8 (= EMP D 101.5–8 Laks-Most), B 26.5–7 (= EMP D 77b.5–7 Laks-Most) and B 35.5 (= EMP D 75.5 Laks-Most) (Love only).

[35] See B 17.7 (= EMP D 73.239 Laks-Most), B 20.2 (= EMP D 73.303 Laks-Most), B 26.5 (= EMP D 77b.5 Laks-Most), B 35.5 (= EMP D 75.5 Laks-Most), PStrasb. a(ii) 17 (= EMP D 73.287 Laks-Most), PStrasb. a(ii) 20 (= EMP D 73.290 Laks-Most).

[36] See B 17.8 (= EMP D 73.240 Laks-Most), B 20.4–5 (= EMP D 73.305–6 Laks-Most), B 21.7 (= EMP D 77a.7 Laks-Most), B 22.6–8 (= EMP D 101.6–8 Laks-Most) and B 26.6 (= EMP D 77b.6 Laks-Most).

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Love unifies the four heterogeneous elements into the One, but separates each element from its homologous portions (that is, she separates and dissolves the elemental masses).[37] As a clarification to Aristotle's report, however, it can be said that Strife's unions and Love's separations result *incidentally* from their main action in the cycle. In fact, Strife always works in the cosmic cycle *by separating Love's compounds* and, in doing so, brings about a gradual increase of *parts*. Therefore, although its action may incidentally cause heterogeneous elements to come together,[38] Strife can nonetheless be said to be *the cause of separation*. Analogously, Love, *by unifying separate parts*, forms *wholes* and gradually reduces the number of things until her re-composition of only *one whole thing*, the Sphairos. This makes Love the cause of union, although her activity incidentally causes the elements to separate from their homologous portions and to combine in heterogeneous mixtures. As a result, Love can be defined as the principle of unity (and One) whereas Strife tries to impede Love's mixtures and, by separating her compounds, is the principle not only of division, but also of the Many.

With reference to the divine nature of the two powers, scholars generally argue that we only have straightforward evidence for the divine nature of Love,[39] who is frequently called by the names of traditional goddesses such as Aphrodite, Cypris and Harmonia.[40] Strife, on the other hand, is not explicitly mentioned as a deity in our extant fragments. Moreover, the gender of Strife's name in Greek (Νεῖκος) is neuter, which, as V. Hladký points out, 'already on the level of grammar, makes it distinct from the other, more personal, masculine or feminine gods that appear in Empedocles'.[41] Nonetheless, we do have some Empedoclean verses in

[37] See *Metaph.* 985a 23–29. See also *De gen. et corr.* 333b 19–22 where Aristotle argues that the movement initiated by Strife leads each element to converge to its homologous parts (hence according to the so-called principle of like to like). In contrast, compounds result from Love's ability to unite different, heterogeneous elements. Additionally, in her unifications of the elements into the One, Love destroys the world and all things in it: Arist. *Metaph.* 1000a 25ff. For the sake of completeness, however, it must be said that Love unifies not only heterogeneous elements into compounds, as Aristotle put it, but also already compounded things into more and more complex integrated entities. Analogously, not every separation of compounds by Strife causes homogeneous elements to come together. Strife's working can result in less integrated entities, as it occurs in the formation of men and women from whole-natured beings (on which, see Chapter 7.1.1).

[38] More precisely, it can be said that, by separating compounds, Strife sets the elements free to move according to their natural motion, hence each towards its homologous parts.

[39] See Rangos (2012: 319) and Hladký (2017: 3).

[40] It is worth noting, moreover, that Love's rush is defined as ἄμβροτος in B 35.13 (= EMP D 75.13 Laks-Most), an adjective that in Greek literature is used for gods.

[41] Hladký (2017: 4), following Rowett (2016: 95–97).

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which Strife is referred to by the names Kotos and Eris (B 21.7 [= EMP D 77a.7 Laks-Most] and B 20.4 [= EMP D 73.305 Laks-Most]). Additionally, traditional gods such as Ares and Kydoimos (see B 128.1 [= EMP D 25.1 Laks-Most] with n.8 above) may also be taken as two names to indicate Strife, just like Cypris and Aphrodite are names for Love or, assuming they are rather 'manifestations of the cosmic super-god Strife',[42] they can still be interpreted as signs of Strife's divine nature. Be that as it may, Love's and Strife's divinity is emphasized in B 59.1 (= EMP D 149.1 Laks-Most) where, as we have seen in Chapter 3.6, they are both referred to as δαίμονες.[43]

Moreover, since, as we have seen above, Empedocles connects mortality to mixture,[44] Love's and Strife's divine status is also determined by the fact that at least a part of them stays unmixed during all phases of a cosmic cycle. In fact, in contrast to the four elements, Love and Strife are introduced in the proem (see B 16 [= EMP D 63 Laks-Most]) in a way that emphasizes their persistence over time:

> ἦι γὰρ καὶ πάρος ἔσκε(?), καὶ ἔσσεται, οὐδέ ποτ', οἴω,
> τούτων ἀμφοτέρων κενεώσεται ἄσπετος αἰών.
>
> For certainly, they were before and will be, and never, I suppose,
> will the innumerable length of time be empty of these two.

Looking at this fragment, we can see that the first line is reminiscent of *Il.* 1.70, ὃς ἤδη τά τ' ἐόντα τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα, a line referring to Calchas' perfect knowledge of all present, past and future events, through an epic formula indicating the eternity of time and history. Similarly, Hesiod (*Theog.* 39) employs the same formula with an analogous meaning to depict the Muses' ability to master a song comprising past, present and future. By echoing the epic formula, therefore, Empedocles indicates that the two forces persist in the cosmic cycle eternally unchanged: Love and Strife are now as they were before and will be in the future.

The contrast between the persistence of the two forces and the four elements undergoing generations and destructions is plain and well

[42] Rowett (2016: 96).

[43] αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μεῖζον ἐμίσγετο δαίμονι δαίμων. *Contra* Hladký (2017: 12) who argues against Strife having a divine nature.

[44] In the case of the elements, as we have seen, they were said to be born as mortals when mixed in the myriad integrated living beings (see B 35.14–17 [= EMP D 75.14–17 Laks-Most]).

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received by Hippolytus, who commented upon the lines quoted above in the following way:

> They [i.e., Love and Strife] never began to come into being, but they pre-existed and will always exist, being unable to endure destruction because of their unborn quality. But fire <and water> and earth and air are dying and returning to life. For when the things that come to be by Strife's agency die, Love receives them and draws them towards, puts them with, and assimilates them to the universe, so that the universe might remain one, always being organized by Love in one manner and form. And when Love makes the one out of many and assimilates the separated things to one, Strife again tears them from the one and makes many, i.e. fire, water, earth and air, the animals and plants created from these and all the parts of the cosmos which we conceive of.[45] (transl. Inwood 2001)

Later on, Hippolytus connects Love's and Strife's stable natures with their immortality. Indeed, he calls the four elements 'mortal gods', whereas Love and Strife are 'immortal, unborn and hostile to each other always'.[46]

To sum up, the analysis of the godlike nature of Love and Strife highlights that the they are divine because they are, like the elements, fundamental principles of Empedocles' physical system – indeed, they are forces acting upon the four elements and influencing their workings in the cosmic cycle. Moreover, Love's and Strife's divine nature also resides in their immortality; indeed in their eternal persistence as one and the same form – a characteristic that more than any other is traditionally connected to godhood. In fact, the Homeric gods are nothing if not ἄμβροτοι.

Thus, Love's and Strife's immortality requires not only that they are endless – indeed, they are eternal – but also that at least a part of them stays unmixed and, consequently, unchanged during all phases of the cosmic cycle. This characteristic makes their immortal and divine nature slightly different from that of the elements. Indeed, as we have seen above, the four elements are born and die when they transform themselves into living compounds and have a life cycle like everything else in Empedocles' system. Because they undergo qualitative changes, the elements can only be said to be *unchanged in their cycle*, while they are immortal just in that part of the cosmic cycle when they are kept unmixed by the influence of Strife. In contrast, Love's and Strife's immortality and divinity entails that they stay unborn and imperishable; that is, perfectly unchanged through the eternity of time.

[45] Hipp. *Ref.* 7.29.10–12. [46] Ibid. 7.29.23.

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4.3 The Sphairos

Turning to the next of those concepts to which Empedocles explicitly ascribes divine nature in his fragments, we see that the Sphairos (or the One) – that is, the form of the universe resulting from the perfect unification of all things into one whole entity – is called θεός in B 31 (= EMP D 95 Laks-Most). Moreover, Hippolytus in his *Refutatio omnium heresium* tells us that the Sphairos is 'the most beautiful form' of the universe because it emerges from Love's dominion over Strife.[47] This characterization agrees with the fact that, as we are going to see, Empedocles conceptualizes the Sphairos as his ideal of perfection. In this regard, let us examine B 27 (= EMP D 89 Laks-Most):

> ἔνθ' οὔτ' ἠελίοιο διείδεται ὠκέα γυῖα
> . . .[48]
> οὕτως Ἁρμονίης πυκινῶι κρύφωι ἐστήρικται
> Σφαῖρος κυκλοτερὴς μονίηι περιγηθέι[49] γαίων.
>
> There neither the swift limbs of the sun can be distinguished
> . . .
> So much remains riveted in the dense hiding place of Harmony
> round Sphairos, exulting in his joyous solitude.

As we have seen in Section 4.1 above, B 27.1 (= EMP D 89.1 Laks-Most) indicates that the Sphairos is a blend in which the four elements no longer stand out as four distinct entities. Taking this concept to the extreme, we conclude that, as already argued, the four elements no longer exist when united to form the One, or, as Empedocles puts it, they are subdued in the Sphairos.[50] The impossibility of distinguishing between its ingredients may well point to a representation of the Sphairos as a thorough blend, with an emphasis to its overall balance and symmetry.

[47] Hipp. *Ref.* 7.29.14.

[48] Diels-Kranz reconstructs line 2 as follows: οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδ' αἴης λάσιον μένος οὐδὲ θάλασσα. In the text quoted by Simpl. *Phys.* 1183.28, our source for the Empedoclean citation, this line is missing. Diels inserted it based on a quotation by Plutarch, *De fac.* 12 p. 926d, which he considered to coincide with Simplicius' quotation. However, as Bignone (1916) demonstrated, although B 27.1 (= EMP D 89.1 Laks-Most) is identical to the first line of the verses quoted by Plutarch, Plutarch's comment shows that his Empedoclean quotation comes from a context that does not deal with the Sphairos.

[49] Diels-Kranz printed in the text the form περιηγέι ('encircling'), which is attested by Achilles Tatius and Proclus. The form περιγηθέι is instead transmitted by Simplicius and should be preferred.

[50] See also Palmer (2009: esp. 285–98).

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This conclusion accords with what we can read in fragment B 28 (= EMP D 90 Laks-Most):

> ἀλλ᾽ ὅ γε πάντοθεν ἶσος <ἑοῖ> καὶ πάμπαν ἀπείρων
> Σφαῖρος κυκλοτερὴς μονίηι περιγηθέι[51] γαίων.
>
> But he is everywhere equal <to himself> and completely boundless
> round Sphairos, rejoicing in his joyous solitude.

The Sphairos' shape is here again presented in a way that stresses its overall balance, as the Sphairos is said to be everywhere equal to itself. This relates well to the representation in B 27 (= EMP D 89 Laks-Most) of the One as a blend in which its ingredients cannot be distinguished. Additionally, the specification that the Sphairos is everywhere always identical to itself indicates that the thorough blend of B 27 corresponds to a perfectly symmetrical and balanced shape.

The One's quality of multidimensional symmetry, highlighted by the notion of the Sphairos being everywhere equal to itself, is repeated almost verbatim in another fragment, B 29 (= EMP D 92 Laks-Most):

> οὐ γὰρ ἀπὸ νώτοιο δύο κλάδοι ἀίσσονται,
> οὐ πόδες, οὐ θοὰ γοῦν(α), οὐ μήδεα γεννήεντα,
> ἀλλὰ σφαῖρος ἦην καὶ <πάντοθεν> ἶσος ἑαυτῶι.
>
> For from his back two branches do not shoot forth,
> no feet, no swift knees, no generative organs,
> but he was Sphairos, and <everywhere> equal to himself.

As we can see, the concluding claim according to which the Sphairos is from all sides equal to itself is presented here as the result of its being a non-anthropomorphic god: it has neither arms nor feet, nor knees, nor genital organs.

Looking at the reception of this description, scholars agree that lines 1 and 2 are Empedocles' criticism of the anthropomorphic representation of the divine, which can be traced back to Xenophanes. By emphasizing that different societies represent their deities with physical characteristics that are typical of those societies, Xenophanes pointed out the subjective

[51] Diels-Kranz printed here the term περιηγέι ('encircling'), which according to them also appears in the comparable line of B 27 (= EMP D 89 Laks-Most) but see n.49 above. The manuscripts of Stobeus (*Egl.* I 15, 2ab = I 144, 20 W.), our sources for these lines, have περιτεθῆ or περιτείθη, which can be taken as corrupted forms for περιγηθέι.

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character of the anthropomorphic approach. For instance, the Aethiops represent their gods as snub nosed and dark skinned, whereas Thracian gods have blue eyes and blond hair.[52] From this observation, Xenophanes arrives at a rather radical deduction, namely that just as people from different societies create different and self-resembling representations of the divine, so too would horses and oxen, if only they had the ability to represent their deities, make them similar to themselves.[53] While recalling Xenophanes, Empedocles' rejection of anthropomorphism and especially the Sphairos' lack of genitals contrasts the specific paradigm of epic theogony with personified gods that reproduce themselves sexually, and points out instead that the Sphairos has no need of reproduction and does not procreate. Thus, instead of an anthropomorphic shape, what is proposed is a symmetrical and spherical form: ἀλλὰ σφαῖρος ἔην.

The spherical form of the Sphairos is made explicit through both the adjective κυκλοτερής (B 27.3 [= EMP D 89.3 Laks-Most] and B 28.2 [= EMP D 90.2 Laks-Most]) and the name Σφαῖρος itself, the masculine form derived from the Greek σφαῖρα ('sphere'). This is reminiscent of Parmenides' *what-is* being like a well-rounded sphere,[54] while later philosophical tradition will concur that roundness is a perfect shape.[55] In fact, any point on the surface of a sphere is equidistant from its centre and this is considered a sign of ideal symmetry. Thus, the Sphairos' roundness contributes to constructing the ideal of balance of the 'most beautiful form' of the universe, which is ultimately functional to portraying Empedocles' ideal of perfection.

Returning to the description of the Sphairos in B 27 (= EMP D 89 Laks-Most) and 28 (= EMP D 90 Laks-Most), we will now see further qualities ascribed to the One that contribute to depicting Empedocles' ideal of perfection. First, the perfect nature of the Sphairos is also constructed

[52] DK 21 B 16 (= XEN D 13 Laks-Most): Αἰθίοπές τε <θεοὺς σφετέρους> σιμοὺς μέλανάς τε / Θρῆικές τε γλαυκοὺς καὶ πυρρούς <φασι πέλεσθαι>.

[53] DK 21 B 15 (= XEN D 14 Laks-Most): ἀλλ' εἰ χεῖρας ἔχον βόες <ἵπποι τ'> ἠὲ λέοντες / ἢ γράψαι χείρεσσι καὶ ἔργα τελεῖν ἅπερ ἄνδρες, / ἵπποι μέν θ' ἵπποισι βόες δέ τε βουσὶν ὁμοίας / καί <κε> θεῶν ἰδέας ἔγραφον καὶ σώματ' ἐποίουν / τοιαῦθ' οἷόν περ καὐτοὶ δέμας εἶχον <ἕκαστοι>.

[54] DK 28 B 8.42–49 (= PARM D 8.47–53 Laks-Most). For further Parmenidean reminiscences in Empedocles' depiction of the Sphairos, see Palmer (2009: 314).

[55] In this respect, the depiction of the spherical form of the world in Plato's *Timaeus* 33b is noteworthy:

> And for the shape he [i.e., the Demiurge] gave it [i.e., the world] that which is fitting and akin to its nature. For the living creature that was to embrace all living creatures within itself, the fitting shape would be the figure that comprehends in itself all the figures there are; accordingly he turned its shape rounded and spherical, equidistant every way from centre to extremity – a figure the most perfect and uniform of all; for he judged uniformity to be immeasurably better than the opposite.

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through the verb ἐστήρικται ('to stand still') at B 27.2 (= EMP D 89.2 Laks-Most). As movement is conceptually related to the idea of a process that is not yet completed, perfection requires in contrast completion of motion and therefore rest. We already find this idea in Parmenides (DK 28 B 8.30–38 [= PARM D 8.35–43 Laks-Most]), who connects the lack of motion of his *what-is* to the fact that it is not allowed to be incomplete (οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον τὸ ἐὸν θέμις εἶναι). Thus, any entity is perfect iff it is complete, and it is complete iff it does not move.

Moreover, the Sphairos' state of rest is a consequence of Love's perfect dominion over Strife. In fact, whereas Empedocles makes it quite clear that Strife is the principle of struggle and movement (Νεῖκος starts motion by separating the Sphairos), Love results in peace and rest. Indeed, although Love can also initiate and influence movement (for instance, of heterogeneous things that come together in mixture), D. O'Brien has cogently demonstrated that 'the movement which Love initiates is movement towards rest, and when Love is successful there is no longer any movement'.[56] Thus, when she forms the Sphairos, Love achieves a universe of absolute rest.

Second, since, as we can appreciate, the Sphairos' qualities that make up its perfect shape are the result of the work of Love, it is to be assumed that the property of being one (or oneness) is also a sign of perfection in contrast to Strife's multiplicity. The quality of solitude, stressed in B 27.3 (= EMP D 89.3 Laks-Most) and B 28.2 (= EMP D 90.2 Laks-Most) by the word μονίῃι, might emphasize the notion of oneness[57] and indirectly relate to the idea that Love has made the elements into a one, unique, whole being. However, the meaning of μονίη is debated.[58] The word can derive from μένειν, indicating that the Sphairos is at rest, or it can stem from μόνος and so defines the Sphairos as alone.[59] Wright is surely correct when emphasizing that 'the unusual word was probably deliberately chosen for its ambiguity', which nonetheless displays that Love is in charge, as the concepts of both one and rest can be associated with her.[60]

[56] O'Brien (1969: 103).

[57] Whereas this is generally taken as meaning that the Sphairos is an amorphous and perfect blend of the four elements, Sedley (2016) and Hladký (2017) argued in contrast that the Sphairos is not just a monolithic lump, but an organism (a 'superorganism' according to Sedley) composed of functioning parts.

[58] See the discussion in Guthrie (1965: 169 n.3); Bollack (1969: vol. 3 137); O'Brien (1969: 22–24), Wright (1995: 188); and Ferella (2019a: 72).

[59] Moreover, μονίη stemming from μόνος could also be described as Empedocles' hint at the Orphic Zeus-μοῦνος and Parmenides' *what-is*-μουνογενές: see Ferella (2019a).

[60] Wright (1995: 188).

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However, since the absence of movement in the Sphairos is pointed out, as we have already seen, through the verb ἐστήρικται at B 27.2 (= EMP D 89.2 Laks-Most), the option for μονίη stemming from μόνος seems to be preferable: alongside the notion of rest, Empedocles might have wanted to stress the fact that Love has now reduced multiplicity to one single thing.

Third, the close of both B 27 (= EMP D 89 Laks-Most) and B 28 (= EMP D 90 Laks-Most) emphasizes a further characteristic of the Sphairos, namely, its being blissful. This agrees with the conception of the Sphairos as Love's product, and in virtue of this it is to be assumed that blissfulness is conceived as a further sign of perfection. In this regard, it is worth noting that in B 17.24 (= EMP D 73.255 Laks-Most), Empedocles claims not only that Love is the principle whereby people think friendly thoughts and accomplish deeds of concordance, but for this reason, she is also called Joy: Γηθοσύνη.[61] Since this appellation is etymologically related to the word περιγηθέι, which in 28.2 (= EMP D 89.2 Laks-Most) expresses the Sphairos' emotional state, it follows that not only are certain emotions connected to Love's influence, but Love is the true source of joy.

To sum up, the fragments on the Sphairos construct an ideal of perfection, which is more specifically characterized as utter symmetry, therefore as a quintessential balance, physically represented by the spherical form. Moreover, the Sphairos' perfection also consists in rest, oneness and blissfulness. As we have seen, all these qualities are connected to the principle of Love and in fact, in B 27.2 (= EMP D 89.2 Laks-Most), Empedocles makes it clear that the Sphairos is riveted 'in the dense hiding place of Harmony'.[62] By displaying that the Sphairos arises by Love's influence, and indeed upon Strife's defeat, this line reveals that Love is the source of ideal perfection.

Strife's complete absence from the Sphairos not only causes this to be perfectly blended and so perfectly balanced throughout, but also endows it with perfect knowledge. As we will see more thoroughly in Chapter 6.3, according to Empedocles, the ability to know is strictly related to the blend of elements in the body. More precisely, the ability to know depends on the blood surrounding the heart and, in particular, its extremely symmetrical *krasis* of elements.[63] Indeed, the mixture of the four elements in blood is according to the ratio 1:1:1:1 and this makes it able to think and know best, as Theophrastus tells us.[64] As we can see, the blood's elemental ratio

[61] B 17.24 (= EMP D 73.255 Laks-Most): Γηθοσύνην καλέοντες ἐπώνυμον ἠδ' Ἀφροδίτην.
[62] As we have seen above, Harmonia, just like Aphrodite and Cypris, is another name for Φιλότης.
[63] See B 98 (= EMP D 190 Laks-Most) and B 105 (= EMP D 240 Laks-Most). [64] *Sens.* 10.

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reproduces, on a microcosmic level, the elemental ratio of the Sphairos, made out of the four elements in the same proportions.[65] By this standard, it is possible to think that, by virtue of this elemental ratio, the Sphairos is a cosmic mind and can produce thoughts and gain knowledge – like blood does on a minor scale.

Indeed, the notion of the Sphairos as a cosmic mind invites the reading that the One has outstanding knowing potential. However, an ancient reader of Empedocles, such as Aristotle, would have disagreed with this conclusion, believing rather that the Sphairos is, because of the lack of Strife in its elemental composition, a god that cannot genuinely know. In a passage of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle attributes to Empedocles the view that knowing occurs by like[66] and supports his claim by quoting B 109 (= EMP D 207 Laks-Most), a fragment in which, as we will see in more detail in Chapter 6.3.1, Empedocles states that each element (presumably in the object of knowledge) is known by its homologous principle (presumably in the knowing subject): fire is known by fire, air by air, water by water, earth by earth, Love by Love and Strife by Strife.[67] In a passage of *De Anima*, moreover, Aristotle reiterates his criticism of Empedocles' theory of knowledge and, again citing B 109 (= EMP D 207 Laks-Most), deduces that the Sphairos must be the least intelligent of all beings.[68] In fact, by focusing on Strife as a principle by which we know (portions of) the world (namely those that are made of Strife, in the same way that we know portions of the world made of fire by fire), Aristotle must conclude that the absence of Strife from the Sphairos' mixture makes the One incapable of attaining perfect knowledge.

As I will extensively discuss in Chapter 6.3, nevertheless, one of our most important sources for Empedocles' theories of perceiving, thinking and knowing, Theophrastus, makes it clear that the acquisition of knowledge according to Empedocles does not rest upon each single principle in the knowing agent that knows its homologous principle in the object of knowledge, so much as upon the fact that perception and understanding

[65] As we have seen in Section 4.1, according to B 17. 27 (= EMP D 73.258 Laks-Most), the four elements are all equal, thereby suggesting that none is greater in size than the others. Therefore, in the Sphairos their proportion is equal.

[66] *Metaph.* 1000b 5: ἡ δὲ γνῶσις τοῦ ὁμοίου τῷ ὁμοίῳ.

[67] γαίηι μὲν γὰρ γαῖαν ὀπώπαμεν, ὕδατι δ' ὕδωρ, / αἰθέρι δ' αἰθέρα δῖον, ἀτὰρ πυρὶ πῦρ ἀίδηλον, / στοργὴν δὲ στοργῆι, νεῖκος δέ τε νείκεϊ λυγρῶι.

[68] See Arist. *An.* 410b 5–8: 'Empedocles at any rate must conclude that his God is the least intelligent of all beings, for of him alone is it true that there is one thing, Strife, which he does not know, while there is nothing which mortal beings do not know, for there is nothing which does not enter into their composition'.

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rest above all upon the *krasis* of elements in the organs of perception and knowledge being symmetrical to epistemic inputs from the outside (from the objects of knowledge).[69] The more harmonious the elemental *kraseis* in body organs are, the more symmetrical they are with respect to external effluvia emanated by things in the world, the more the external epistemic inputs adapt to our organ of knowledge, giving us the possibility of knowing more and better. Thus, it is the symmetry between organs and objects of knowledge (more precisely, between the elemental blend within the body and the effluvia emanated by external things) that enables perception, thought and knowledge. This is the reason why, as we have seen above, the knowing organ in humans is blood around the heart. Its harmonious *krasis* makes pericardial blood apt to produce thoughts and gain knowledge to the highest degree.

Since not only are harmony and symmetry qualities associated with Love, but it is Love that forms harmonious and symmetrical mixtures, it follows that the ability to perceive, think and know is always related to Love's power. This invites the reading that Strife is an impediment to rather than a principle for knowing. Indeed, since Strife always works to impede the integral and well-ordered compounds of Love, an elemental mixture affected by Strife would lack the balance and symmetry that ensures rational thought and knowledge. Consequently, the Sphairos, whose composition lacks Strife and is for this specific reason utterly symmetrical (and therefore harmonious to the highest degree), must be, by virtue of this, also the most rational and wisest of all beings.

In conclusion, the divine nature of the Sphairos is conveyed through making it Empedocles' ideal of perfection, which is constructed around outstanding physical characteristics, such as utter balance and symmetry, and therefore sphericity, rest and oneness, as well as a blissful nature and exceptional epistemic ability. Because it embodies Empedocles' ideal of perfection, the Sphairos can be taken as the major god in his system. However, in contrast to the four principles and the two forces of Love and Strife, the Sphairos is a compound of elements – indeed, the perfect blend of the four elements. Its characteristic of being compounded means that its divine nature rests on the fact that it is a thorough blend. This makes

[69] Theophrastus talks about Empedocles' theories on perception and knowledge acquisition in *Sens.* 7–24. In *Sens.* 15, moreover, Theophrastus admits that in his theories on sensation, thinking and knowing, Empedocles is silent about the compositional likeness between the object and organ of perception/knowledge. Moreover, although Theophrastus introduces Empedocles as a likeness theorist, he recounts his views solely in terms of effluences being symmetrical and thus fitting into the elemental *krasis* of our organs. See also Sedley (1992: 27–31) and Kamtekar (2009: 217).

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the Sphairos not only the most beautiful form of the universe, as Hippolytus tells us, but also the form of 'compound' divinity at its perfect degree, to which, as I will argue below, all other forms of integrated beings – that is, above all, human beings – should approach.

4.4 Holy Mind

The non-anthropomorphic shape of the Sphairos and his having an outstanding knowing ability are closely associated with another divine entity in Empedocles' system: the Holy Mind. This is presented in fragment B 134 (= EMP D 93 Laks-Most), within a context that, according to our sources,[70] deals with the divine, τὸ θεῖον (*to theion*):

οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀνδρομέηι κεφαλῆι κατὰ γυῖα κέκασται,
οὐ μὲν ἀπαὶ νώτοιο δύο κλάδοι ἀίσσονται,
οὐ πόδες, οὐ θοὰ γοῦν(α), οὐ μήδεα λαχνήεντα,
ἀλλὰ φρὴν ἱερὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος ἔπλετο μοῦνον,
φροντίσι κόσμον ἅπαντα καταΐσσουσα θοῆισιν. 5

For his limbs are not furnished with the head of a man either,
from his back two branches do not shoot forth,
no feet, no swift knees, no shaggy organs,
but he is nothing but mind, holy and vast,[71]
darting forth across the whole cosmos by swift thoughts. 5

As we can see, the first three lines of the fragment are nearly identical to the first lines of B 29 (= EMP D 92 Laks-Most), although B 134.5–6 (= EMP D 93.5–6 Laks-Most) presents the divine as a holy and vast mind, whose swift thoughts move across the whole cosmos. Analogously, as mentioned above, the Sphairos displays, to a macrocosmic scale, the same elemental ratio of the human mind and can therefore be said to be, by virtue of this, a vast, cosmic mind.

On the basis of these similarities, can we conclude that the Holy Mind and the Sphairos are one and the same form of the divine and of the universe in Empedocles' physical system? Scholars are divided on this issue. For instance, Guthrie pointed out that the indication of the Holy Mind darting its thoughts across the cosmos constitutes an objection to this identification. According to Guthrie, 'the Sphere exists only at a certain stage of the cycle' and 'during its perfection there is no cosmos in the

[70] Ammon. *De Interpr*. CIAG 4.5, 249.1–11 and Tzetz. *Chil*. 7.143, 522–23 Kiessling, who also attests that B 134 (= EMP D 93 Laks-Most) comes from the third book of *On Nature*.
[71] This translation of ἀθέσφατος is according to Picot (2012: 21–23).

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ordinary sense'.[72] Guthrie seems to refer the word κόσμον in B 134.5 (= EMP D 93.5 Laks-Most) to our world, which in Empedocles' cosmic cycle is opposed to the Sphairos (being Many instead of One). However, his interpretation encounters some obstacles when compared to other occurrences of the term κόσμος in the Empedoclean fragments. In fact, these rather indicate that κόσμος means a well-integrated, harmonious form that is one and united with respect to its parts,[73] whereas in PStrasb. a(i) 6 (= EMP D 73.267 Laks-Most) κόσμος seems to coincide with the Sphairos.[74]

Nevertheless, other scholars have noted that the thinking activity of the Holy Mind, described by Empedocles as swift thoughts moving across the cosmos, contrasts with the fact that the Sphairos is at rest. In contrast, it can be argued that the verb καταΐσσουσα is here used figuratively to conceptualize the quick and pervasive production of thoughts by the Holy Mind. This could be an indication that the verb does not denote a real motion, least of all the spatial movement Empedocles denies the Sphairos. Rather, it could be argued that Empedocles, as elsewhere, used vivid and concrete images to illustrate an abstract and more elusive mental faculty. In this sense, 'darting forth across the whole cosmos by swift thoughts' could express the concept of a deity whose thoughts can extremely rapidly concern every aspect of what exists and, in this sense, they can be said to 'dart and reach' every existing things in the cosmos. Moreover, by assuming that the Holy Mind coincides with the Sphairos and therefore with the whole universe, thoughts reaching what exists in all its parts could denote an entity that is entirely and ubiquitously perceptive and knowing, just like the 'one god' of Xenophanes, who 'sees as a whole, thinks as a whole and hears as a whole'.[75]

Returning to a characteristic of the Holy Mind I have mentioned at the outset of this section, our sources for B 134 (= EMP D 93 Laks-Most) refer it to Empedocles' representation of the divine in general. Specifically, Ammonius[76] told us that Empedocles, when speaking of the Holy Mind, was referring 'primarily to Apollo who was the immediately relevant topic of his discourse' but, in the same way, he was also referring 'to the totality

[72] Guthrie (1965: 258–59). [73] See, e.g., B 26.5 (= EMP D 77b.5 Laks-Most).

[74] It is worth noting that Rangos (2012: 323) interprets the activity of the Holy Mind '*as an extroverted mental and emotional care* . . . which implies the existence of an entire ordered structure (κόσμος ἅπας) as something *distinct* from the holy mind itself' (Rangos' emphasis). On the term κόσμος in B 134 (= EMP D 93 Laks-Most) indicating the Sphairos, see Hladký (2017: 18).

[75] DK 21 B 24 (= XEN D 17 Laks-Most): οὖλος ὁρᾶι, οὖλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὖλος δέ τ' ἀκούει.

[76] *De Interpr*. CIAG 4.5, 249.1–11.

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of the divine in general'. Similarly, Tzetzes reported that Empedocles was showing through this fragment 'what the substance of a god is'.[77] This specification may suggest the notion that being divine is straightforwardly connected to being a Holy Mind, resulting in the assumption that any god, indeed any divine entity, in Empedocles' system is a Holy Mind.[78]

In contrast, I understand our sources' indication that the description of the Holy Mind shows the substance of a god as a further reference to the assimilation between the Holy Mind and the Sphairos. Specifically, as we have seen in the previous section, the Sphairos is both the ideal form of a compounded being and, as such, the god *par excellence* in Empedocles' system. From this it can be inferred that it also is the prototype and the ideal of a perfection to which all compounded divine entities aspire. By assuming that the Sphairos and the Holy Mind coincide, the indication that the Holy Mind represents the very substance of godhood for Empedocles might refer to the fact that it represents the ideal and model upon which he conceptualized the divine nature of integrated beings. Thus, while the Sphairos/Holy Mind's godhood principally coincides with perfect shape (perfect wholeness, perfect balance and perfect beauty), perfect knowledge and perfect blissfulness – hence, complete association with Love against Strife – so too does the divine nature for all integrated beings who populate the cosmos. Their godhood must therefore entail that they are well-ordered and harmonious, wise and utterly happy because of their association with Love, as we will now see.

4.5 Long-Lived Gods

Turning to the next and last of those entities that Empedocles explicitly refers to as gods in his fragments, long-lived gods, 'the greatest in honour', are listed by Empedocles, together with plants, animals and human beings, among the myriad mortal forms that arise from the combination of the four elements. Let us consider B 21.7–12 (= EMP D 77a.7–12 Laks-Most):[79]

ἐν δὲ Κότῳ διάμορφα καὶ ἄνδιχα πάντα πέλονται,
σὺν δ' ἔβη ἐν Φιλότητι καὶ ἀλλήλοισι ποθεῖται.
ἐκ τούτων γὰρ πάνθ' ὅσα τ' ἦν ὅσα τ' ἔστι καὶ ἔσται,
δένδρεά τ' ἐβλάστησε καὶ ἀνέρες ἠδὲ γυναῖκες, 10

[77] *Chil.* 7.143, 522–23 Kiessling.
[78] As argued by Rangos (2012: 325), according to whom long-lived gods were 'essentially minds whose caring thoughts extended to the entire structured universe'.
[79] See PStrasb. a(1) 9–a(ii) 1–2 (= EMP D 73. 270–72 Laks-Most) and B 23.6–8 (= EMP D 60.6–8 Laks-Most).

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θῆρές τ' οἰωνοί τε καὶ ὑδατοθρέμμονες ἰχθῦς,
καί τε θεοὶ δολιχαίωνες τιμῇσι φέριστοι.

Under Rancour, they are all distinct in form and are separated,
and they come together in Love and are desired by each other.
For out of these all things that were, that are and that will be in the future,
have sprung: trees and men and women,
and beasts and birds and water-nourished fish,
and long-lived gods, the greatest in honours.

Through these lines, Empedocles tells us that his physical system envisages the existence of some gods who are made out of the four elements, as is every other living being. The quality 'long-lived' attributed to these gods appears as a novel notion in contrast to the traditional representation of gods being *ambrotoi*, immortal. It can be explained, however, with reference to Empedocles' ontology, according to which, what is made out of compounded elements must abide by the cosmic cycle; hence, long-lived gods, since they are integrated beings, were born at some point in the history of the world and will also ultimately die, just like any other compounds, when things come together to be just one whole being, the Sphairos.

In the introduction to this chapter, I listed diverse divine entities under the definition of long-lived gods. These include (traditional) gods recalled as a group or individually mentioned by the names of Ares, Kydoimos, Zeus, Kronos and Poseidon; the Muse and more specifically Calliope; deities who guide the souls in the underworld, among whom we may number Pythagoras; a goddess in the underworld who dresses souls with new bodies; guilty and exiled gods and thus Empedocles' himself; and, finally, those who escape rebirths. The heterogeneous character of this group of gods implies that, on my interpretation, any god that is not a principle (that is, either one of the four elements or Love and Strife) can be taken as a long-lived god.[80]

Because they are mortal deities, made of the four elements just like any other living being, long-lived gods belong on the scale of rational beings that also includes plants, animals and humans. In this respect, it should be safe to argue that gods, probably because they are the most rational beings, represent the top of the scale, whose bottom is occupied by plants, with

[80] Even the Sphairos can be regarded as a long-lived god, as it lives as long as Love has complete dominion of the elements, but perishes once Strife regains power, separates the elements and forms our cosmos (see Chapter 7.1). However, as the present analysis concentrates on long-lived gods in our world, it does not include the Sphairos.

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animals and human beings in between. Furthermore, although gods share with animals and plants an analogous elemental structure and, ultimately, even mortal nature, their being long-lived refers to the fact that they are among the most stable elemental structures of the cosmos, while human beings are swift to die (B 2.4 [= EMP D 42.4 Laks-Most]), have just a small portion of life (B 2.3 [= EMP D 42.3 Laks-Most]) and are many-times-dying (B 113.2 [= EMP D 5.2 Laks-Most]). Thus, while the mortal nature of humans consists in them being frail and having a fragmented existence, it is assumed that gods have a firm and unbroken nature and are, therefore, able to live much longer than any other living beings.

It is worth observing that the adjective δολιχαίωνες, which characterizes the gods 'greatest in honour', recalls the definition of δαίμονες as οἵτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο, 'gods who have won long-lasting life' in B 115.5 (= EMP D 10.5 Laks-Most). I agree with Sedley that θεοὶ δολιχαίωνες include the δαίμονες with a share in long life.[81] Consequently, all those who escape rebirths and become gods *become long-lasting or long-lived gods*. As B 146–47 (= EMP D 39 and 40 Laks-Most) tells us, their godhood primarily consists in them 'having no parts in human sorrows' and being 'indestructible'; additionally they partake in divine feasts and banquets. We have already come upon the characteristic of having a blissful existence with respect to the nature of the Sphairos, which 'rejoices' in its solitude. Moreover, this quality of the Sphairos has been linked to the power of Love and the defeat of Strife. In a more general sense, we can say that divine nature and blissfulness are associated with Love. In parallel, mortality and misery are connected to Strife.

Furthermore, long-lived gods do not have a fragmented existence that is subjected to many deaths; rather, they have just one death (which may coincide with the end of the world and which in any case makes their lives extremely long), unless they abide by Strife and commit a crime. In that case, they are condemned to become ordinary mortals and so to die and be born again many times. This particular aspect once more relates the divine nature of this group of gods to Love in opposition to Strife. Analogously, as we have seen, the dialectic of divine nature in Empedocles' system that can be reconstructed through the demonological fragments is based upon the antithesis between a blissful state (and abode) that the guilty δαίμονες lose

[81] Sedley (2007: 50). See already Barnes (1982: 499): 'the *daimones* and the long-lived gods . . . have much in common: parsimony suggests their identification'. See also Inwood (2001: 54) and Curd (2005: 143). *Contra* Primavesi (2013: 708–9), who identifies the long-lived gods with both the Sphairos and the four elements.

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and the miserable place and life they are compelled to embrace in our world because of their trust in Strife. This conclusion links the godhood of this group to an aspect of ethical import: their being pure and behaving justly. We already know that gods can lose their divine nature because of certain crimes they commit at some point in their life. Moreover, in Chapter 6.4 we will see that Pausanias, in order to escape rebirths and become a god, must learn to 'fast from evil', hence to behave justly, purifying himself from Strife and its works. This is a further sign that, with relation to integrated beings, like human beings, divinity is linked to purity and therefore to Love, as much as mortality is connected with 'pollution', crime and Strife.

4.6 Conclusions

The investigation put forward in this chapter has shown that, in Empedocles' system, the divine nature of the elements is different from the divine nature of Love and Strife, just as this is different from the divine nature of the Sphairos and the Holy Mind, or from that of long-lived gods, greatest in honours. However, at least with regard to compounds and integrated beings, like living beings, we can confidently say that their divine nature presents some common traits that closely recall, indeed are modelled upon, the characteristics of the Sphairos, the prototype of all integrated entities and the ideal of godhood. Thus, as the Sphairos shows, being divine for integrated individuals, such as men and women, is associated with Love in contrast to Strife, indeed it is essentially connected with the absence of Strife. Therefore, integrated individuals' godhood is linked with blissfulness in contrast to misery, purity in contrast to pollution, stability (continuity) in contrast to fragmentation, symmetry in contrast to unbalance and perfect knowledge in contrast to the ignorance of ordinary mortals who have a short lifespan and know just what they happen to experience. In other words, what is promised to those who escape rebirths and become gods is a long and stable life consisting of quintessential happiness and perfect knowledge.

In conclusion, this chapter completes, along with Chapter 3, the definition of key terms and concepts in Empedocles' thought that are significant for a more fully comprehensive account of his doctrine of rebirth. While the previous chapter concentrated on the notion of δαίμων, the focus here is on further terms translating the Empedoclean notion of divinity. Such an analysis has proven important not only because it has clarified a controversial issue of Empedocles studies – namely, what can be

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considered as divine in his physical system and why – but also because it lays the necessary groundwork for the major argument of this book, by enabling us to define in more detail Empedocles' belief in rebirth. This groundwork will finally allow me to work out, beginning with the next chapter, the ways in which this belief can be reconciled with the principles and theories of his natural philosophy.

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