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BRILL

Empedocles the Wandering *Daimōn* and Trusting in Mad Strife

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Abstract

This article argues that Empedocles' trust in Strife (DK31 B115.14 = LM22 D10.14) is not, as the prevailing interpretation has it, only a past misjudgement and failure. Rather, trust in Strife still, and to his own lament, infects Empedocles' mind and informs his life. This detail then offers a fresh perspective on Empedocles' self-conception and on how, through the *daimōn*'s cosmic peregrinations, Empedocles raises and pursues questions of agency and responsibility. Furthermore, it sheds light on Empedocles' understanding of his own ethical standing: common assumptions to the contrary notwithstanding, he does not see himself as an unqualifiedly successful embodiment of his own ideals.

Keywords

Empedocles – *daimōn* – Strife – transmigration – madness – agency

1 Introduction

As he concludes his account of crime and transmigratory punishment among divine beings, Empedocles identifies himself as a daimonic exile 'trusting in mad Strife' (DK31 B115.13–14 = LM22 D10.13–14).¹ This remark will turn out to be

1 References are to the editions of Diels-Kranz (DK) and Laks-Most (LM). The letters 'A' or 'B' followed by a number refer to the corresponding text in Sections 'A' or 'B' respectively of Chapter 31 of DK; the letters 'D' or 'R' followed by a number refer to the corresponding text

more puzzling and challenging than scholars recognise. By contrast with the prevailing interpretation, I will argue that this trust does not represent merely a *past* misjudgement or failure that led Empedocles down the path of crime and exile but no longer exercises any hold on his mind. Instead, the text indicates that Empedocles is *still now* trusting in mad Strife, that this trust at least to some degree governs his cosmic peregrinations and—to his own lament—still infects his present state of mind, even if less blindingly and virulently than before.

This point will lead us into a broader examination of questions of self-conception, agency and responsibility in Empedocles' thought, and of how Empedocles understands the nature and extent of his own standing and achievements. Empedocles both locates his agency with the transmigrating *daimōn* and, at the same time, renders the *daimōn*'s agency subject to the (sometimes overwhelming) external influences of the divine powers that govern his cosmic journey and to the succession of alien bodies that constitute his uncomfortable way stations along this journey. On the one hand, the *daimōn* will emerge as a deliberate and volitional agent and as a continuing (though also changing) entity across successive incarnations. On the other hand, the *daimōn*'s self-government is constrained and complicated by the ongoing influence of mad Strife and by the hampering psychological and cognitive effects of his different human, animal and vegetal hosts. As he travels from one life-form to the next—across different species and genders—the *daimōn* experiences substantially different psychological lives, framed by different impulses, capacities and limitations.² An important point, however, will be that, even in his current incarnation, Empedocles does not imagine himself to be now a perfect manifestation of his own ethical ideals: his mind is not altogether free of Strife's pernicious influence. For the exiled *daimōn*, I will argue, trust in Strife represents an unwelcome attachment that the *daimōn* must struggle to resist and can resist with only partial and varying degrees of success. To some extent, the influence of Strife's madness remains an inescapable fact of the exile's unhappy existence.³

in Sections 'D' or 'R' respectively of Chapter 22 of LM. To avoid cumbersome reduplications, subsequent references to B115 = D10 will be to 'B115' alone.

- 2 I use the masculine pronoun when referring to the *daimōn*, in keeping with Empedocles' practice in B115. Empedocles is explicit, though, that he has been incarnated as both male and female (B17 = D13).
- 3 It remains controversial whether our material from Empedocles derives from one poem or two, but my discussion will not turn on this issue (with the exception of one interpretive possibility raised tentatively: text with n. 66 below). The Strasbourg papyrus, published in 1999, undermined attempts (that had already been subjected to powerful critiques: Kahn 1960;

2 The Wandering *Daimōn*: (Still Now) Trusting in Mad Strife

In B115, Empedocles recounts a system of crime and punishment among the *daimones* and his own subsequent exile:

ἔστιν ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν, 1
 αἰδίον, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὄρκοις·
 εὐτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φό(ν)ω φίλα γυῖα μίγη
 ... ὅς κ' ἐπίορκον ἀμαρτήσας ἐπομόσση,
 δαίμονες οἴτε μακραιῶνος λελάχασι βίοιο, 5
 τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
 φύμενο(ν) παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἶδεα θνητῶν
 ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
 αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
 πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὐδὰς ἀπέπτυσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς 10
 ἡελίου φαέθοντος, ὃ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·
 ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.
 τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἶμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
 Νεῖκεῖ μαινομένῳ πίσυνος... (B115)

There is an oracle of necessity, an ancient decree of the gods, 1
 Everlasting, sealed with broad oaths:
 Whenever one in his crimes stains his own limbs with blood⁴ ...
 Committing misdeeds, swears falsely—
 The *daimones* who have obtained as their lot a long life— 5
 He is to wander for thrice ten thousand seasons away
 from the blessed ones,
 Growing to be⁵ all sorts of forms of mortal things through time,
 Interchanging the painful paths of life.
 For the force of air drives him into the sea,

Osborne 1987*b*) to divorce Empedocles' natural philosophy from his religion and eschatology. In particular, ensemble *d* juxtaposes cosmological and daimonological themes. There is now general agreement that these aspects of Empedocles' thought were somehow unified. For a succinct discussion of this development, see Trépanier 2017, 132–3.

4 Noncommittally following the common emendation φόνω; see Santamaría 2022, 300–2. For the retention of φόβω, see Wright 1995, 272–3; Gagné 2006; Picot 2007.

5 Noncommittally reading φύμενον, as referring back to τις (3) and agreeing with μεταλλάσσοντα (8); see Wright 1995, 274, who plausibly argues that, with the plural φουμένους, Hippolytus is adapting the line to his commentary (*Refutation of All Heresies (Haer.)* 7.29.17). Some editors, though, retain the plural, as agreeing with δαίμονες (5), e.g. LM22 D10.

And the sea spits him out onto the surface of the earth,
 and the earth into the beams 10
 Of the shining sun, and it throws him into the eddies of air;
 And one receives him from another, but all hate him.
 Of them I too am now one, an exile from the gods and a wanderer,
 Trusting in mad Strife.⁶

Other fragments flesh out Empedocles' transmigratory career a little further. His sojourns as different life-forms encompass land, sea and air animals, including both human genders and plants (B117 = D13). Again, Empedocles laments crimes that he committed as some beast (*Strasb. d* 5–6 = B139 = D34, D76.5–6) and, when he refers to *daimones* who become lions among beasts and laurels among trees (B127 = D36), it is a fair guess that he is similarly alluding to his own previous incarnations.

The passage concludes with the stunning revelation that the speaker is himself one of the exiled and transmigrating *daimones*, and this revelation is capped off with his description of himself as 'trusting in mad Strife.'⁷ According to a widely held interpretation commonly taken for granted, Empedocles' trust in Strife is a thing of the past. It constitutes the ethical misjudgement and failure that got the *daimōn* into trouble in the first place, but the *daimōn* no longer places trust in Strife. Thus, for example, Gheerbrant (2017) discusses B115.13–14 as 'a retrospective analysis' of the past influence that once led Empedocles

6 Translations of Empedocles generally follow Inwood 2001 or LM, with modifications.

7 It is well to remember that the standard text of B115 followed above is a composite of citations from several sources, sometimes interspersed with commentary; see e.g. Wright 1995, 136–9. We cannot be certain that no other lines intervened. The key point for us, however, is that both Hippolytus (*Haer.* 7.29.14–23) and Plutarch (*On Exile (Exil.)* 607c–d) give us to understand that the speaker is one of the transmigrating exiles. Even in Plutarch, who cites B115.1–3–5–6–13 with an alternative reading of B115.13^a ('this way I myself am now going', see n. 19 below), the implication is that Empedocles is now embarked on the journey of these exiled *daimones* (5–6) and is therefore one of them. Rashed 2018, 230–1 inserts B113 = D5 between lines 12 and 13 of B115, so that 'of them' (τῶν, B115.13) now has 'mortal humans' (θνητῶν ... ἀνθρώπων, B113.2 = D5.2) as its antecedent. Not much motivates this placement (Rashed overplays the rhetorical difficulty of moving from B115.12 directly to B115.13). Even on Rashed's text, however, Empedocles still identifies himself as one of the *daimones*: this would now be the implicit content of the boast referred to in B113.1 = D5.1. Rashed 2018, 231, 241 rightly continues to assume this identification. The hypothesis of Picot 2022, 535–664, that the *daimones* are not suffering exiles but remnants of the wrongdoer's corpse that merely accompany successive earthly lives, makes it difficult to see why those lives should count as 'reincarnations' of the wrongdoer (cf. 621) or punishments for him (624). I accept Plutarch's overt testimony that the ones undergoing punishment are *daimones* who committed wrongs (*On Isis and Osiris* 361c, before citing B115.9–12); contrast Picot 2022, 625–6.

to perpetrate his crimes.⁸ The translation of Laks and Most captures well the common attitude: ‘Of them, I too am now one, an exile from the divine and a wanderer, *I who relied* on insane Strife.’⁹

I submit that, while the *daimōn* does indeed regret and lament his trust in Strife, he does not imagine that he is now altogether free of this trust.¹⁰ To begin with, *pisunos* (‘trusting’, ‘relying’) is not a participle, as it is often treated, but an adjective. The term expresses the trust that agents (mortal or divine) place in others or in their own attributes, as in Zeus’ trust in his thunder and lightning (Hesiod, *Theogony* (*Th.*) 506). In a distinctive usage, it expresses the trust of mortals in gods and, in particular, how those mortals act in concert with divine guidance or influence. In the *Iliad*, it is their trust in Zeus’ omens that underpins Hector’s relentless attack against the Greeks, and Priam’s perilous mission to Achilles (πίσυνος Δί, *Iliad* (*Il.*) 9.238; τῷ πίσυνος, *Il.* 24.295, 313).

8 Gheerbrant 2017, 683–7, 697; similarly, Santamaría 2022, 299–300, 308.

9 D10 (my emphases); cf. similarly e.g. DK31 (*ad loc.*): ‘... da ich rasendem Streite vertraute’; Wright 1995, 270 (also KRS 1983, 315): ‘... having put my trust in raving strife’; Rowett 2016, 100 n. 35: ‘... because I placed my trust ...’; Gheerbrant 2017, 798: ‘... parce que j’ai eu foi en la Discorde furieuse’; Casella 2019, 273: ‘per avere confidato ...’; Palmer 2020, 67–8: ‘having trusted ...’; Santamaría 2022, 299: ‘I who relied ...’. Examples can be multiplied.

10 O’Brien 2001, 131–4 similarly sees the *daimōn*’s trust in Strife as a pollution that will stay with him during his exile. Likewise, Rashed 2001, 252 raises in passing the possibility (crediting the idea to independent suggestions from O’Brien and Picot) that the *daimōn* may be lucid enough to recognise Strife’s tormenting influence and yet be unable to stop it. They do not develop this reading—or pursue its implications for Empedocles’ self-conception and reflections on agency and responsibility—in the ways attempted below. As examples of actions that the exiled *daimōn* takes ‘in concert with Strife’ and as its ‘faithful associate’, O’Brien mentions ‘the dreadful deeds of murder and cannibalism to which he is now all unwittingly addicted’ (132, 134). But these are surely actions that Empedocles, in his current incarnation, does successfully resist (B136–B137 = D28–D29). Also, it is difficult to take it, with O’Brien, that Empedocles’ trust in Strife originally stems from whatever transgression is described in B115.3–4, since some alignment with Strife should be a precondition for that transgression, even if an increased alignment with Strife results from it. Kingsley 2003, 430–3 also interprets Empedocles’ trust in Strife as current. But, in keeping with his idiosyncratic denial that Empedocles prefers Love over Strife (415–17), Kingsley takes it that Empedocles simply chooses to trust in Strife. Empedocles, however, has a strongly pejorative view of Strife (as noted below). Bollack 2003, 69 also seems to render the *daimōn*’s trust a deliberate policy when he suggests that the *daimōn* made himself Strife’s servant in order to overcome it (‘[I]e nouvel Oreste s’est fait le serviteur du Mal pour en venir à bout’). It remains mysterious, however, how and why the *daimōn* might ‘overcome’ Strife *by* trusting in it. As we shall see, the more we trust in Strife, the madder we become, and the further we stray from our purification. This is why, also within the context of our exile, Empedocles exhorts us to distance ourselves from Strife as much as possible. Indeed, Empedocles would prefer his own annihilation to shedding blood (*Strasb. d* 5–6 = B139 = D34, D76.5–6): he is not a *willing* servant of Strife.

In later archaic and early classical poetry, we also find it expressing such trust where no specific gods are named, as when Pindar's Jason, 'trusting in a god' (whose identity remains vague), undertakes his heroic task (θεῶ πίσινος εἶχετ' ἔργου, *Pythian Odes* (*P*) 4.232), or when Aeschylus' chorus say that, 'trusting in gods', they prayed to them to protect Thebes against the besieging army (θεοῖς πίσινος, *Seven against Thebes* (*Th.*) 212).¹¹ The term *pisunos* in no way suggests that Empedocles' trust in Strife is only a past state of affairs.

It may be objected that, even if the term *pisunos* does not itself direct us backwards, a remark on moral error within an account of exile would naturally refer to the past event that brought about this exile. One could, furthermore, square this intuition with our text by taking it that we are meant to supply a (causal) participle after *pisunos*—the present participle ὄν is often omitted—and construe it as expressing a state antecedent to the main verb ('... since I was trusting ...').¹²

An initial worry about this line of thought is that Empedocles would be rendering the proper construal of a key point—*ex hypothesi*, that his trust in Strife is only a thing of the past—dependent on a specific interpretive reaction from his audience that is at most possible but unobvious: supplying an implicit participle and construing its action as antecedent. This worry is exacerbated by a second one. Even if we posited an implicit ὄν (and nothing would warrant supplying some particular and less generic supplement), our default presumption, in the absence of linguistic markers of anteriority or other manifest indications to the contrary, would be that the participle conveys action coincident with that of the main verb.¹³ Put differently, even if we posited an

11 For further philological discussion of the adjective, see O'Brien 2001, 132; Gheerbrant 2017, 683–7.

12 I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this point. On omissions of ὄν, see Smyth 1984, § 2116–19. This objection, like my interpretation, takes the syntax of B115.13–14 as we have it. We of course cannot exclude demonstrably the possibility that some lost words following B115.14 restricted somehow the temporal scope of the *daimōn*'s trust in Strife. To hypothesise some such continuation, however, would be tendentious and purely speculative. Instructively, none of our sources give any such indication, and all that cite both lines treat B115.13–14^a as a complete syntactic unit (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.29.14–15; Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.8.1.19–20; Hierocles, *Commentary on the Golden Verses of the Pythagoreans* 24.2; Philoponus, *Commentaries on Aristotle's On Generation and Corruption* 266.4–5; *Commentaries on Aristotle's On the Soul* 73.32–3; *Commentaries on Aristotle's Physics* 24.20–1; *On the Creation of the World* 81.16–18; Asclepius, *Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics Books Alpha to Zeta* 197.20–1).

13 Cf. Smyth 1984, § 1872: the action expressed by a present participle is generally coincident and only rarely anterior or subsequent to that of the main verb. In his typical examples of present participles expressing anterior actions (§ 1872a1), some temporal marker signals

implicit participle, still nothing in the phraseology of these lines would direct us backwards.

These initial points raised in response to the objection are not trivial, but I do not claim that they are conclusive. Ultimately, the question is whether the immediate and broader context of B115.14 directs us to restrict Empedocles' statement to the *daimōn*'s past and his original transgression alone. A close consideration of this context points, I suggest, in a different direction. First, the words 'of them I too am now one' (νῦν εἰμι, B115.13^a) are emphatic. The shortly following expression, 'trusting in mad Strife', thus forms part of the description of a pointedly and painfully present condition, rather than merely a previous one. Second, we have the immediately preceding words: 'an exile from the gods and a wanderer' (φυγάς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης, B115.13^b). Here the two terms with which Empedocles describes himself warrant close attention. The first term—*phugas* ('exile', 'outcast')—indeed evokes (even if implicitly) the inception of the exile and, perhaps, the circumstances leading to it. But the second term—*alētēs* ('wanderer')—precisely extends our purview further, onto the subsequent experiences and conditions of the exile itself. It is apt, then, that 'wanderer' follows upon 'exile' or 'outcast'. Indeed, the two terms, so ordered, recapitulate the structure of Empedocles' preceding account in B115. The term *phugas* echoes the inception of the exile (B115.1–6), while *alētēs* captures the wanderings of which this exile then consisted (B115.6–12; note *alalēsthai* at the close of B115.6).¹⁴ Whether or not one accepts this last interpretive suggestion, by describing himself as a 'wanderer', Empedocles draws our attention to the ongoing peregrinations he had just described in the preceding lines. In this light, the progression 'an exile from the gods and a wanderer trusting in mad Strife' naturally invites us to reflect on trust in Strife as a condition that not only underlay Empedocles' initial expulsion from the gods but also then continued to frame his subsequent lives and experiences *as a wanderer*. By contrast, suppose that, as the objection has it, Empedocles expected his readers to supply a participle and construe its action as anterior, so as to restrict trust in Strife to a period siloed off from his ongoing wanderings. In that case, he would mislead his readers by placing 'trusting in mad Strife' immediately after his self-identification as, currently, a wanderer. I conclude that trust in Strife is an ongoing and current predicament for the exiled wanderer: it is a condition

this explicitly (πρόσθεν, τότε, μέχρι τούτου); cf. van Emde Boas *et al.* 2019, no. 52.5: '[a]n explicit indication of anteriority is usually present'.

14 For the observation that *alētēs* (B115.13) echoes *alalēsthai* (B115.6), cf. O'Brien 2001, 100 n. 42.

that not only led to his current troubled state but is also a continuing aspect of that state.

None of this is to deny that these lines, and indeed the fragment as a whole, also look backwards to Empedocles' initial crimes as a *daimōn* and the influence of Strife that first led him to err. Indeed, I do not think that this retrospection is of merely secondary importance in this passage. But this retrospection is conveyed only implicitly and indirectly. Explicitly and directly, Empedocles identifies himself here as an exiled and wandering *daimōn*, who is still now implicated in trusting in mad Strife.

It has long been recognised that Empedocles' account in B115 echoes Hesiod's description of the exile of perjured gods (*Th.* 782–806).¹⁵ This intertextual relation might also incline one towards the traditional interpretation. After all, Hesiod's divine perjurers commit their crime before their exile and do not appear to offend during it.¹⁶ Empedocles, however, creatively adapts the Hesiodic model. The complex, transmigratory journey of Empedocles' exiled *daimones* through the cosmos is not paralleled in Hesiod, whose exiled divinities are only said to spend one year lying down breathless and another nine in isolation from other gods (795–803). Most importantly, Empedocles' account of his time as a wild beast (*Strasb.* d 5–6 = B139 = D34, D76.5–6, cited below) confirms that he indeed departs from Hesiod on the point in question: incarnated as a beast, the exiled *daimōn* kills violently.¹⁷ It is perhaps unsurprising that Strife should continue to haunt the exiled *daimōn*, since its presence looms large in his peregrinations. While it would be a mistake to limit responsibility for the process of punishment and transmigration only to one of Empedocles' two principal cosmic powers, the hand of Strife is keenly felt in the exile's sufferings ('interchanging the painful paths of life', B115.8) and, in particular, in the hatred of all the different areas of the cosmos towards him ('but all hate him', B115.10–12). Empedocles thus locates himself within an ongoing process of punitive exile in which the influence of Strife is decidedly current.¹⁸ Against

15 DK31 (*ad loc.*); Wright 1995, 275; see further Most 2007, 284–92; Long 2019, 26; Santamaría 2022.

16 I thank an anonymous reviewer for this observation.

17 Empedocles also subverts Hesiod's daimonology. For Hesiod, invisible *daimones* dwell among humans unbeknownst to us, protect us and judge our crimes (*Works & Days* 121–6, 249–55). For Empedocles, we are, unbeknownst to ourselves, the *daimones* who are here, and the *daimōn* is himself a disgraced exile duly suffering for his own crimes. On the internalisation of the *daimōn* in the philosophical tradition (the *locus classicus* is *Timaeus* 90c), see Suárez de la Torre 2000.

18 For the point that Strife prominently presides over the *daimōn*'s incarnations, cf. Picot and Berg 2015: 384. Zatta 2020, 52 n. 1 calls for a present-tense translation of '*pisunos*' on this ground (without pursuing this point in the directions taken below).

this background, we could not plausibly dismiss Empedocles' description of himself as in the grip of this higher power as merely a thing of the past. As we saw, what Empedocles directly refers to just before he describes himself as trusting in mad Strife is his present state as an exiled cosmic wanderer.¹⁹

The upshot of the textual analysis undertaken in this section is that, according to B115.14, Empedocles is still now trusting in mad Strife. If this is right, then this line presents a major and largely overlooked puzzle for readers of Empedocles: why might Empedocles be still now trusting in mad Strife, and what might this trust amount to? If nothing else, I hope to have shown that this difficult interpretive challenge—effaced by the traditional, past-tense construal of B115.14—has a claim on our attention. In the next section, I develop and defend one way of meeting it.

3 Humanity and Madness: Why the *Daimōn* Might (Still Now) Be Trusting in Mad Strife

By comparison with the parallels we considered, Empedocles' use of the language of trust and reliance in B115 is jarring and paradoxical.²⁰ When Hecuba exhorts Priam to trust in and rely on Zeus' omen (*Il.* 24.295), or Aeschylus' chorus describe themselves as 'trusting in gods' (*Th.* 212), they are encouraging or expressing pious conduct. Such relationships of attachment to gods can also convey privileged and empowering divine favour, as when Pindar portrays the heroic Jason as 'trusting in a god' (*P.* 4.232). By contrast, Empedocles' statement

19 If we entertained the alternative text of B115.13^a found in Plutarch (τὴν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἶμι, *Exil.* 607d1), then we would probably have to translate: 'this way I myself am now going' (see Zuntz 1971, 198, though his purported parallels at n. 2 for this use of εἶμι have a gnomic flavour missing in B115.13^a), rather than: 'this way I myself will now go' (cf. LM22 *ad* D10 n. 1), which would conflict with the fact that the *daimōn* is already well advanced on his journey (B117 = D13; B146 = D39). On either translation, however, Plutarch's text coheres, *mutatis mutandis*, with my overall interpretation of B115.13–14 and is equally inhospitable to the prevailing, past-tense interpretation of B115.14.

20 Nor could we mitigate the paradox by establishing some strict division between the notions of trusting in something and relying on it (for example, by stipulating that relying is something one might do while remaining distrustful) and positing that, in his current state, the *daimōn* still somehow *relies* on Strife but, unlike previously, no longer falls into the error of putting his *trust* in it. As the parallels considered in the previous section and this one illustrate, the term '*pisunos*' and its cognates encompass the notions of trusting in something and relying on it, but not in a way that allows a surgical distinction between those two closely related ideas. It is not plausible that, with the word '*pisunos*', Empedocles could expect to signal some carefully circumscribed conception of the latter to the exclusion of the former.

stops us in our tracks and impels us to ask why and in what sense the exiled *daimōn* might now be trusting in and relying on mad Strife.²¹ The puzzling nature of Empedocles' statement about Strife is thrown into sharper relief by his own use of cognate language elsewhere, when he expresses his trust in and attachment to his Muse and calls on us to accept her 'assurances' (πιστώματα Μούσης, B4.2 = D47.2).²²

Indeed, Empedocles consistently describes Strife in pejorative terms: Strife is hateful (Νείκεος ἔχθει, B17.8 = D73.240; cf. B21.7 = D77.7: Κότῳ), destructive (οὐλόμενον, B17.19 = D73.250) and baleful (λυγρῶ, B109.3 = D207.3).²³ Likewise, Empedocles, as we shall see, indicates that associating oneself with Strife is

21 Osborne 1987a, 114, 118 plausibly remarks that Empedocles must rely on Strife since he is exiled in a realm governed predominantly by Strife. This observation of course leaves much to explore concerning the ramifications of the exile's subsequent unwelcome attachment to Strife. More problematically, Rashed 2001, 253 suggests that in B115.14 Empedocles may only express hope for some future benefit—left unspecified here—from Strife's activity; similarly but more specifically, Picot 2022, 646–7 proposes that Empedocles is merely indicating that he will owe to Strife his eventual release from exile. Rashed's and Picot's suggestions encounter several difficulties. First, this language of trust and reliance expresses elsewhere personal attachment to some god and indicates that one is acting in line with some divine influence or guidance (see the parallels discussed above, and B4 = D47 noted anon); it would be most misleading of Empedocles to use this charged language if he wished to express only hope in Strife or the prediction that Strife will administer the termination of his exile, without suggesting personal attachment of that sort (cf. a similar objection in O'Brien 2001, 132–3). Second, why should Empedocles choose this moment, when, *ex hypothesi*, he is expressing his hopes in Strife or his confidence in its direction of the process of exile, to describe it as *mad*? Third, one intuition that lies behind the traditional, past-tense interpretation of B115.14 is in itself compelling: within this account of crime and punishment, one would expect that Empedocles' climactic remarks about himself as an outcast and about trusting in 'mad Strife' relate somehow to the error that led him to his fateful transgression (B115.3–4) and consequently to his expulsion (for the connection between crimes and madness, cf. B145 = D30, discussed below); my reading of B115.13–14 in Section 2 accommodates this intuition, but Rashed's and Picot's proposals do not. Fourth, Empedocles' pronounced view of Strife as the cause of sufferings and evil makes it difficult to identify in B115.14 the expression of some hope in Strife, as O'Brien 2001, 133 objects to Rashed. Finally, Picot's more specific proposal also requires him to supply the reference to the prospect of release from exile, which nothing in the immediate context suggests. (There is, moreover, no evidence that Strife governs the process of exile alone; indeed, note the female eschatological agent of B126 = D19.)

22 It is the mark of base men to distrust (ἀπιστεῖν) what is authoritative (B4.1 = D47.1). Cf. also the cognate language of trust in B3.10, 13 = D44.10, 13; B71.1 = D61.1. Some scholars suggest that the calls for trust in B3 = D44 are addressed by the Muse to Empedocles: Hardie 2013, 237–9; Herrero de Jáuregui 2015, 38–41.

23 Also B115.14 ('mad': μαينوμένῳ); B20.4 = D73.305 ('evil quarrels': κακῆσι ... ἐρίδουσι); B27a = D91 ('unseemly battle': δῆρις ἀναίσχυρος); on this point, cf. Trépanier 2004, 166; Casella 2019, 270; Mackenzie 2020, 125.

a recipe for further miseries and woes. The *daimōn* is *lamenting* his trust in Strife. And yet, he recognises that he is still now putting his trust in Strife all the same. What begins to emerge here is that it is to his own regret and consternation that Empedocles trusts in mad Strife. We may begin to get a better sense of this phenomenon in Empedocles' life as a human being by comparing and contrasting his account of his time as a form of life dominated by Strife in a much more extreme and violent way. In the following lines, Empedocles recounts actions he took as some wild beast:

οἴμοι ὄτι οὐ πρόσθεν με διώλεσε νηλεές ἦμαρ,
πρὶν χηλαῖς σχέτλι' ἔργα βορᾶς πέρι μητίσασθαι.

Strasb. d 5–6 = B139 = D34, D76.5–6

Woe! That the pitiless day did not destroy me earlier,
Before I devised with my claws terrible deeds for the sake of food.²⁴

The *daimōn* is described as 'growing to be all sorts of forms of mortal things through time, interchanging the painful paths of life' (B115.7–8). This suggests that the *daimōn* successively morphs into or merges with different life-forms.²⁵ Empedocles' actions as a wild beast make clear that these physiological transformations are accompanied by psychological and cognitive and, therefore,

24 *Strasb. d 5–6* may present the correct text for B139, or the two couplets may constitute near repetition with a variance, with 'lips' (χηλαῖς) in the penultimate position in B139 instead of 'claws' (χηλαῖς) after πρὶν. LM print separate texts: D34 = B139, D76.5–6 = *Strasb. d 5–6*. I follow the view that, in these lines (as in B117 = D13), Empedocles relays his recollections of first-hand experiences in a past incarnation, and that he ascribes such recollections to the anonymous sage of B129 = D38 (see e.g. Inwood 2006 and the scholars cited in n. 69 below; the view is questioned e.g. in Long 2017, 14–15 and rejected in Picot 2022, 566–70), but my argument does not require this point. Recollections of past lives were ascribed to Pythagoras (e.g. Heraclides Ponticus *apud* Diogenes Laertius, 8.4–5), who is identified by Porphyry (*Life of Pythagoras* 30) as the sage of B129 = D38; see Pellò 2018.

25 Cf. Zatta 2020 55, 64, who labels this process 'metensomatosis'; note B117 = D13 ('I became ...'). On the *daimōn* as a long- but not ever-lasting entity, see Long 2017, 12–17; 2019, 22–7. On the *daimōn* as a material entity, see e.g. Curd 2005, 142–3; Trépanier 2014; 2017; 2020; 2021, 28–36. Santaniello 2021, 147 takes Aëtius 5.25.4 = A85 = R29 to exclude a material *daimōn* persisting across lives, but the reliability and meaning of this testimony are doubtful. As Mansfeld and Runia 2020, 2004 observe, if by saying in 5.25.4 that death is common to body and soul Aëtius meant that the latter dissolves upon death, this would contradict 4.7.1, where the Empedoclean soul is indestructible. Aëtius might mean only that the soul detaches from the body upon death. Anyway, Aëtius' remark is only his hazy inference (ὥστε κατὰ τοῦτο...) from the view that a human dies when the overall elemental structure of which he had consisted ceases to hold together.

ethical ones. When he was incarnated as a beast, Empedocles was constrained—psychologically and morally—far more radically than he is now. He was driven to tear flesh for the sake of food. Incarnated as a human, Empedocles has the clarity of mind to preach vegetarianism and a sufficient degree of self-control to practise it. Equally, however, even if human beings are not *as* contaminated by the psychological influence of Strife that so dominates the beast’s thoughts, experiences and behaviour, it does not follow that they are completely free of this influence, or that Empedocles was deluded enough to imagine that he was. Indeed, extant reflections in Empedocles on the human condition and especially on madness, both in general terms and in relation to his own predicament, point in the opposite direction. In this way, they offer supplementary evidence that helps explain why and how the *daimōn* is, lamentably, still now trusting in mad Strife.

In one passage, Empedocles catalogues opposing powers, both positive and negative, that, it seems, inescapably frame our lived experience:

Δῆρις θ' αἰματόεσσα καὶ Ἀρμονίη θεμερῶπις
 Καλλιστῶ τ' Αἰσχρὴ τε, Θόωσά τε Δηναίη τε,
 Νημερτής τ' ἔροεσσα μελάγκαρπός τ' Ἀσάφεια.

B122.2–4 = D21.2–4

And bloody Combat and calm-seeing Harmony,
 And Beauty and Ugliness and Quickness and Slowness,
 And lovely Unerringness and black-fruited Obscurity.

According to Plutarch, these lines made the point that, from the moment of their birth, humans are subjected to the contrary pull of competing impulses and drives, and that they may strive to align themselves with the better ones but must always expect and cannot simply eliminate the worse (*On Tranquillity of Mind* 474b–c = R49). Plutarch’s account fits with Empedocles’ apparent reference to the scene of our exile, elsewhere described as a ‘roofed cave’ (B120 = D16), as ‘an unpleasant place ... the meadow of Atē’, where murder and rage wander in darkness (B121 = D24).²⁶ It also fits with Empedocles’ remark that the ‘miserable race of mortals’ was born of ‘strifes and groans’ (ἔκ τ’ ἐρίδων ἔκ τε στοναχῶν, B124 = D17). This origin story is clearly meant to have consequences for the lives that mortal human beings, or *daimones* incarnated as human

26 See Wright 1995, 278–81 for relating B120–B122 = D16, D21, D24 to our own surroundings. On ‘Atē’, see below in this section, with n. 31. On the alignment of the pairs in B122 = D21 with Love and Strife, see Mackenzie 2021, 116–18.

beings, lead and the sufferings that they endure and create for themselves.²⁷ These passages are less than explicit, but they are naturally read as expressing a view of human life that is anyway altogether plausible: humans are inexorably subject to, among other things, thoughts and impulses of anger, violence and hostility; no human life can fail to be framed, to some degree, by such thoughts and impulses. Whatever else is involved in the personal attachment to and engagement with mad Strife of one who trusts in it, this condition must at least include, given Empedocles' conception of Love and Strife as psychologically influential powers, being liable to think, experience and perhaps sometimes even act in line with Strife's influence. In the light of his sober attitude to mortal and human existence, therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that Empedocles is aware—self-aware and painfully aware—that he is still now a creature who cannot but be liable to such lapses.²⁸

We may compare Empedocles' remark to Pausanias that he will learn, but only as far as mortal intelligence can reach (B2.8^b–9 = D42.8^b–9), and his own appeal to the Muse to relay to him only what is right for ephemeral mortal creatures to hear (B3.3–5 = D44.3–5). Their current incarnation in human form imposes on Empedocles and Pausanias certain cognitive limitations and—by the same token—ethical and psychological ones. Empedocles could strive to minimise Strife's hold and influence over his life and mind as much as possible but also acknowledge that as an exiled *daimōn*, tossed about through the cosmos from one mortal life-form to the next, he cannot eradicate it. In B115.13–14, Empedocles acknowledges that the *daimōn* still now cannot wholly extricate himself from the same psychological influence that so dominated his life as a wild beast.²⁹

27 '... or *daimones* incarnated as human beings': I leave open whether all human beings are exiled *daimones* or, as Sedley 2005, 345–7 argues, there is one race of *daimones*, who may be incarnated as human beings as punishment, and another of humans, who are always restricted to this life-form and do not transmigrate.

28 It may be suggested that Empedocles' verses themselves indeed do not reveal a Strife-free voice. His invectives against 'child-like fools' (νήπιοι, B11 = D51), for example, presumably do not reflect the 'loving thoughts' and 'deeds of union' mortals perform through Love (B17.23 = D73.254). I do not mean that Empedocles *intended* us to see his aggressive rhetoric as Strife's influence, but only that the self-awareness he expresses in B115.13–14 could indeed be motivated by honest self-reflection on thoughts and impulses to which he was prone.

29 The disposition of the *daimōn* fluctuates not only between different life-forms, but also with the cosmic waxing and waning of Love and Strife. Consider the peaceful beasts of B130 = D26 when 'benevolence blazed forth', and the Aphrodite-worshipping community of B128 = D25.

From human existence let us turn to madness. The category of madness lends itself well to worries about one's inability to regulate fully one's thoughts and actions. We can be painfully aware of the hold our madness sometimes has over us and yet be unable to dispel it. Aeschylus' Orestes diagnoses his creeping madness in terms that evoke some failure of self-governance: '... as if I am twisting reins with chariot horses outside the track, my wits carry me: they are hard to govern and I am overcome' (ὥσπερ ξὺν ἵπποις ἡνιοστροφῶ δρόμου | ἔξω-τέρω· φέρουσι γὰρ νικώμενον | φρένες δύσαρχτοι, *Libation Bearers* 1022–4). Such self-reflection about the madness to which one has succumbed or is liable to succumb, under some divine influence, is familiar from tragedy.³⁰ We may think also of Homer's Agamemnon who, now in a clear-headed state, regrets his behaviour under the irresistible influence of Atē (*Il.* 19.86–138).³¹ On the analysis defended in Section 2, B115.13–14 bears at least some comparison with such moments of pained, lucid self-awareness. After all, we need not imagine that Empedocles sometimes takes the view that one *should* trust in Strife, any more than Agamemnon ever maintained that one should consciously follow the promptings of Atē. It is after the event that a human being realises that they have (again) come under the maddening influence of a force like Atē. Empedocles identifies himself as a creature still constitutionally burdened with a propensity to think, feel or act in ways that—when he reflects from the perspective of clearheaded and lucid self-awareness—he recognises amount *de facto* to trusting in and relying on mad Strife, that is, to following the promptings of Strife and being in concert with it.

Now, in B115.14 it is not Empedocles who is described as 'mad', but Strife.³² It is extremely difficult, however, to imagine that the *daimōn* could be trusting in mad Strife without thereby becoming infected with that madness. Empedocles' account of his time as a wild beast gives us a disquieting snapshot of a form of life frenzied and maddened through Strife. More generally, it is by Love that we commit acts of Love and by Strife acts of Strife (we will return to this point below). It is a constant feature of these twin powers that they come to typify our mental states even as they influence our actions. When we act with Love, we not only perform loving acts but also have loving thoughts (B17.23 =

30 Cf. e.g. Sophocles, *Ajax* 447–53; Euripides, *Hippolytus* 239–48; *Heracles* 1149–62; *Bacchae* 1259–96, etc. On madness in Greek tragedy, see Goldhill 1986, 168–98; Padel 1995; Most 2013; Saïd 2013. Aristotle compares the akratic to those who are asleep, mad or drunk (*Nicomachean Ethics* 7.3 1147^a11–18).

31 On Homeric *atē* (indicating both 'delusion' recognised in retrospect and the 'ruin' this delusion caused), see Scodel 2008, 114–17; Cairns 2012; on Homeric *atē* as partial precursor to tragic madness, see Padel 1995, 167–96; Saïd 2013.

32 Gheerbrant 2017, 687 emphasises this point.

D73.254). By the same token, one could not trust in mad Strife, think in line with this trust or act on it, without thereby coming to share in its madness.³³

Another fragment confirms this point and shows the circular link between Strife's influence and bad conduct: 'And so, being frenzied by terrible crimes (*χαλεπήσιν ἀλύοντες κακότησιν*), you will never rest your heart from dreadful sufferings' (B145 = D30). Trust in Strife leads to criminal actions which themselves exacerbate our madness and so reduce our ability to resist Strife's influence. Importantly, none of this undermines the *daimōn*'s ability, when incarnated as a human, to push his psychological wellbeing and his relationship with Strife in the opposite direction, for example by avoiding killing and meat-eating through a deliberate exercise of his volition (e.g. B136 = D28). Again, however, this does not mean that the exiled *daimōn* can simply *eliminate* the influence of Strife's madness from his life and thought.

This leads us, finally, to our most revealing bit of supplementary evidence. Before he invokes his Muse, Empedocles makes a more general appeal: 'But, gods, turn aside their madness from my tongue (*τῶν μὲν μανίην ἀποτρέψατε γλώσσης*), and draw forth a pure stream from pious lips' (B3.1–2 = D44.1–2). Using the same language of madness that he uses of Strife (*Νείκει μαινομένω*, B115.14), Empedocles recognises that it is only through continuous divine aid, from whichever gods he calls on here, that he would have some confidence of keeping from his own mind and verses the maddening influence of Strife to which the accounts of others have fallen prey. That is, Empedocles recognises here that he is still now a creature who is liable to lapse into madness, into thinking and speaking in alignment with the influence of mad Strife.³⁴

In sum, Empedocles' reflections on what it is to be (incarnated as) a human or a beast, and on madness, point us in the same direction. Over the course of his wanderings and transformations, the *daimōn* continues to be beset by some measure of proclivity for falling or lapsing into the error of trusting in and relying on mad Strife.³⁵

33 Not to mention that it could in the first place be considered an act of madness to place one's trust in mad Strife.

34 I see no reason to read the distinctive appeal of B3.1–2 = D44.1–2 as anything less than a genuine call for divine aid. Even if one adopted some figurative interpretation, however, one would still need to account for this aspect of Empedocles' self-presentation in these lines.

35 Some scholars ascribe to Empedocles a positive claim for benign poetic *mania*, contrasted with Strife's madness: Guthrie 1965, 227–8; Hardie 2013, 231–2; Ustinova 2018, 335–7. This ascription would cohere with my discussion of Empedocles' extant remarks on madness, but it rests on a testimonium from Caelius Aurelianus (*On Chronic Diseases* 1.5 = A98; LM exclude this text), which is late, inexplicit (Caelius speaks only of 'Empedocles' followers':

4 Agency and Responsibility

The picture that emerged below raises difficult questions. Can we draw a clear line between the *daimōn*'s volition and deliberate actions and the sometimes irresistible external divine influences to which he is subjected? What makes the *daimōn* culpable for actions committed as an incarnated human—not to mention as a wild beast—through the maddening influence of Strife? Are they still in any meaningful sense his own actions? I do not hope to answer these questions here—if they can be answered—but only to probe them a little further.

In a series of important articles, Rowett argues that Empedocles ascribes to the *daimōn* unconstrained volition and, therefore, responsibility and culpability for his actions. Indeed, all the components of Empedocles' world, including not only the *daimōn* but also, for example, the four elements, are living beings, who act as voluntary agents.³⁶ Rowett sees the influence of Love and Strife as an impetus to display certain attitudes and act in particular ways that, nonetheless, leaves it up to the affected subject (be it an element, a *daimōn* or some other organism) to decide whether and how to respond through an unhindered exercise of volition.³⁷ Rowett offers a valuable corrective to mechanistic conceptions of Empedocles' world and her emphasis on the *daimōn*'s volition and culpability is well placed. But her approach to the problem of the *daimōn*'s agency and divine influence strikes me as too neat. I do not suggest that the *daimōn* is in fact simply forced or coerced by Strife, but Rowett's stance does not easily accommodate Empedocles' lament that he is still now, to his own regret, trusting in mad Strife. The *daimōn*, it seems, may experience an external stimulus so powerful that he ends up thinking in line with it or acting on it despite the better judgements of his lucid thoughts.³⁸

The problem of squaring divine influence with human agency looms large already in Homer, and one approach to this issue will be deeply suggestive for

Empedoclem sequentes) and likely coloured by the approach to *mania* in Plato's *Phaedrus*, which Caelius summarises beforehand.

36 Osborne 1987*b*; 2005; Rowett 2016. For volitional language used of the elements, see B21.8 = D77a.8 (ποθείται); B22.5 = D101.5 (ἔσττερκται); B35.6 = D75.6 (θέλημά); B62.6 = D157.6 (θέλον); cf. B110.10 = D257.10; and, on plants, D250a, c.

37 Esp. Rowett 2016, 93.

38 Rowett also argues that changes between the cosmic cycles of Love and Strife themselves result from voluntary agents freely changing their moral attitudes and that such changes are 'spontaneous in the way that intelligent behavior is spontaneous' (Osborne 2005, 295). The question here (Rowett answers affirmatively: see the items in n. 36 and 2020, 172–6) is whether this view can be squared with apparent evidence that these macrocosmic processes are cyclical in a recurrent and predictable manner: B17.13, 29 = D73.244, 260; B26.1, 12 = D77b.1, 12; A46 = D81; D84b.2; D85b; D86b.2; R8b.2; R13b.2; R12.

our understanding of Empedocles' wandering *daimōn*. Schmitt argues that, in Homer, 'humans are generally led or misled by the gods only to do those things for which they already have a predisposition in themselves.'³⁹ Divine influence ranges from persuasion to violent coercion, but, at the former end of the spectrum, the gods do not pick their mortal targets at random. Humans can thus bear responsibility for the sort of divine influence that they receive.⁴⁰ Even Agamemnon, who to a significant extent shifts the blame onto the divine actors who altered his state of mind (Zeus, Fate, the Erinyes and Atē, *Il.* 19.86–94), nonetheless recognises that it was he who succumbed to and acted under their influence and so wishes to make amends (137–8), so that he does not altogether renounce his earlier assumption of responsibility (*Il.* 9.115–20). Schmitt makes a good case that Agamemnon's own boastful arrogance was instrumental in rendering him susceptible in the first place to the divine influence that led him to wrong Achilles.⁴¹ The plainest illustration of Schmitt's model, however, is given by Pandarus, who ruins the truce between the Greeks and Trojans by shooting at Menelaus. This event was planned by Zeus and triggered by Athena, and yet Athena does not select just any Trojan. She looks specifically for Pandarus (*Il.* 4.86–8). She does not coerce him to shoot his arrow but, in disguise, plays on his own desire for wealth and fame (93–103).⁴² Thus, Homeric mortals, despite being influenced by the gods, are possessed of a genuine (if limited) form of freedom and so remain responsible and culpable for their actions.⁴³

We need not imagine that this is the only model of divine influence and human responsibility found in Homer.⁴⁴ But, at a minimum, Schmitt shows that it is at least one prominent Homeric model, and this model may shed

39 Schmitt 2013, 65. A similar insight comes into play in the reflections of Williams 2008, 28–33 on divine interventions and human agency in Homer: 'even when the gods do intervene, they do not standardly do so by simply making people do things' (29). Williams highlights, for example, cases where gods intervene by presenting a human with reasons (30–1, cf. 135), something nicely illustrated by the example of Pandarus noted below.

40 Schmitt 2013, 73.

41 Schmitt 2013, 77–80; cf. Cairns 2012, 21 on Agamemnon as 'prone to *atē*'.

42 Schmitt 2013, 74–6; cf. Scodel 2018, 10.

43 Schmitt 2013, 62.

44 Schmitt works too hard to iron out some creases. After all, Priam does suggest that the culpability for Helen's errors lies squarely with the gods (*Il.* 3.164), even if Helen herself demurs (*Il.* 3.180; 6.344); see Scodel 2008, 11, 116–17 and contrast Schmitt 2013, 81. Again, Schmitt 2013, 79–81 underplays how, at *Il.* 19.86–144 (unlike *Il.* 9.115–20), Agamemnon's plea that 'he was not in a normal state of mind' (Williams 2008, 54) shifts the blame onto the gods. For nuanced discussions of the ways in which, in *Iliad* 19, Agamemnon both disavows and assumes responsibility, see Williams 2008, 52–5; Scodel 2008, 117–24; Cairns 2012, 23–6, with n. 52.

some light on our exiled *daimōn*. My suggestion is not that Strife seeks out the *daimōn* in the same way as Athena sought out Pandarus. The crucial point for us is rather that it is indeed the *daimōn*'s own psychological and cognitive disposition—a disposition that alters significantly between different incarnations—that renders him susceptible or vulnerable to the stimuli of Love and Strife. When the *daimōn* proves unable to resist the influence of mad Strife, then this failing itself stems from his own character and shortcomings. The language of trust and reliance itself supports this point. Empedocles is not simply forced by an outside agent to follow the promptings of Strife. It is his own nature that leads him, to his own subsequent regret, to put his trust in Strife.

There is no strict division in Empedocles between free action and externally-determined, unfree action.⁴⁵ At every turn, the *daimōn* is confronted with the competing pressures of Love and Strife. He may recognise them at one time and miss them at another, or successfully resist some and succumb to others.⁴⁶ As Empedocles recounts (or, we would say, imagines) how the exiled *daimōn* travels through the cosmos from one life-form to another (a beast, a human, etc.), he is in part reflecting on how different life-forms may be possessed of different ethical dispositions, face different psychological pressures, and operate with different capacities and limitations when meeting those pressures.

There is a distinctive group of references to Love and Strife in the dative case. Empedocles reflects on how it is 'in' or 'by' Love and Strife that humans or other things (e.g. the elements) take certain actions, have certain experiences or undergo certain processes. It is by Love (τῆ) that mortals 'have loving thoughts and perform deeds of union' (B17.23 = D73.254). Again, in B21.7–8 = D77a.7–8 we read: 'In Hatred (ἐν δὲ Κότῳ), all things are divided in form and are separated, while they come together in Love (ἐν Φιλότητι) and desire each other.'⁴⁷ Rowett suggests that, in these passages, Empedocles is not referring to external agents (Love and Strife) but to the attitudes and emotions of the

45 Cf. Schmitt 2013, 67–8 on Homer. For the phenomenon of 'double-motivation' or 'over-determination' in Homer, where the same actions or impulses are conceived as caused by both human and divine agency, see e.g. *Il.* 15.636–7; 20.94; with Janko 1992, 3–4; Dodds 1951, 1–27; Scodel 2008, 112, 129; 2018, 10–11.

46 One may press the point that the *daimōn*'s character, whether prior to or during any incarnation, itself results from the formative influences of Love and Strife. This problem may again not admit of a fully satisfying resolution, and it would probably be ill-conceived to pinpoint precisely where the *daimōn*'s character ends and external influence begins. If moral responsibility is to reside anywhere, however, it will be with the choices and actions that stem in some way from the character (however formed) of the *daimōn*.

47 Cf. B17.7–8 = D73.239–40; B20.2–4 = D73.303–5; B22.5 = D101.5; B26.5–6 = D77b5–6; B35.5 = D75.5; B109 = D207; also B95 = D217.

subjects themselves (their own amity or hostility).⁴⁸ This strict division between the external gods (Love and Strife) and the attitudes that they engender (love and strife) again strikes me as too neat. I cannot see that any linguistic markers in Empedocles suggest it. Instead, these datival constructions further support the conclusion, suggested above, that Empedocles does not draw a strict division between the agency of the *daimōn* and the influence of Love and Strife. Every action is the result of some collaboration or compromise between the pressures and stimuli exercised by both Love and Strife and the *daimōn*'s response to those pressures and stimuli.⁴⁹

5 Return to Godhood

In B146 = D39, Empedocles describes the penultimate stop before the *daimōn*'s final return to the gods:

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

B146 = D39

And, finally, they become seers and singers of hymns and doctors
And *promoi* among humans on the earth.
From there, they blossom up as gods, foremost in honours.

Against the standard interpretation, Picot and Berg (2015) convincingly argue that the four figures mentioned cannot represent pure and saintly agents of Love.⁵⁰ At least many (even if not all) seers and singers of hymns prescribe or celebrate violence and animal sacrifices. Most problematically, the term '*promoi*' carries a strong militaristic connotation. In Homer, the term is consistently used as a functional equivalent of '*promachos*' or 'foremost fighter' (*Il.* 7.75; 15.293). By Empedocles' time, it could signify 'leader' in an extended sense and Empedocles need not be referring exclusively to 'battle chiefs'.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the point stands that, if Empedocles wished to indicate leaders while avoiding

48 Rowett 2016, 97–101.

49 On this point, cf. O'Brien 2001, 132: B115.14 'indicates ... a joining of the daimon's action to that of Strife. The daimon who "trusts" in, or who "relies" on, Strife acts in concert with Strife.' On O'Brien 2001, see further n. 10 above.

50 For the standard view, see e.g. Kissel 2007, 120.

51 As Picot and Berg 2015, 383 translate the word.

connotations of Strife, then *'promoi'* would be a highly incongruous word to choose, given its longstanding and common associations with violence and war.⁵² Nor should we *expect* the penultimate stage of the exile to reflect the values of Love to the exclusion of Strife's. Why should this be the case in a world-order in which both powers have a hand? We noted that Strife's agency is prominent in Empedocles' account of the *daimōn's* exile. Indeed, some evidence suggests that our current cosmic period is one of waxing Strife.⁵³ As Picot and Berg put it, scholars have acquiesced in an overly 'angelic' picture of Empedocles' daimonology and eschatology.⁵⁴

Unlike seers, singers and *promoi*, the doctor is plausibly a figure who primarily advances the cause of Love. The coherence of this group of figures on the final rung of reincarnation seems to lie not in their association with either Love or Strife, but in the fact that all four enjoy elevated social status.⁵⁵ It is again unsurprising that the same social hierarchies are found both in our human communities and in the eschatological process of transmigration. After all, the same dual forces of Love and Strife played a decisive factor in influencing the formation of both human conventions and the 'ancient decree of the gods' (B115.1) that governs the eschatological process. The purpose of the purifications prescribed by Empedocles, then, is not to shorten the sentence of the exiled *daimōn*. The period of exile is set at thirty thousand seasons (B115.6) and, whatever period of time this indicates, nothing in Empedocles suggests that it can be reduced. Instead, Empedocles' purifications aim to reduce the agony of exile.⁵⁶ Empedocles makes clear that the influence of Strife is intrinsically and intensely undesirable.⁵⁷ Insofar as Empedocles' purifications have the effect of making any exiled *daimōn* less affected by Strife's influence and more receptive to Love's—for example through the avoidance of killing and meat-eating—they do much to improve his life here on earth.

Things get more tricky for Picot and Berg when they come to ask whether Empedocles sees *himself*, in his current incarnation, among the four figures

52 'Leader': Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Aulis* 699. We also find figurative uses in Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 660 and Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazousae* 50 (assuming the emendation of *πράμος* to *πρόμος*) and an at least ambiguous use at Aeschylus, *Suppliants* 905. Picot and Berg 2015, 394–5 n. 31, however, plausibly identify militaristic undertones in all three passages. Other fifth-century occurrences involve some military context: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 200; Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus* 884; Euripides, *Children of Heracles* 670; *Phoenician Women* 1244; *Trojan Women* 31; cf. Picot and Berg 2015, 394.

53 See Picot and Berg 2015, 408.

54 Picot and Berg 2015, 403.

55 *Loc. cit.*

56 Following Picot and Berg 2015, 404; Picot 2022, 655–6; similarly, Rashed 2018, 229.

57 B145 = D30, discussed above; cf. B22.6–8 = D101.6–8.

highlighted in B146 = D39. It is difficult to deny that he associates himself at least with the healers, seers and singers of hymns.⁵⁸ Picot and Berg opt for an uneasy ‘yes’: Empedocles does indeed associate himself with at least three of the four figures, but he is a highly untraditional seer and singer of hymns, shunning the traditional promotion or celebration of violence.⁵⁹

The problem with which Picot and Berg are grappling is that it is difficult to square the evidence that, in B146 = D39, Empedocles highlights figures whose activities recall his own with their (convincing) argument that these figures are *not* celebrated as pure agents of Love. There is perhaps a real tension here, but I suggest that two considerations can ameliorate it. First, while we could not plausibly dissociate from the workings of Strife all those to whom Empedocles refers *en masse* as seers, singers of hymns and *promoi*, we could plausibly see them—even the *promoi*—as *also* promoting the workings of Love, in particular by preserving social harmony and the integrity of human communities. Homer formulaically describes military leaders like Agamemnon as shepherds of the people (e.g. *Il.* 2.243). In the proem to his *Theogony* (36–115), Hesiod relates how both singer and king, in their different capacities, can soothe anger and grief and preserve or restore psychological and communal harmony. The importance of seers for the preservation of individual and communal life is no less clear. In the *Iliad*, to take one example, Achilles urges the Greeks to call upon a seer in order to discover the cause of the pestilence threatening the Greek army and end it (*Il.* 1.62–7). Second, Picot and Berg still seem to operate with the idea that—even though Empedocles does not see the four figures of B146 = D39 as humans who embody Empedoclean ethical ideals to perfection—he does see *himself* in that way.⁶⁰ As we saw, however, Empedocles’ identification of himself as a *daimōn* who is still now trusting in mad Strife expresses a more nuanced conception of his own psychological and ethical achievements. To be sure, within the broad spectrum of each profession (seer, singer, healer, *promos*), Empedocles would locate himself at the most Love-leaning end. He will not be a seer who prescribes animal sacrifices or a singer who celebrates warlike prowess. But this is not to say that Empedocles imagines his *own* life and mind to be entirely free of the pernicious influence of Strife. This makes it easier to understand how Empedocles can associate his own current position with that of the other incarnated *daimones* who are on the cusp of their return to the gods. An important lesson from B146 = D39, then, is that, at the

58 For Empedocles as a healer, see B112.10–12 = D4.10–12; B111 = D43; seer: B112.10 = D4.10; singer of hymns: B35.1 = D75.1; cf. Herrero de Jáuregui 2013, 46.

59 Picot and Berg 2015, 400–2, 409.

60 Picot and Berg 2015, 390–1.

final stage of their transmigrations and just before their return to the gods, the exiled *daimones* are not free of Strife, even though some may resist it better than others.

We must address one final text. In B₁₁₂ = D₄, Empedocles introduces himself to his audience in these terms (4–5):

χαίρετ' ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός,
πωλεῦμαι μετὰ πάσι τετιμένος, ὥσπερ ἔοικα...

Greetings! I tell you, an immortal god, mortal no more,
I go about honoured by all, as is fitting ...

A deflationary interpretation emphasises the collocation ὑμῖν θεός and takes Empedocles to remark only on how the people of Acragas perceive him: 'I, for you a god ...'.⁶¹ But ὑμῖν need be no more than a light-touch ethical dative (as in my translation above), broadly involving Empedocles' addressees in his account.⁶² Certainly, nothing precludes that Empedocles is asserting his own divinity *in propria persona*.⁶³ Since Empedocles is in the final stage before his return from exile (B₁₄₆ = D₃₉), he may judge that his current outlook is indeed that of an immortal god who is 'mortal no more': after all, what will immediately follow his current state is not further incarnations into 'forms of mortal things' (B₁₁₅.7), but release and a return to the company of the other gods.⁶⁴

On the traditional interpretation, then, Empedocles claims for himself in B₁₁₂ = D₄ the status of a god. Even on the deflationary interpretation, he deems 'fitting' (on the most likely construal of ἔοικα) the honours he receives from all.⁶⁵ How might we best relate this attitude to what we found above: that

61 E.g. Palmer 2013, 311; Hardie 2013, 225 n. 64; cf. LM22 D₄. For the dative of perspective, see van Emde Boas *et al.* 2019, no. 30.52. It would be another question whether Empedocles concurs with the perception of him as a god.

62 See Zuntz 1971, 190–1; Wright 1995, 264–66 ('I tell you ...'); Long 2017, 12 ('any translation risks overtranslating'). For the ethical dative, see van Emde Boas *et al.* 2019, no. 30.53.

63 For a sustained defence of this view, see Panagiotou 1983; also Zuntz 1971, 189–91; Long 2017, 12–13.

64 Somewhat differently, Guthrie 1965, 246 suggests that Empedocles is speaking proleptically of his imminent return to godhood; or Long 2017, 12–15; 2019, 26: Empedocles is now an immortal god insofar as, henceforth, he will enjoy the long-lasting psychological continuity that his successive transmigrations have interrupted (one might qualify: have interrupted significantly even if not wholly; cf. n. 24 above).

65 For a defence of the rendering 'as is fitting' for ὥσπερ ἔοικα (literally, 'as I deserve', cf. *Odyssey* 22.348) or ἔοικεν, see the items cited in n. 63 above. Contrast Wright 1995, 264 (reading ἔοικεν: 'as it seems'); LM22 D₄ (reading ἔοικα: 'as I am seen').

Empedocles does not imagine himself to be a perfect ethical exemplar, insofar as his mind is not altogether immune to Strife?

One viable if of course speculative possibility is to follow the lead of scholars who assign B115 and B112 = D4 to different poems that represent different stages in Empedocles' self-conception. Thus, Sedley assigns B115 to *On Nature*, where Empedocles still saw himself as a fallen transmigrating *daimōn*, and B112 = D4 to the later *Purifications*, where he now confidently considered that he had recovered his godly status.⁶⁶ Along such lines, Empedocles' acknowledgement of his trust in Strife may be another manifestation of a general pessimism, which characterises an earlier phase of his self-conception, as reflected in the proem of *On Nature*, and which eventually gives way to the unmitigated triumphalism of the proem of the *Purifications*.

This, then, is one option. I wish, though, to raise also another one. First, instead of different phases, we might speak rather of different aspects of a complex predicament. Empedocles may lament that he is a guilty exile condemned to a painful cycle of transmigrations, while, at the same time, optimistically locating himself at the conclusion of this daunting process and on the cusp of release from it. Second, the closest parallel to Empedocles' description of himself in B112 = D4 as a god who is honoured by all is his reference in B146 = D39 to those who are about to 'blossom up as gods, foremost in honours'. As we saw, however, the protagonists of B146 = D39 are not out-and-out agents of Love, aseptically sanitised from Strife. Here again, then, we must not presume without justification an overly 'angelic' (to adopt Picot and Berg's term) understanding of Empedocles' conception of divinity. Indeed, that Empedocles is a god does not by itself imply that he is now free of Strife: that Strife's influence extends even to some of the Blessed is shown by the exile's initial crime (B115.3–4). Third, Empedocles immediately elaborates on his judgement, that he is honoured fittingly, by describing how throngs of admirers inquire of him about 'the path to profit' (κέρδος), seeking in particular prophecies and cures (6–12). In other words, Empedocles, again reminiscently of the figures of B146 = D39, rests his claim for social recognition on an economy of reciprocity that obtains between benefactor and beneficiaries, not in the first instance on some other ethical criteria of merit.⁶⁷

66 Sedley 1989, 275–6; 1998, 2–10; 2005, 363 n. 48; for such moves, cf. Kahn 1960, 29–30; Long 2017, 16. Contrast e.g. Rashed 2018, 213–43, who places B115 and B112 = D4 within the proem of the *Purifications*. The possibility raised in this paragraph of course requires, controversially, the two-poem view.

67 The social honours that Empedocles describes fall short of the worship that in B128 = D25 a bygone community accords Love. On this point, see Zuntz 1971, 191. Empedocles' addressees in B112 = D4 ('Friends ...') are themselves described as 'inexperienced in evil'

Certainly, Empedocles may also believe that his laudable ability to benefit individuals and communities rests in part on a personal, ethical as well as cognitive and psychological achievement. After all, Empedocles uncovers the true nature of the conflicting powers of Love and Strife, and goes perhaps as far as one could, as an exile in whose punishment Strife is a dominant presence, to align his thinking and conduct with Love. If one were reluctant to assign B115 and B112 = D4 to different poems and periods, then what the foregoing argument of this article would require is only a not unreasonable qualification: Empedocles can confidently present and promote himself as a champion of Love, as a benefactor for individuals and communities, and even as a god, without thereby imagining or implying that he has rendered himself altogether invulnerable to one of the two universal forces that unite, separate and affect things throughout the cosmos, a force whose influence extends even to some in the community of the Blessed themselves.

A certain duality is fundamental to Empedocles' conception of himself.⁶⁸ On one hand, Empedocles is a divinity that persists beyond its successive incarnations in different life-forms. On the other hand, we saw that, as the *daimōn* migrates from one mortal life-form to another, he experiences substantial changes in his psychological makeup, emotional proclivities and moral and cognitive capacities and limitations. Empedocles-the-beast experiences and responds to the world differently from Empedocles-the-human. Within this framework, it is natural if the more positive or negative aspects of Empedocles' complex self-conception come to the fore in different contexts and moods. This may be why, at some junctures, Empedocles can present himself as a divine being 'superior to much-destroyed mortal humans' (B113 = D5), but, at others, as one of the 'ephemeral' mortal creatures (B131 = D7). Again, at some moments, Empedocles may lament that trust in Strife has been an inescapable fact of life over the course of the transmigratory journey that was his exile (B115.13–14), but, at others, celebrate his status as a god and his imminent release (B112 = D4).

or 'in ill' (κακότητος ἄπειροι, B112.3 = D4.3). If these are mortals, then this must be *captatio benevolentiae* (so Mackenzie 2021, 130 n. 103, 134, 142). Indeed, it seems unlikely that Empedocles' address would reach only the ears of vegetarian mortals. Most plausibly, it is relative to other human communities that the Acragans are 'careful of good works' (2) and inexperienced in evil. Alternatively, some interpret those addressees as themselves the gods of the citadel: Stehle 2005; Sassi 2009, 236–7. If so, and if *those* gods never committed crimes (B115.3–4), then, unlike exiled *daimones*, they may indeed be inexperienced in evil or suffering.

68 On this duality, cf. Tor 2017, 335–7.

6 Final Remarks

This article argued that Empedocles' identification of himself as an exile and a wanderer 'trusting in mad Strife' expresses an ongoing and current predicament. It explored, further, how this pained avowal, and Empedocles' shifting placements of the *daimōn* in different life-forms, bear on his negotiation of thorny issues of self-conception, agency, responsibility and authority. As he reflects on his personal journey from one mortal form of life to the next, Empedocles locates his agency with the exiled *daimōn*. At the same time, Empedocles raises through this story difficult questions about the ways in which the *daimōn's* agency is subjected at every turn to the competing pressures of Love and Strife—crucially, he laments that the exiled *daimōn* could never fully liberate himself from the frenzied influence of the latter—and to all the various human and animal bodies into which the cosmic wanderer finds his way. There is a neat echo between Empedocles' identity as an itinerant *daimōn*, travelling from one life-form to another, and his identity, within his present incarnation, as a wandering poet, who travels from city to city, offering his wisdom, his oracles and his cures (B112 = D4).

The analysis of these issues places in a new light Empedocles' construction of authority and his conception of his own ethical standing. To be sure, Empedocles considers himself far superior to his contemporaries. Nonetheless, and common assumptions to the contrary notwithstanding, Empedocles (at least in whatever poem featured B115) does not see himself as an altogether perfect embodiment of his own ethical ideals. His mind is not altogether free of mad Strife. Viewed by the light—or in the shadow—of his lament in B115.13–14, as analysed in the context of our extant evidence, Empedocles constructs his authority and ethical standing in a more nuanced and sober way. He emerges as someone who sees clearly the duelling cosmic forces of Love and Strife which, unbeknownst to us, frame our lives, and who was even able to struggle against the corrupting influence of mad Strife as much as his present incarnation allowed, although, significantly, no more than that.⁶⁹

69 In addition to the oftentimes fraught issues explored above, there is another and more upbeat story to be told about how the *daimōn's* cosmic journey contributes to Empedocles' construction of poetic and epistemic authority. At least if we see Empedocles as claiming recollections of past lives (see n. 24 above), the *daimōn's* cognitive access to different cosmic places, periods and perspectives—including to the psychological pressures he had encountered—may be partly what enables Empedocles to convey an authoritative account of the world-order, its inhabitants and the physical and moral powers that mould it. For discussions along those lines, see Sassi 2009, 193–4, 234–5; Ferella 2013, 43–7; Clay 2015, 128–34; Ranzato 2015 99–105; Tor 2017, 318–39; Pellò 2018; Santaniello 2021, 157–9.

Empedocles' daimonology disrupts boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the familiar and the unfamiliar. On one hand, Empedocles does away with the *daimōn* who operates on us from the outside inscrutably.⁷⁰ The *daimōn* has become internal and is in fact nothing beyond us ourselves. On the other hand, Empedocles renders the ordinary itself deeply extraordinary. What we might previously have thought of as an unremarkable human life turns out to be one stage in the punitive cosmic journey of an exiled *daimōn*. What seemed to be everyday actions and decisions reveal themselves as the sites of so many different cosmic battles between Love and Strife, battles that are waged through and within the person and agency of this same *daimōn*.⁷¹

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70 On these aspects of daimonic action, see Burkert 1985, 180–1.

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