its legitimating source. The author himself embodies this paradox: Empedocles—he of "stable glory" (*empedon kleos*)—will emerge as the singular exception to the volatile ontology he expounds and a productive point of aporia within his own philosophy. In this respect, Empedocles's text resembles Heraclitus's; as we observed in the last chapter, Heraclitus's own *logos* becomes audible at the very moment it splits from, and thus articulates a split in, the unitary cosmic *logos*.[7]

This chapter traces the tangled lines of *autos, bios*, and *graphē* across the fragments of Empedocles's text. In doing so, it does not aim to reorder these terms into a hierarchy that would secure both philosophy and philosopher as stable and coherent, vouchsafing their *empedon kleos*. Instead, it embraces the incoherences in Empedocles's work and persona as the inevitable byproduct of his ambitious experiment in rhizomatic thinking—his attempt to articulate a philosophy and poetics of the roots. The *autos* that writes this dynamic philosophy also lives it, but the life undoes the writing and the writing the life. In the schizophrenic autobiography and philosophy this paradox generates we can see both the radical nature of Empedocles's project and its limits.[8]

AUTOS

Questions about the relation between autobiography and natural philosophy and the place of the *egō* in each are central to the study of Empedocles. Two titles come down to us from antiquity attached to Empedocles's name, *Katharmoi* (*Purifications*) and *Peri Phuseōs* (*On Nature*). The long-standing assumption that these two titles refer to two different poems has been challenged in recent decades, and scholars have argued for reading the fragments as part of a single poem.[9] This position received support from the identification in the 1990s of a papyrus in Strasbourg containing substantial new fragments of Empedocles's poem.[10] These

7. We will return to the aporia of the author function in the Conclusion.

8. Deleuze and Guattari label their materialist psychiatry "schizoanalysis" and posit the schizophrenic as the decentered subject of their rhizomatic ontology (1983b, 2, 14, 56–57; Holland 1999, 1–24). Their exemplum is Freud's Judge Schreber, "who sought to remain at that unbearable point where the mind touches matter and lives its every intensity" (1983b, 19–20). The hero of an autobiographical narrative of metempsychosis, persecutory transformations, and purification both individual and cosmic, materially connected to all other beings through nerves and rays, and communicating in a special "root language" (*Grundsprache*), Schreber offers a fertile comparandum to Empedocles's daimonic *autos*.

9. The one-poem thesis was argued forcefully by Osborne (1987a), extending the rearrangement of the fragments by Van der Ben (1975), and is followed by Inwood (2001, with justification at 8–21); Trépanier (2004, 1–30); and Mackenzie (2016, 2021a, 104–7). Without subscribing to a distinction between the esoteric and the exoteric (Kingsley 2002, 344–50; Bollack 2005; and Patzer 2006, 92) I find the two different addressees and imagined performative contexts hard to reconcile from a formal standpoint. But I remain open-minded on the issue and nothing in my argument rides on it: in fact, the tension I examine between the physical theory and the daimonic *autos* is all the more pointed if the two are part of the same poem.

10. The fragments of the Strasbourg papyrus have been edited by Martin and Primavesi (1999). As they point out, however, the papyrus neither proves nor disproves the one-poem theory (118–19). On

new papyrological fragments show that even if (as I believe) Empedocles did write two separate poems, his natural philosophy and religious thought are deeply interconnected.

One apparent point of difference, however, is the authorial voice.[11] The doctrine of *On Nature* is validated to a degree unparalleled in early Greek philosophy by the personal authority of the poetic voice. This work is not structured as an autobiography, but its physical theory is expounded by an *egō* who maintains a strong presence throughout. *On Nature* is staged as a one-on-one pedagogical relationship between this *egō* and his student interlocutor Pausanias. The *egō* asserts himself through repeated imperatives: he urges Pausanias to listen and to hear, to see, to imagine, to pay attention, to know.[12] Demanding that the reader, as well as the fictional interlocutor, attend to his words, this *egō* commands authority. If the student obeys his command, he personally guarantees him extravagant and exclusive benefits: cures for sickness, control of the winds and rains, power over life and death, "since to you alone I ordain (*kraneō*) all these things" (B111.2/D43.2). In the language of divine and oracular fulfillment (*kraneō*, a verb virtually unparalleled in the first-person singular), the *egō* declares the performative efficacy of his teaching: to understand his *On Nature* is to impose one's will on nature.[13]

That personal authority alone validates the truth of the doctrine. Empedocles follows Parmenides in donning the mantle of Homer and laying claim to the bard's traditional authority. His choice of dactylic hexameter in itself announces that double (Parmenidean and Homeric) filiation, as do his appeals to "the assurances of our Muse" (B4.2/D47.2; cf. B3.3–5/D44.3–5, B131/D7). But though Empedocles asks his Muse to stand by his side as he presents his account (B131/D7), she is not manifestly the source of that account.[14] Whereas Parmenides's goddess initiates the young man into the mysteries of Being, Empedocles's Muse assists him as he

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the impact of the papyrus on our understanding of Empedocles, see Inwood 2001, 75–79; and Ferella 2024, 26–31.

11. Long 1966, 258; Primavesi 2013, 667–68; and Sassi 2018, 167.

12. Listen and hear: B1/D41, B6.1/D57.1, B17.14/D73.245, B17.26/D73.257, B62.3/D157.3; see: B3.9/D44.9, B21.1/D77a.1; imagine: B17.21/D73.252; pay attention: P. Strasb. a(ii) 21–22/D73.291–2; know: B4.3/D47.3, B110.10/D257.10.

13. This is, as Ferella (2024, 246–306) argues, to obtain the mind of a god. The performative force of the teaching in B111/D43 is reiterated in the echo *peusēi/pauseis* (you will learn/you will stop [the winds]), which also resonates with Pausanias's name. *Krainō/kraneō* occurs in prayers to the gods (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.41, *Od.* 17.242, 20.115) and in reference to oracles (Pind. *Ol.* 3.11, Eur. *Ion* 464). The prominence of the first-person voice fits with Obbink's (1993, 79n61) observation of the uncommon frequency of second-person address, which he sees as an aspect of "sphragidization," "the embedded assertion of the identity of the poet with his narrative persona."

14. In B3/D44 he calls on her to ensure the piety of his words but does not suggest that she is responsible for their content. As Mackenzie (2021a, 115) nicely puts it, the Muse is metonymic of his own poetic authority. See further Hardie 2013, 216–20; Gheerbrant 2017, 99–218; and Sassi 2018, 164. On Empedocles's creative use of Homer and Hesiod, see Traglia 1952, 11–29; Bollack 1965, 283–86; Gemelli Marciano 1990, 29–60; Picot 1998; and Willi 2008, 193–229, and on his flexible hexameter, see Bollack 1965, 313–20; and Gheerbrant 2017, 161–64.

initiates Pausanias by commanding (*keletai*) the student to trust and learn from his master (B4/D47).[15] Moreover, Parmenides supplements divine inspiration with the logical argumentation that constitutes the persuasive force of his poem. Empedocles, by contrast, offers virtually no logical argumentation.[16] Instead, the truth value of his poem and doctrine rests on the insistence of the *egō*. When the poet (in an overt allusion to Parmenides) demands that Pausanias "hear the not-deceptive expedition of argument" (*su d'akoue logou stolon ouk apatēlon*, B17.26/D73.257; cf. Parm. B8.52/D8.57), the same personal authority that enforces the command also supports the claim that the *logos* is "not deceptive": to obey the command and listen to the poem is to accept the veracity of its account. Thus this *egō* inserts himself frequently into the poem to verify its claims: I will speak, I will show, I will tell.[17]

If the *egō* of *On Nature* is a philosophy professor, the "I" of *Purifications* is a demon.

> ὦ φίλοι, οἳ μέγα ἄστυ κατὰ ξανθοῦ Ἀκράγαντος
> ναίετ' ἀν' ἄκρα πόλεος, ἀγαθῶν μελεδήμονες ἔργων,
> ξείνων αἰδοῖοι λιμένες, κακότητος ἄπειροι,
> χαίρετ'· ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός
> πωλεῦμαι μετὰ πᾶσι τετιμένος, ὥσπερ ἔοικα,
> ταινίαις τε περίστεπτος στέφεσίν τε θαλείοις. (B112.1–6/D4.1–6)
>
> Oh friends, who dwell in the great city along the golden Acragas
> upon the city's heights, you who are concerned for noble deeds,
> harbors respectful of strangers, inexperienced of evil,
> greetings! I come to you, an immortal god, no longer mortal,
> honored among all, as I seem,
> crowned with ribbons and flourishing crowns.

15. Bollack 1969, 18; and Ferella 2024, 266–73. *Peri Phuseōs* as initiatory: Kahn 1974, 431–32; and Kingsley 1995, 230–31, 359–70.

16. As noted by Van Groningen 1960, 201–6; and Barnes 1982, 310–11. For more detailed assessment of Empedocles's argumentative strategies see McKirahan 2005. The only extended deductive reasoning is at B17.30–33/D73.261–64, arguing for the eternal and unchanging existence of the four elements: the argumentative style there, with its rhetorical questions and counterfactual conditions, seems to be a deliberate nod to Parmenides (Wright 1981, 170). On Empedocles's philosophical response to Parmenides, see Solmsen 1975; Curd 1998, 155–71; Graham 1999; Inwood 2001, 24–33; Trépanier 2004, 129–44, 152–70; and Palmer 2009, 271–317; and on his stylistic response, Traglia 1952, 101–16; Nünlist 2005; and Mackenzie 2021a, 108–16.

17. B8.1/D53.1, B9.5/D54.5, B16/D63, B17.1/D73.233, B17.16/D73.247, B35.1/D75.1, B38/D122, P. Strasb. a(ii) 23/D73.293, P. Strasb. d 8/D76.8. On the stylistic features of Empedocles's didactic persona, see further Willi 2008, 231–35. Calame (1995, 1–73) charts the increasing autonomy of the enunciating *egō* over the course of the archaic period and its decreasing reliance on the Muse; he does not discuss Empedocles. Rosenfeld-Löffler (2006, 77–100) fills that gap with her (Calame-inspired) study of the "Je-énonciateur" in *On Nature*.

This fragment, which Diogenes Laertius says came at the beginning of *Purifications*, sets the poem's scene. In contrast to the intimate pedagogical setting figured in *On Nature*, the fictional mise en scène of this poem is public and ceremonial. We are in Acragas, the city Empedocles was from: the poem is anchored in time and place by the author's own biography.[18] But if the setting is "historical," the speaker is outlandishly mythical. Who, or what, is this divine *egō* who has arrived in the city? The peculiar phrase *hōsper eoika* ("as I seem") highlights the perplexity: is he actually a god or does he just seem one?[19] Is he a stranger (*xenos*), as his praise of the audience's hospitality suggests (3), or a friend, a *philos* among *philoi?* The scene is at once a religious epiphany and a glorious homecoming: decked in garlands and ribbons, the *egō* returns to his polis with godlike honor, the benefit of which he will share with us in the form of profit, prophecies, cures for "all sorts of diseases" (10–11).

This triumphant *nostos* marks the end of the *egō*'s long exile, a saga no less baffling than the subject who recounts it. In B115/D10, the speaker tells of "an oracle of Necessity, ancient decree of the gods, eternal, sealed by wide oaths" (1–2). This oracle commands that any god who spills blood or swears false oaths be banished from the divine community to wander for thirty thousand years. These exiled divinities are "*daimones* who have been allotted a long life" (5). The speaker details the misery of the *daimones* as they are driven from air to sea to earth to aether, and "one after another welcomes them and all detest them" (12). The fragment ends with another first-person epiphany: "Of these I too am now one (*tōn kai egō nun eimi*), a fugitive from the gods and a wanderer, trusting in mad Strife" (13–14).[20]

The narrative this daimonic "I" goes on to tell is like nothing else in Greek literature.[21] He recounts his wanderings through strange and dismal lands: an

18. Diog. Laert. 8.54 (< A1/P7). The performance context of the poem is debated, but I follow recent scholars like Mackenzie (2021a, 106–7) in supposing that both poems were originally disseminated through rhapsodic performances at public festivals, such as the Olympic games (as reported at Diog. Laert. 8.63). On the poem's performance and addressees, see further Zuntz 1971, 186–92; Rösler 1983; Obbink 1993, 76–80; Stehle 2005; Gheerbrant 2017, 595–641, 2022; and Mackenzie 2021a, 126–56.

19. The Palatine Anthology correction of B112.5/D4.5 to the third-person singular marks the oddity of the form. The phrase is common in the second and third person but the only other occurrence of the first person is in the pleonastic construction at Pl. *Alc.* 116d6 (*phainomai, hōs eoika*), where it is also "odd" (Denyer 2001, 151 ad loc.). Interpretation of B112/D4 is also affected by how we construe the dative in line 4: "I come to you as god" or "I come as a god to (or for) you."

20. Plutarch reads *eími* ("I go") instead of *eimí* ("I am") and *tēn* for *tōn* in this line (*tēn kai egō nun eími*), i.e., "I too now go this way." For him, the *daimōn* is an allegory for each of us inasmuch as we are all "migrants here [on earth] and strangers and fugitives" (*De exil.* 607D2–3). Plutarch's reading is favored by Wilamowitz (1929, 634); Zuntz (1971, 198); Rashed (2008, 24–25); and Picot (2022, 585, 596–612), against that of Hippolytus, printed by Diels-Kranz. B115/D10 is riddled with textual and interpretive uncertainties: see Rashed 2008, 2018, 213–43. There is no consensus on the precise nature of the *daimones*. Picot 2022, 665–88 helpfully collates views on the question.

21. Even the speaker recognizes that this account may be hard to believe (B114/D6; cf. B113/D5). Mackenzie (2021a, 127–42) identifies the mythical and literary antecedents of the exile-purification narrative.

underworld cave, the vortex of Strife, the dark meadow of delusion (B118–123/D14–24). The narrative is told from the first-person perspective and with intense emotion: "I cried and wailed seeing this unfamiliar place" (B118/D14); "I wet my cheeks . . . I came into the furthest place . . . with a scream and a shout . . . reaching the meadow of Atē" (P. Strasb. d7–17/D76.7–17). This anguished travelogue is a tale of guilt, punishment, and ultimate redemption. Banished from the gods for "staining his own limbs with murder" (B115.3/D10.3), the daimonic narrator undergoes countless reincarnations, "growing over time into various forms of mortal things that exchange the terrible paths of life" (B115.7–8/D10.7–8). These transformations too he recounts in the first person: "I was once already (*ēdē gar pot' egō genomēn*) a boy and a girl and a bush and a bird and a sea-leaping, voyaging fish" (D13/B117). After thirty thousand years of suffering, by adhering to moral laws that include abstaining from animal sacrifice (and possibly from sexual activity) he will finally expiate his crime.[22] Purified—hence the title of the poem—he will ultimately rejoin the divine community: "In the end they [the *daimones*] become seers and singers and doctors and leaders among earthly humans; from there they grow to be gods (*theoi*), highest in honors" (B146/D39). The happy *telos* is recounted in B147/D40: "Sharing a feast with the other immortals (*athanatois*), being at the same table, with no share in the sufferings of men, indestructible." It is in this final, divine form that the *egō* makes his triumphant return to Acragas, "an immortal god (*theos*), no longer mortal" (B112.4/D4.4), and divulges the wisdom he has acquired in his long wanderings.

What are we to make of this metempsychotic autobiography, the first-person account of the life—or lives—of an exiled *daimōn?* Who—or what—is this narrator, and what is his relation to the authoritative narrator of *On Nature?* Ancient readers took the daimonic *egō* as an allegory for the philosophical (and particularly Platonic) soul and his otherworldly adventures as a tale of moral and intellectual *askēsis*. For these readers, the *daimōn*'s saga is a tale of philosophical redemption, in which the individual ascends from the meadow of delusion to apotheosis and a seat at the banquet of the wise.[23] "Purifying" the *daimōn* as a philosopher-to-be,

22. Animal sacrifice is clearly prohibited at B135–139/D27a–D35. Eating beans is also proscribed at B141/D31: "Wretched, entirely wretched men, keep your hands away from beans (*kuamōn*)!" Aulus Gellius, who cites this line, says that *kuamoi* means not beans but testicles (4.11.9–10) and thinks this refers to sexual abstinence. For other evidence for an injunction to sexual abstinence and discussion of the rationale, see Inwood 2001, 64–66.

23. Clem. Al. *Strom.* 4.150 ad B146/R82: "Empedocles says the souls of *sophoi* become gods"; cf. Hierocles, Synesius ad B121/D24; Aët. 1.7.28 (A32/≠LM). Plut. *De exil.* 607C–D, quoting B115/D10, takes the *daimōn*'s journey as a "gentle euphemism" for the tribulations of the human soul. He probably has the Platonic soul in mind, a connection Plato himself invites when he reuses Empedocles's "unfamiliar cloak of flesh" (B126/D19) at *Phd.* 87c–88b (Inwood 2001, 55–59). Plotinus and Porphyry likewise compare the cave visited by the fallen *daimōn* (B120/D16) to the cave in Plato's *Republic* (Plotinus *Enn.* 4.8.1, Porph. *De antr. nymph.* 8). Laks-Most collect other allegorical readings of the *daimōn*'s exile at Emp. R47–57. A number of modern scholars take the *daimōn* as a proto-Platonic *psukhē,* the enduring

this interpretation assimilates the outlandish *egō* of *Katharmoi* to his pedagogical counterpart. Criticizing a similar tendency in modern scholarship, Peter Kingsley views Empedocles not as a rational philosopher but as a magician and inspired mystic, whose teaching—cosmology no less than demonology—is divine revelation. For him, the *daimōn*'s story is effectively Empedocles's own autobiography, the account of his shamanic initiation, and the cosmology is an esoteric vehicle of spiritual salvation.[24] While early readers assimilated the daimonic *egō* to *On Nature*'s philosopher, Kingsley unites the two authorial personae by assimilating the natural philosopher to the divinized *daimōn* and identifying that divinity with Empedocles himself.

Werner Jaeger famously characterized the historical Empedocles as "a philosophical centaur . . . a prodigious union of Ionian elemental physics and Orphic religion."[25] This dichotomy between Empedocles the natural philosopher and Empedocles the mystic obviously collapses if *Peri Phuseōs* and *Katharmoi* were a single poem. But even if there were two separate poems, scholars have demonstrated the deep interconnection between the material theory of the cosmology and the religious thought of the daimonology.[26] Moreover, the two authorial personae are not just mutually entangled but in fact mutually dependent if, as some have argued, the autobiography of the *daimōn* reflects or enacts the physical theory expounded in *On Nature*. The oracle of Necessity that dictates the *daimōn*'s punishment in B115/D10 has been taken since antiquity to refer to the alternation of Love and Strife, and the speaker himself attributes his torments to his trust in "mad Strife" (B115.14/D10.14).[27] Thus Oliver Primavesi reads the journey of the *daimōn*, shunted from one element to another, taking on different ephemeral forms as these "exchange the terrible paths of life" (B115.8/D10.8), as a "mythological mirror" for the combination and dispersion of the root elements, themselves apparently called *daimones* at B59/D149.[28] Furthermore, the *daimōn* not only suffers this physical

element of the individual: Inwood 2001, 56; Trépanier 2004, 129, 2017; Curd 2005, 142; and Kahn 2014. Contra, Zuntz 1971, 270–71; Wright 1981, 273–74; Bollack 2003, 65–66; Laks 2004, 35–37; Sassi 2018, 134; Picot 2022, 535–664; and Ferella 2024, 138–84.

24. Kingsley 2002; cf. 1995, 217–391; 2003, 309–559.

25. Jaeger 1945, 295. This dichotomy was strongly articulated by Zeller (1881, 171–207); it is instantiated in Diels-Kranz's edition of the text and argued for in Diels 1969.

26. See especially the important contribution of Kahn (2014). Most scholars now accept the continuity of Empedocles's thought, even if they believe it was articulated in two separate poems: Bignone 1916, 11–21; Long 1949; Wright 1981, 57–63; Osborne 1987a; Inwood 2001; Laks 2004; Curd 2005; Trépanier 2014, 2017, 132; Mackenzie 2021a, 104–7; and Ferella 2024. O'Brien (2001); Kingsley (2002); and Bollack (2003, 14–17, 62–66, 2005), however, warn against conflating the two.

27. Hippol. *Haer.* 7.29. Both are sealed with a "broad oath" (B30.3/D94.3; cf. B115.2/D10.2). Laks (2005) offers a lucid analysis of the different nature of necessity in the two accounts and its implication for their relation (cf. Laks 2004, 42–44, 2010).

28. Primavesi 2008, 252. A variant of the phrase "exchanging paths" (*metallassonta keleuthous,* B115.8/D10.8) is used of the elements at B35.15/D75.15 (*diallaxanta keleuthous*). Scholars have seen the

process but may even, as Catherine Rowett (Osborne) has argued, actively contribute to it.[29] The *daimōn* is exiled for "staining his own limbs with murder" (B115.3/D10.3), presumably by sacrificing and eating animals. The prohibition on animal sacrifice, vividly described in other fragments of *Purifications*, is a universal law based on the common kinship of all living beings (B135/D27a), a kinship likely predicated on their shared elemental composition as described in *On Nature*.[30] In a fragment presumed to belong to *Purifications* the *daimōn* cries out with remorse for his crime: "Alas that the pitiless day did not destroy me first, before I contrived wicked acts with my lips for the sake of food!" (B139/D34). The same *cri du coeur* occurs, with slight variation, in a fragment of the Strasbourg papyrus describing the vortex of Strife (P. Strasb. d 5–6/D76.5–6). This fragment indisputably links the daimonology to the cosmology and suggests that the *daimōn*'s crime not only brought on his personal punishment but also contributed to the sway of Strife in the cosmos, and that his moral purification will, conversely, help to bring about the cosmic reunification under Philotēs.

Read in this way, the *daimōn* is an allegory not for a Platonic soul but for Empedoclean matter. The *daimōn*'s saga becomes the autobiography of the roots as they undergo their cosmic transformations, and the daimonic *autos* is the living (and dying and living . . .) proof of the doctrine. This would suggest in turn that the didactic *egō* who propounds this doctrine in *On Nature* derives his philosophical credibility at least in part from the experience of his daimonic counterpart. Further, that daimonic experience may in fact be his own. Like Heraclitus, Empedocles scorns mortals who "see only a small share of life in their lifetimes" and mistake that fraction for the whole (B2.3–6/D42.3–6). In contrast, B129/D38 describes a "man of extraordinary knowledge": "Whenever he reached out with all his mind, easily he saw each of all the things that are in ten or twenty lifetimes of mortals" (B129.4–6/D38.4–6).[31] Is the poet of *On Nature* claiming to be such a man, passing on to his student the wisdom gained over his many incarnations? This fragment is generally assigned to *Purifications*, but fragment B23/D60, which expounds cosmological doctrine, concludes: "Let no deception overcome your mind that the font of mortal things . . . is from anywhere else [than the mixing of roots], but know these things clearly, having heard a speech from a god" (*theou para muthon*

daimōn variously as the embodiment of a specific force, element, or compound of elements: Mackenzie (2020, 118–21) surveys the different positions.

29. Osborne 2005, anticipated in Osborne 1987a, 35–41; cf. Inwood 2001, 59–68; Ferella 2024, 348–60. Rowett (Osborne) and Inwood both believe the crime that causes the *daimōn*'s exile is not animal sacrifice but the breakup of Sphere and precipitation of Strife. On the *daimōn*'s transgression, see further Tor 2023a.

30. Iambl. *VP* 24.108: "The shared kinship of animals, which arises from sharing life and the same elements and the mixture that arises from these, yoked them to us as if in brotherhood." On the kinship of all living beings in Presocratic philosophy, see Zatta 2017, esp. 9–44.

31. The fragment was taken by its sources to refer to either Pythagoras or Parmenides: see Zuntz 1971, 265–66; Wright 1981, 256; and Bollack 2003, 88–90.

akousas, B23.9–11/D60.9–11). If that *theos* is the speaker himself, the whole *Peri Phuseōs* becomes a kind of epiphany through which the philosopher declares, like the revenant of *Katharmoi*, "I come to you, an immortal god, no longer mortal."[32] This identification would be all the stronger if, as some believe, fragment B115/D10, which recounts the *daimōn*'s exile, came at the opening not of *Purifications* but of *On Nature*.[33] According to this reading, the poet can describe the physical processes of the cosmos truthfully because he has suffered through them himself over the course of his own myriad lifetimes. His natural philosophy in and of itself thus becomes an implicit autobiography, supporting Nietzsche's observation that every philosophy is, at base, "a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir."[34]

This daimonic experience, finally, would justify the exorbitant benefits the poet claims for his teachings in *On Nature*. Like a god, the teacher "ordains" (*kraneō*, B111.2/D43.2) for his pupil exclusive mastery over the elements, the winds and rains and earth. In addition, he promises, "you will lead the might of a dead man back from Hades" (B111.9/D43.9).[35] Mastery over life and death may be the ultimate benefit of comprehending the physical doctrine, with its teaching that "there is no birth of any living thing nor any end of dire death, but only mixing and interchanging of things mixed" (B8/D53; cf. B9/D54). But reading the fragments of *On Nature* and *Purifications* closely together, it may also be seen as a power derived from the *egō*'s own biography and thanatography, his thirty thousand years of reincarnation.[36]

Far from heterogeneous creatures—the man and horse of Jaeger's "philosophical centaur"—the didactic *egō* of *On Nature* and the daimonic *egō* of *Purifications* appear, then, to be two faces of the same authorial *autos*, and the philosophical authority of the former seems to depend on the mad autobiography of the latter. And yet the two cannot simply be assimilated, and their mutual implication produces certain tensions within each and within Empedocles's oeuvre as a whole. For if the daimonological *autos* validates the physical theory, the theory invalidates that *autos* as the stable source of his own autobiography. In B117/D13, the *daimōn*

32. Some think he is referring to the Muse: Wright 1981, 181; Palmer 2013.

33. Sedley 1989, 274–76; Sassi 2018, 165 (following Van der Ben 1975, 16–26); and Ferella 2024, 24–61. Plutarch says only that Empedocles "uttered it as a preface at the beginning of his philosophy" (*De exil.* 607C). Inwood 2001 places it near the start of the combined single poem; see also Osborne 1987a, 29–31; contra, O'Brien 2001. For Ferella (2024) the reallocation of this and other fragments traditionally assigned to *Katharmoi* to the proem of *Peri Phuseōs* is part of a larger argument that Empedocles's physics is "premised and structured" (22, 307–62) on his theory of reincarnation.

34. Nietzsche 1989b, 13, quoted by Kronick 2000, 997.

35. The biographical tradition reports that Empedocles himself brought a dead woman back to life. The story is recounted by Diogenes Laertius (8.61), who cites as evidence the epiphany of B112/D4. This feat of reanimation is closely linked in Diogenes's account to Empedocles's own mysterious death: see n. 95 below.

36. Ferella 2024, 95–107. Later readers may have believed this power to inhere in the physical text: the Strasbourg papyrus was originally found folded into a crown on the head of a corpse in a sarcophagus in Egypt: Martin and Primavesi 1999, 27–51.

narrates his past lives as boy, girl, bush, bird, and fish. These reincarnations are part of the punishment of the criminal *daimones*, "growing over time into various forms of mortal things that exchange the terrible paths of life" (B115.7–8/D10.7–8). As stages of his "purification" they form the chapters of the *daimōn*'s life story and his path to eventual apotheosis. *On Nature* teaches that all living things—exemplified by this same list of creatures—are compounds of the four elements and as such will eventually dissolve entirely in the general dispersion at the peak of Strife.[37] But if compounds disperse entirely with every cosmic cycle, how can there be an "I" who survives over the longue durée to remember and recount those past lives? Even on a shorter time frame, if the elemental composition of the individual is constantly changing in reaction to the elements of the environment (B106/D243, B109/D207), and "to the extent that they become other (*alloioi*), to that extent it always happens to them also to think otherwise (*to phronein alloia*)" (B108/D244), then every new "unfamiliar (*allognōti)* cloak of flesh" (B126/D19) renders the self's mind (*gnōmē*) and thinking (*phronein*) unfamiliar, unrecognizable from one moment to the next, much less from one life to the next.[38] The same elemental mixing makes it hard even to differentiate absolutely between such beings as a boy and a girl and a bush and a bird and a fish: each is just a temporary reorganization of the components of the other, its identity porous and provisional at best.

The physical theory would thus seem to destabilize not only the *autos* of this exceptional daimonic autobiography but the *autos* in general, the very possibility of a self, stable over time and separate from other beings. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield put the issue well:

> The psychology of *On Nature* is not purely reductive, although it leaves in obscurity what is the 'I' which thinks and perceives *with* the elements. It remains similarly obscure what the continuing identity of a *daimon* consists in, as it is tossed from element to element and transformed from plant to beast to man. What is clear is the force of Empedocles's conviction *that* there is an 'I' which survives such changes, whose perspective on life and death and everything else can never be entirely subsumed within a cosmic perspective. . . . 'I' is ineliminable.[39]

37. B9.2–3/D54.2–3, B20.6–7/D73.307–308, B21.10–12/D77a.10–12, B23.6–8/D60.6–8, P. Strasb. a(i)9–a(ii)2, c7–8/D73.270–272, 307–8. They will also be fused beyond recognition in Sphere at the peak of Philotēs.

38. Kahn 2014, 439–40. This is true of all autobiography, inasmuch as we are all continuously changing and becoming different; the fixity of the authorial position is always a fiction and is often revealed to be so by the life it writes. Mackenzie (2020) stresses the multiplicity and porousness of individual identity in Empedocles's physical system and believes that the daimonology is designed to encourage his audience to accept this expanded conception of selfhood.

39. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 1983, 321. See further Inwood 2007; and Kahn 2014, 435–42. How much the *egō* remembers of his past lives is (like so much else about Empedocles's daimonology) an open question. I assume, based in part on his emotionally charged memories of exile (B118–123/D14–24), that he recalls the experience, not just the fact, of past lives (with Tor 2017, 332–33; contra, e.g.,

The union of the cosmology and daimonology thus opens new schisms within Empedocles's autobiography and his philosophy. On the one hand, the narrative "I" whose emotional tale of transformation enacts the elemental theory is (literally) disintegrated by that theory: in this contradictory autobiography the *autos* is unwritten by the *bios* he writes, leaving the author (and thus authority) of that life story uncertain. On the other hand, if the pedagogical "I" depends on the daimonic autobiography to substantiate his physical theories, then he, too, is in jeopardy, as is the theory he teaches: the doctrine would be validated by the account of a life that the doctrine itself renders untellable. These contradictions trouble not only the narrative "I," both daimonological and cosmological, but also the authorial "I," the persona projected by the text that allows us to speak of "Empedocles's philosophy" at all.[40] For "Empedocles" as well as his narrators, "I"—as the stable and authoritative source of his philosophy and guarantor of its stability and authority—is at once impossible and, as we shall see, ineliminable.

Recognizing the interdependence of Empedocles's two (if they are two) poems and personae thus merely reproduces a fundamental schism in the position of philosophical enunciation, as the philosophical *autos* is shown to be both divided in itself and in tension with the doctrine it expounds. This schizophrenia is not the effect of a historical split between scientist and sorcerer awkwardly sutured into a mythical hybrid, nor can it be resolved by a reading that turns the daimonic *autos* into an allegorical philosopher or the natural philosopher into a god. Instead, I will suggest, it is the symptom of Empedocles's radical new theory of life and the fundamentally ambiguous place of the self within it.

BIOS

We have seen that Empedocles's autobiography destabilizes the *autos*: the idea of a singular autonomous self, knowing and writing his own life, is undermined by that life itself. In fact, Empedocles shifts the relations among these terms. In his fragments, autobiography is not the writing of the life of a self, the *bios* of an *autos*, but the writing of life itself, *bios ho autos*. And the protagonist of this story is not the singular self but instead a swarming multiplicity of lives, human and nonhuman, each with its own agency and desires.

For Empedocles, the story of an individual life is contained within and inseparable from the story of life as a whole. Most people, Empedocles writes, "see only a small share of life (*biou*) in their lifetimes (*zōēisi*), and swift-fated like smoke they rise and fly, believing only this, what each happens to encounter as they are driven everywhere, but he boasts that he has discovered the whole" (B2.3–6/D42.3–6).

Wright 1981, 276). The latter view would diminish, but not eliminate, the tension between the physical theory and the concept of an identity that persists across reincarnations.

40. Foucault 1984, 105–13. I return to the author function in the Conclusion.