This book starts off with so proud and enticing an assertion that I cannot refrain from repeating it here in full. The author lists three major problems facing the modern student of Empedocles, and continues (‘Introduction’, p. 3).

Aucun de ces trois problèmes n’a jusqu’à présent trouvé de solution définitive. La publication du ‘Papyrus de Strasbourg’ ne semble pas non plus apporter les réponses espérées. Cette aporie pourrait pourtant s’expliquer à mon avis par le fait que la diction spécifique, poétique, significative à plusieurs égards, de l’œuvre n’est pas suffisamment prise en considération. Et quand elle l’est – les publications sur ce sujet existent en effet –, on a étrangement tendance à la tenir à l’écart de la discussion.

The three ‘problems’ to which we are invited to hope for a solution include none other than Empedocles’ cosmogonical theories, notably the question of a cyclic return, and the nature of the datmones whose presence looms ever larger in modern studies of both the Peri physeos and the Katharmoi. To be told that, in order to find, or even to approach, a definitive solution to these problems, we have only to pay closer attention to the language of the surviving fragments is a prospect that cannot but fill with enthusiasm any potential reader of this volume. Such enthusiasm is scarcely abated when we discover that, in order to enter this new Eldorado, we have only to master a handful of conceptual innovations, kindly summarised for us on the concluding page of the ‘Introduction’ (p. 10). Three partly overlapping categories, one: enseignement fictionnel, two: enseignement ‘réel’ avec glissement énonciatif, are divided and subdivided into a total of fourteen terms in all: locuteur/je and allocuté/tu for category one, énonciateur/rhapsode and énonciataire/public (auditeur/lecteur) for category two, locuteur-énonciateur/je-énonciateur et allocuté-énonciataire/tu-énonciataire for category three. Even someone who does not take kindly to the proliferation of such jargon will be more than willing to tolerate these barbarous neologisms, when the glittering prize is dangled before him of a new and ‘definitive’ understanding of Empedocles’ cosmogonical and religious theories.

Admittedly, for anyone who knows anything about Empedocles, or even about early Greek thought in general, the prospect of this new sunlit land is overshadowed by the opening words of the ‘Introduction’, where Empedocles’ ‘roots’ or elements (the four cosmic bodies of earth, air, fire and water familiar from Plato’s Timaeus onwards) are introduced as so many ‘notions’ (p. 1). The same word is used for the two cosmic powers of Love and Strife, which are also referred to, in a footnote (p. 1 n. 1), as ‘concepts’. Unless this is mere slipshod thinking and mere slipshod writing, then the author would presumably have us believe that the constituents of Empedocles’ universe are so many ‘concepts’ or ‘notions’.

It is true that Empedocles does at one point, speaking of Love, bid his pupil ‘See her with the mind’ (fr. 17,21: τὴν [sc. Φιλότητα] οὐ νῦν δέχοντα.pdf). But it does not follow that Love is a ‘concept’. For Empedocles’ point is not that what we ‘see’ with the mind therefore lies within the mind. On the contrary, Love and Strife and the four elements all exist independently of our knowledge of them.
They are all extended in space. (Love is said specifically to be ‘equal in length and breadth’, fr. 17.20.) They all, including Love and Strife (fr. 35), move from place to place in the cosmos. Unless one is an extreme idealist, ‘concepts’ and ‘notions’ do not exist independently of the mind that thinks them, are not extended in space, and do not move from place to place in the universe. Whatever else they may be, Love and Strife and the four elements are not ‘concepts’ and are not ‘notions’.

Even apart from the obvious philosophical error, ‘concept’ is not a word to be bandied about lightly in the study of pre-Platonic and pre-Aristotelian philosophy. In the fifth century, ‘concepts’ have not become part of the daily bread-and-butter of philosophical discourse. The very word has no simple equivalent in the Fundamentals of Empedocles’ cosmological beliefs.

No less ominous is the author’s error when she proceeds, in the same paragraph (p. 1), to summarise the role assigned to Love and Strife and the four elements in Empedocles’ cosmic system. We are told, rightly enough, that the history of the world embraces two quite different states, one when Love is dominant (‘lorsque Amour prédomine’), and one when Strife is uppermost (‘lorsqu’en revanche c’est Haine qui l’emporte’). Those two times, we are also told, correspond to the birth and death of living creatures. When Love is dominant, «différentes particules se réunissent pour donner forme à une créature». Conversely, when Strife is dominant, «la créature se défait», because «chaque élément rejoint ceux de sa propre espèce».

But that is not all what Empedocles believes. The difference between domination by Love and domination by Strife is not a difference between the formation and the dissolution of living creatures. The activity of Love no less than that of Strife, when taken to its term, leads to a wholly non-cosmic state, where the world as we know it now has disappeared. So much we learn from verses which we know were repeated, in a slightly different form, to describe both the culmination of the work of Love and the culmination of the work of Strife.1

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1 Something has gone awry with the author’s French here, since there is no obvious antecedent to «ceux». ‘Chaque élément rejoint les éléments de sa propre espèce’ would perhaps be possible grammatically, but hardly makes sense. Did the author perhaps mean to write ‘celles’? ‘Chaque élément rejoint celles (î.e. les particules) de sa propre espèce’.

2 ‘The culmination of the work of Love,’ ‘the culmination of the work of Strife’: this I take to be the meaning of the two expressions, «lorsque Amour prédomine» and «lorsqu’en revanche c’est Haine qui l’emporte». The ‘Trésor de la langue française, Dictionnaire de la langue du XIXe et du XXe siècle (1789–1960), 16 tomes (Paris, 1971–1994, tomes i–x, Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, tomes xi–xvi, Gallimard), s.v.v., explains «prédominer» by ‘l’emporter’ and defines «l’emporter» as ‘avoir la supériorité, le dessus lorsqu’on est en lutte, en compétition, en concurrence’. Both expressions are therefore most naturally taken, in an Empedoclean context, as referring, not to a time when Love and Strife are still locked in combat, but to the issue of the conflict, to the
For those are the two quite different contexts to which the verses in question are assigned by Plutarch, in the *De facie*, referring to a time of total Strife, and by Simplicius, in his commentary on the *Physics*, referring to a time of total Love.1 Those two authors may be confident had access to a large part, if not the whole, of Empedocles’ poetic production. Plutarch was the author of a ten-volume commentary on Empedocles, listed in the so-called *Lamprias Catalogue* (n° 43) and once excerpted by Hippolytus (fr. 24 Sandbach). Simplicius, in his commentaries on Aristotle’s *Physics* and *De caelo*, quotes freely from Empedocles and, as he does so, frequently remarks on the position and the context of the verses he records. From the evidence of those two authors, we learn that domination by Strife (Plutarch) as also domination by Love (Simplicius, in conjunction with Eudemus) led to the total disappearance of the world as we know it now.

Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler’s omission of so striking a feature, in her opening summary of Empedocles’ cosmic system, is deeply troubling. The evidence given by two major authorities (Plutarch and Simplicius) is unimpeachable. Empedocles himself obviously gave prominence to the point by his repetition of similar verses in two wholly different contexts (domination by Love, domination by Strife). But not only is this striking feature absent from Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler’s summary of the system; it has been replaced by a quite different account of what happens «lorsque Amour prédomine» and «lorsqu’en revanche c’est Haine qui l’emporte».

An inauspicious beginning for someone who claims to point the way to a new and definitive understanding of Empedocles’ cosmogonical theories. Can the author hope to throw light on theories that she does not understand, even in outline?

The reader’s doubts are only deepened by the final sentence of the opening paragraph, which is even more flagrantly at odds with what we can learn, not simply from the fragments, but from those who quote the fragments. «Puisque les deux puissances cosmiques sont de force égale,» so the author tells us, «la matière est maintenue en un mouvement perpétuel qui anime la vie cosmique dans toute sa diversité et son évolution.» No serious student of Empedocles can read that sentence without a sense of bewilderment, bordering on disbelief. A perpetual movement? A movement which «une fois déclenché, se continuérait toujours de lui-même sans altération»?

Has the author never read the opening chapter of book eight of Aristotle’s *Physics*? Empedocles and Anaxagoras are here contrasted, at length and in detail, precisely to illustrate the point that Anaxagoras’ world, once it has been set in movement by a cosmic mind, continues moving for evermore, as opposed to time when Love has got the better of Strife («lorsque Amour prédomine»), and to the time when Strife has got the better of Love («lorsqu’en revanche c’est Haine qui l’emporte»). If that is not the author’s meaning, I can only protest: if you want to be understood, express yourself clearly.


I quote the definition given by the ‘Trésor de la langue française’, i.e., lest there should be any doubt about the meaning of the word ‘perpétuel’ in contemporary French.
Empedocles’ world, where periods of rest and periods of movement succeed each other in an endless alternation, so that Empedocles’ world, far from being in ‘perpetual’ movement, displays an endless succession of periods of movement and periods of rest.

Aristotle’s evidence is essential for an understanding of Empedocles’ cosmic system. We do, it is true, learn from the fragments that the alternation in power of Love and Strife ‘never ceases’ (fr. 17.12 = fr. 26.11: ... ὀδηγεῖται λύπη). But what we learn no less clearly, from Aristotle’s comments in the Physics, is that the elements subjected to the alternating powers of Love and Strife do not therefore display «un mouvement perpétuel».

Precisely how we are to relate what Aristotle tells us in the Physics to what we are told by Simplicius and Plutarch about what Empedocles’ world is like is not a simple matter. I do myself believe that a close reading of Aristotle’s chapter, combined with a study of the fragments and with an attentive reading of the evidence of other ancient authors whom we know, or may suppose, to have had direct access to Empedocles’ writings, including both Simplicius and Plutarch, is sufficient to enable us to arrive at a reasonably well-founded reconstruction of Empedocles’ ‘cosmic cycle’. Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler may not share my view. But that is not the point at issue here.

The question raised by the concluding sentence of the author’s opening paragraph is a far simpler one. Aristotle, in the Physics, specifically contrasts Anaxagoras and Empedocles. Anaxagoras’ world, once it had been subjected to the intervention of a cosmic ‘mind’, was in perpetual movement. Empedocles’ world was not. When Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler writes, seemingly blithely and unthinkingly, that Empedocles’ elements were in ‘perpetual’ movement, does she mean to discount Aristotle’s evidence? Or is the sad and simple – even if almost unbelievably – truth that she has never even read those pages of the Physics at all?

Were that so, there would be nothing more to say: the author would have to be told to shut up shop, and not to open up again until she has done her homework on the secondary sources. But so abrupt a dismissal is perhaps premature. We have still read only the first paragraph of the ‘Introduction’. A fledgling author can be forgiven a false start. This is only the darkness before the dawn…

Alas, no. The misgivings roused by a reading of the author’s opening sentences are redoubled when we turn to the chapters that follow. In seeking to come to grips with a detailed study of the language of the fragments, Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler persistently fails to take into account what the ancient authors who quote those fragments have to tell us of the cosmological and cosmogonical theories which their quotations are introduced to illustrate.

So it is when, in the opening pages of her first chapter, the author comments on the verses quoted by Simplicius (Phys. 1183.28–1184.4) to illustrate the non-cosmic period that resulted from domination by Love. The first of the verses that Simplicius has quoted (fr. 27.1) tells us that ‘there’ (ἐκεῖνα, sc. in a world dominated by Love) the sun’s ‘swift limbs’ (ὡς ἁρμάτα γυμνά) are no longer to be seen. The sun’s ‘limbs’, so Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler informs us (p. 16), are the rays of the sun, compared in their ‘swiftness’ to the limbs of an athlete, with the reverse comparison allegedly familiar to a contemporary audience, both from paintings of athletes whose arms and legs are depicted as so many ‘rays’ («des représenta-
tions iconographiques de coureurs, dont les bras et les jambes ressemblent à quatre rayons) and from Homer's repeated descriptions of his warrior athletes as possessed of 'shining limbs' (καυδήμα γυνα), «un attribut qui les rapproche du corps céleste».

Both arguments for the comparison of an athlete to the sun prove to be merely fanciful. Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler's single reference (p. 16 n. 11) to the «représentation iconographique» of a heliacal athlete is to a late archaic red-figure vase, illustrated in the catalogue of an exhibition mounted in Paris some years ago. Anywho who takes the trouble to look up the illustration will find himself sorely exercised in attempting to see the athlete's arms and legs portrayed as so many rays of sunlight.

The supposed Homeric parallel has no firmer foundation. There are seven occurrences of 'shining limbs' (καυδήμα γυνα) in the Iliad (none in the Odyssey). But there is nothing, in any one of these verses, to suggest sunlight, and in only one passage (xxiii 63) is there an (indirect) reference to running. The context, as often as not, is quite other. In four out of the seven verses (vi 27, xiii 455, xvi 805, xxiii 691), the 'radiant limbs' are those of a warrior who is on the point of death. Far from speeding across the field of battle, as the innocent reader of Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler's pages may have been led to suppose, Homer's warrior is about to sink to the ground, life swiftly ebbing from his 'shining limbs'.

The claim that, despite the use of a different epithet (οὐρέτα in Empedocles, καυδήμα in Homer), the sun's rays are compared to those of an athlete, and the limbs of an athlete compared, conversely, to the rays of the sun, is a pure fiction. But the sadness is not merely that here, as not infrequently elsewhere, Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler has let her imagination run away with her. The tragedy is that, by failing to explore the context in which Empedocles' verse is quoted, our author has failed to see that there really is a cosmic significance in the sun's limbs being described, at this precise point in the poem, as 'swift'.

Simplicius, in recording the verse, refers to, and is very possibly quoting from, Eudemus, a runner-up to Aristotle’s succession at the Lyceum, someone therefore whom we may well suppose to have had independent access to a written text. Eudemus (fr. 110 Wehrli), as also Simplicius, is commenting on Aristotle’s long account of periods of alternate movement and rest in the opening chapter of book eight of the *Physics*. The verses referring to ‘the sun’s swift limbs’ are introduced by way of illustrating Eudemus’ claim that the successive periods of rest which Aristotle attributes to Empedocles fall in the non-cosmic state resulting from Love’s triumph over Strife. The elements are motionless when Love is dominant.

Hence, or so we may well suppose, the reference to the sun’s ὄμελα γυνα. Lack of movement, and therefore lack of speed, are singled out as the features no longer to be ‘seen’ (fr. 27.1: δειτεται) when Love’s rule is complete, for the simple and obvious reason that, when Love has made the elements into one, there is no sun and no movement. Lack of movement, and lack of speed, are singled out as the features conspicuously lacking in a world where the elements are at rest.

Do I need to spell out the lesson to be learnt? Instead of hunting for a – totally chimerical – Homeric parallel, Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler needed merely to study the evidence for Empedocles’ cosmic theories as recorded by Aristotle and Eudemus (via Simplicius) to see that the epithet on which she has lavished her attention does indeed have a cosmological significance, and would therefore have fitted very neatly into a study sub-titled ‘Cosmologie et métaphore’. But, here as elsewhere, the cosmological connotations of Empedocles’ use of metaphor cannot be brought to light by someone who studiously ignores the account of Empedocles’ cosmic system recorded for us by those who quote his verses.

The same sorry tale continues in the chapter entitled ‘Les temps’ (chapter 5, pp. 133–164). We are here introduced to a group of three verses (fr. 30) where Strife leaps forward to seize his honours ‘when the time that has been fixed in exchange by a broad oath comes to an end’. «Ces vers», Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler solemnly informs her reader (p. 146), «montrent que le texte tend à illustrer le paramètre temporel à l’aide du paramètre spatial.»

Perhaps so. But, more to the point, what was the purpose of these verses in the context from which they have been taken? All the author tells us, in a brief footnote (p. 146 n. 28), is that the lines are quoted by Aristotle and by Simplicius «pour illustrer le fait qu’Amour et Haine jouent, selon la doctrine d’Empédocle, un rôle de même importance à l’intérieur de la vie cosmique». That sentence is so far from being the whole truth that it is almost an untruth. We know more, far more, of the context of the verses than Rosenfeld-Löffler’s weasel words would lead us to believe.

From a comparison of Aristotle’s remarks in the *Metaphysics* (B 4, 1000 b 9–17) with what Simplicius tells us when quoting the same verses in his commentary on the *Physics* (1184,5–18), we know that the fragment describes the moment when Strife invades the motionless sphere, ruled by Love, and in so doing unleashes a new cosmogony, a cosmogony of increasing Strife. The ‘time’ that ‘comes to an end’ is therefore most naturally taken to be the time of Love’s total rule, a time of rest and unity that has been allowed to Love ‘in exchange’ (fr. 30.3:
for the time of movement and plurality that will now be claimed by Strife. We may even suppose that the two 'times', the time that is coming to an end and the time that is about to begin, are none other than the 'equal times' that Aristotle refers to at the end of his detailed account of Empedocles' theory of movement and rest in the last book of the *Physics* (viii 1, 252 A 31–32).

Not only is there not a breath of all this in Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler's study of the verses; the author appears, once again, to be unaware of the information that can be gleaned from a study of the authors who quote the verses. For in her concluding chapter she refers to this very moment in the 'cyclic' interpretation of Empedocles, only to declare that, on such a theory, the change-over from total Love to increasing Strife occurs «suite à un incident non déterminé» (p. 169). But no: the «incident» supposedly «non déterminé» is precisely Strife's leaping forward to seize his 'honours' when the time that has been fixed by a broad oath 'in exchange' for those honours 'comes to an end'.

It is true that Aristotle may not have thought much of 'time', 'honours' and an 'oath' as a cause of cosmic change (see his disparaging comment in Met. B 4, 1000 b 17). But Empedocles was still living in a world where such factors would have counted for a good deal in the governance of the universe. They would certainly not have added up to an «incident non déterminé», and the significance of their conjunction at this point is merely trivialised by a passing remark on the coincidence of temporal and spatial 'parameters'.

A no less distressing example of the author's neglect of secondary evidence is to be found in her study of «déictiques temporels» (pp. 160–161 and pp. 178–185). There are several references, in the surviving verses, to the state of the world at the present time. Empedocles speaks of the four cosmic bodies as including 'all the things that we see now' (fr. 38.2: ... τὰ νῦν ἐκορμόμεν ἥπαντα), and in another fragment of combinations of the four elements that 'have come into being now, joined together by Aphrodite' (fr. 71.4: ... ἄλλα νῦν γεγυμαν ϑυμωμοθέντ᾽ Ἀρμόδιῃ). He twice uses the same adverb (νῦν) in verses recovered from the Strasbourg papyrus, when he speaks of people living 'now' as under threat from the forces of Strife (Ensemble a ii, verse 14, and Ensemble d, verse 3).

Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler has trouble reconciling these seemingly different applications of the same adverb, the one relating to Love's activity (fr. 71.4), the other belonging to a context overshadowed by Strife (the verses recovered from the Strasbourg papyrus). To extricate herself from the apparent contradiction, she claims that, in the papyrus, the reference to mortals living 'now' is restricted to «ces mortels malheureux qui n’ont pas accès à l’enseignement de l’énonciateur», as distinct from Empedocles and his disciples, «ces nous [...] décrits dans un mouvement conforme à la force d’Amour» (p. 184).

Nowhere does the author look to Aristotle for a simpler and safer solution to her problem. Aristotle states categorically (*De gen. et corr.* ii 6, 334 a 5–7) that we are living 'now' in a world subject to the influence of Strife (ἐπί τε τοῦ Νεῖκους νῦν), as opposed to a previous dispensation subjected to the influence of Love (... προτέρου ἐπί τῆς Φύλας). But Aristotle’s point, in the long passage of commentary that accompanies this observation (*De gen. et corr.* ii 6, 333 a 16–334 a 15), is not that Love is therefore absent from the world as it is 'now'.

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If we follow through Aristotle’s remarks, both here and elsewhere, notably in the
passage of the *Metaphysics* accompanying his quotation of fr. 30 (B 4, 1000 a 18–b 22), we are easily able to understand that, in the world as at present
constituted, we do still ‘see’ (cf. fr. 38) combinations of the elements ‘joined to-
gether by Aphrodite’ (fr. 71.4), but that such harmonious combinations are
nonetheless doomed to disappear because the world we are living in ‘now’ is
a world where Love’s power is on the decline, and Strife’s power is on the
increase – precisely the message proclaimed loud and clear in the verses of the
Strasbourg papyrus (Ensemble a ii, verses 14–19, and Ensemble d). For the world
as it is ‘now’ is no longer the world as it was in the past (Aristotle’s πρότερον),
when Love’s power was on the increase, and when Strife’s power was in decline.

Once again, the reader can only wonder: is Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler
so much as aware of Aristotle’s distinction between past (πρότερον) and present
(νῦν) in Empedocles’ universe? Aristotle’s «déictique temporel» (νῦν) is exactly
the same as the «déictiques temporels» in Empedocles’ own verses. Why then has
no account been taken of Aristotle’s testimony?

Aristotle’s ‘now’ both confirms and explains how it is that, living ‘now’ in a
world increasingly subjected to the influence of Strife, we nonetheless still see
around us ‘now’ a multiplicity of objects that have been formed by Love. Aris-
totle’s simple distinction obviates the need for Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler’s im-
plausible claim that Empedocles himself and his disciples are excluded from the
ranks of those who ‘now’ inhabit a world under imminent threat from the in-
creasing power of Strife.

If Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler fails to see that point, it is not only because she
has failed to take account of the evidence in Aristotle. The author has invented
for herself a picture of Love’s activity as the central feature of Empedocles’
teaching, of Love’s influence as paramount in Empedocles’ description of the
shifting fortunes of the universe, and of Love’s presence as determining the rela-
tionship between Empedocles and his pupil Pausanias. It would be too wear-
some to pursue the multiple errors that such an interpretation has led to in the
reading of individual fragments. A couple of examples must suffice.

One frequent source of error lies in translations taken over, uncritically, from
the latest French edition of the fragments (Bollack). So it is when «la valeur cos-
omologique de l’acte de la communication en cours», «un événement déterminé
par la force cosmique Amour» (p. 6), is allegedly exemplified by the reference to
‘learning’ (μάθημα) in Empedocles’ exhortation to his pupil (fr. 17.14): ἀλλ’ ὀνειρεύον
cλήθη: μαθημάτην τοῦ ὀρθοῦ τοῖς ψυχικῶις. The translation of this verse adopted
by Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler: «Mais allons, écoute ce récit: d’écouter, plus riche
deviendra ta pensée» (p. 26), is nothing more than a poor man’s paraphrase.

The verb in the imperative that concludes the first half of the verse (κλήθη) is
not repeated at the beginning of the second half of the verse, as it is in the trans-
lation («écoute» followed by «d’écouter»). The pupil’s ψυχικῶις are the object of a
transitive verb in the Greek (αὐξάνει), not the subject of an intransitive verb, as in
the French («plus riche deviendra...»). Finally and irredeemably, the turning up-
side down and inside out of the syntax, with the object of a transitive verb in
Greek (ψυχικῶις αὐξάνει) becoming the subject of an intransitive verb in French
(«plus riche deviendra ta pensée»), leaves no room, in the translation, for the
subject of the verb in Greek (μάθη). The very word that, more than any other, is essential to Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler’s general thesis therefore finds no place in the translation, unless perhaps we are to suppose that ‘learning’ (μάθη) is somehow to be subsumed under ‘hearing’ (d’écouter).

With a translation of the Greek so far removed from the text, the long analysis that follows the translation (pp. 27–30) loses what little cogency it might otherwise have had, and leaves the reader more than ever bewildered when, many pages later, the author introduces, without a whisper of explanation or apology, a quite different translation of the same verse, much closer to the Greek (p. 78): «L’apprentissage rendra plus riche ta pensée.» Why not have chosen this translation in the first place?

Elsewhere, it is not only the translation but the text that is hopeless. To reinforce her picture of Love the seducer (a role which she takes to be imitated by Empedocles himself), Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler makes much (pp. 65–69) of a verse (fr. 17.25) where we read in the manuscripts (Simplicius, Phys. 158.24) τὴν [sc. 'Αφροδίτην] oú τις μετ’ ὀσσουν [MS. DE, μετ' ὀσσιάν MS. F] ἔλοσωμενήν δεδώκατε. The majority reading (ὀσσοῦν) does not scan. The variant (ὀσσιάν) does scan. But the meaning of the word, if it is to be the same (‘eyes’), would require a spelling of ὀσσιάν (with a single sigma) not attested elsewhere.1

There have been several attempts at emendation. Brandis, in 1862, proposed reading μετά τοιοῦ, a correction which happily repeats another use of the protosarticle as a demonstrative pronoun, a few lines earlier, referring to the elements (v. 20: ἐν τοῖοι).2 Right or wrong, Brandis’ correction restores the metre, fits the context and requires a change of only two letters (MS. F) or of three (MSS. DE). The correction was adopted by Diels, in his Poetarum philosophorum fragmenta (1901). It is retained in the first edition of his ‘Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker’ (1923), and has been repeated ever since, in subsequent editions of that work.

Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler (again following Bollack) prints μετ’ ὀσσιάν (p. 65), and translates (p. 67): «Elle, personne ne l’a reconnue, comme elle tour.price les yeux.» But is she even aware of the anomaly (an unknown variant of ὀσσιάν), «les yeux», with one sigma instead of two? Certainly, she has no knowledge of the history of the text, for the only warning she gives her reader that all may not be well with the words she has printed is that editors other than Bollack «suivant DK 1951, corrigeant ὀσσιάν en ὀσσοῦν» (p. 68 n. 72).

By 1951 Diels had long been dead. The correction of the text printed in all editions of ‘Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker’, including the most recent (μετά τοιοῦ), was first put forward almost a century earlier (by Brandis, in 1862, see above). And that correction is not the word unaccountably quoted in Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler’s footnote (ὀσσιάν, ‘with torments’). No serious study of

1 In the Thesaurus linguae graecae occurrence is recorded of ὀσσοῦν or ὀσσοῦν (with a double sigma), and not a single occurrence (other than Simplicius’ quotation of the verse from Empedocles) of an alternative spelling (with a single sigma).

Empedocles’ diction or meaning can possibly hope to arise, phoenix like, from such a shambles.

It would be easy enough to extend this catalogue of errors, but would there be any point? Enough is enough (as the French love to say, in English). The general air of self-confidence, verging on arrogance, that pervades the pages of this volume is totally out of keeping with what little the author has to tell us. The parallels and verbal echoes, spelt out at painful length, are as often as not a mere statement of the obvious. The repetition, page after page, of the latest heavy-handed linguistic jargon is a constant irritant, a vexatious distraction that rarely, if at all, adds to our understanding of the fragments.

But all these faults are as nothing compared to the author’s wilful neglect of the secondary evidence for our knowledge of Empedocles’ cosmic theories. It should surely have been obvious, to the author and to those who advised her, that a study of Empedocles’ poetic diction, and its cosmological implications, cannot be pursued successfully if divorced from the content of the poems, and cannot therefore afford to neglect what we may learn of the content from those several writers (Aristotle, Plutarch, Simplicius) who still had available to them a large part, if not the whole, of Empedocles’ poetic production, and who frequently acquaint us with the detail of his theories.

But let me not end on a seemingly adversarial note. I do very much hope it will not be taken amiss if I venture to address my final remarks to the author herself. Chère consœur, you may well think that I have done you an injustice in writing so critical a review of your thesis. You may even be moved to complain that I have hardly attempted to summarise, still less to engage with, the elaborate theoretical structure which you have erected for what I am sure you sincerely believe is a new and refreshing reading of Empedocles’ verses. If I have not done so, it is not because I am unmindful of my duties as a reviewer, but because any such discussion would be premature.

Whatever conclusions the style of criticism you engage in may be made to yield, those conclusions cannot be worth the paper they are written on if they are founded on readings and translations that are obviously false or inadequate, and if they fly in the face of what we are told of Empedocles’ meaning by the very authors to whom we are indebted for our knowledge of the surviving fragments. Until – unless – those essential matters have been put right, it would be a waste of my time, and of my reader’s time, to engage in any more detailed consideration of the critical tools that you attempt to employ. At almost every turn, the method you have chosen is falsified by its results. To seek to abstract from those results, to attempt to consider your method independently of the conclusions you have drawn from it, would be a fruitless task, and impossible within the confines of a brief review.

Here then is my advice, if you have the courage to begin again. Give up any idea that the stylistic study of Empedocles is an easy option, a short-cut to an

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1 To support the reading δῶοςον (fr. 17.24), Annette Rosenfeld-Löffler calls attention (p. 68 n. 72) to the «structure annulaire» of vv. 20 to 25 if δῶοςον (v. 25: «les yeux») looks back to οὕσις (v. 21). But the «structure annulaire», for what it is worth, is virtually the same with Brands’ correction: μετὰ τοῦτον (v. 25) looks back to ἐν τούτων (v. 20), τὴν (v. 25) repeats τήν (v. 21), and ἀρθίμα (v. 23) echoes ἀρθίρος (v. 22).
understanding of Empedocles’ cosmological and religious theories. Reconcile yourself to the fact that style and ‘diction’ cannot be separated from content, what a person says from the way he says it. In the light of that obvious, and incontrovertible, truth, you need to do two things. First, familiarise yourself with the history of the text, giving special attention to questions of syntax and metre, so that you are able to adopt an independent reading of the fragments instead of taking on trust an existing edition and translation, least of all an edition notorious for its failings and foibles.

Next, acquaint yourself with the secondary evidence for Empedocles’ cosmic theories, paying special attention to what we are told of the context of the fragments by ancient authors whom we may suppose to have had a first-hand knowledge of the written text. And when you do so, try to find time to peruse, however briefly, some of the modern literature on the subject, if only to avoid any of the more obvious errors to which you might otherwise be liable. For example, the myth of ‘continuous’ movement in Empedocles has been well and truly exploded in pages which you would obviously have found it profitable to read, if only you had approached your subject in a more workmanlike way.

Then, and only then, take up again your study of «La poétique d’Empédocles», and write a wholly new and different book. The result might be interesting. It might even prove useful.

Denis O’Brien


Die weithin vertraute Ansicht, wie sie Aristoteles exemplarisch vertritt (Met. I 3–10), ging davon aus, die Geschichte der Philosophie folge einem teleologisch bestimmten Entwicklungsgang, der von anfänglich rudimentären Antworten auf menschliche Grundfragen in zunehmender Vervollkommnung zu einem nahezu perfekten Wissensstand in der Erkenntnis der Wahrheit geführt habe. Dieses Schema vom Gang des menschlichen Wissens als progressiv sich vollender Fortschrittsgeschichte ist nicht zuletzt in der Formel...