CHAPTER 1

Reconstructing Empedocles' On Nature

In the Introduction to this book, we have seen that Empedocles' thought has traditionally been reconstructed in two different poems: one is religious in content and goes under the title *Purifications*, while the other, titled *On Nature*, is on topics connected with what may be considered as fifth-century natural philosophy. This reconstruction can be traced back to nineteenth-century approaches to Empedocles' thought which, by considering his philosophical theories and religious doctrines as belonging to distinct and irreconcilable areas, sharply separated all religious material from the more strictly physical fragments. However, by 1960 Kahn had already demonstrated that there is no doctrinal conflict between the two poems, since the *Purifications* presuppose Empedocles' cosmology, while *On Nature* is a profoundly religious work. Kahn's pivotal revision ensured that scholars gradually discredited the idea of Empedocles' doctrinal dichotomy as an anachronistic imposition on fifth-century thought and began instead to point out that the philosopher's physical theories in *On Nature* and the religious concerns of the *Purifications* display analogies.

Nevertheless, this ongoing reconsideration of the relationship between Empedocles' religious and physical interests seems to have had no impact on how scholars assign his fragments to one or the other poem. Modern editions of Empedocles' verses still present a conventional apportionment: verses related to the concept of rebirth and purificatory rules are generally separated from fragments of a more physical character, connected to the four elements and the two forces of Love and Strife, the cosmic cycle, the origin and development of our world, zoogony, anthropogony, biology and epistemology. In this way, scholars *de facto* perpetuate the nineteenth-century distinction, as if it had some independent authority. In the present chapter I will demonstrate that it has none.

Following the path opened by Kahn concerning a reading of Empedocles' philosophy that is unified, in the first two chapters of this book my aim is to go even further: by reconsidering the place of several

religious fragments by locating them within the proem to *On Nature*, I will provide that reading with a concrete textual basis. Thus, aiming at showing that the prologue to Empedocles' *On Nature* can be reconstructed out of several topics and verses traditionally attributed to the *Purifications*,[1] the major claim of Chapters 1 and 2 is that the need to rethink the interrelation and interaction among myth, religion and natural philosophy in Empedocles' thought is not only prompted by the context of fifth-century thought in which Empedocles happened to live and work or by the doctrinal background of his verses; rather, it is primarily urged by the text of *On Nature*, which returns us verses and topics concerning guilty gods and rebirths in synergy with more strictly physical theories. More specifically, whereas in the next chapter I will reconstruct the whole sequence of verses and topics that introduce *On Nature*, my argument here is a justification of the apportionment of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to the very *incipit* of the physical proem.

The re-allocation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) is no small matter, but significant for a number of reasons, most importantly, because its verses are crucial for our understanding of Empedocles' thought and therefore it is one of the most quoted fragments by ancient authors from the whole Empedoclean corpus.[2] Through its lines, Empedocles tells the story of the gods who, because of crimes committed while trusting Strife, are banished from the divine community and exiled to our world where, for many years, they are obliged to be reborn as other forms of living beings. At the end of the fragment, Empedocles declares he himself is one of these gods, an exile and a wanderer because of Strife. Thus, the relevance of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) for a rounded understanding of Empedoclean philosophy lies in the fact that its verses are the place where Empedocles speaks, on the one hand, of the chain of rebirths and, on the other hand, of his exceptional nature as a god. Precisely because of its mythical-religious content, the relocation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) within the proem to *On Nature* will set the stage for a re-evaluation of Empedocles' physical poem and natural philosophy in their entirety.

[1] For the standard apportionment of Empedocles' fragments between his two poems, and consequently the interpretation of Empedocles' apparent doctrinal antinomy, see my Introduction to this book.

[2] In his *Index fontium*, O'Brien lists about twenty-four authors who quote or recall one or more of its lines and he mentions further passages of ancient works, which either do or might hint at it, see O'Brien (1981: 111–14, p. 115 *index alphabeticum*), on the basis of Diels (1901: 150–53). See also Rowett (1987b: 113 n.120).

The chapter begins with a look at the Strasbourg papyrus and the evidence it has uncovered that is relevant to the question of the nature and content of the physical poem, followed by a fresh reading of the verses of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most). Having set up this necessary background, I will then challenge the basis on which scholars have located B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) within the *Purifications*, discussing the indirect tradition through a close survey of its major sources: Plutarch, Hippolytus and Simplicius. Thereby, it will be shown that neither Plutarch nor Hippolytus can be taken as evidence for a sure allocation of B 115 within the *Purifications*, whereas Simplicius seems to have read it within Empedocles' *On Nature*. In Section 1.4, I will address scholars' claims that B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) and B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) belong together for thematic reasons and show, in contrast, that Empedocles' claim to be a god in B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) is perfectly comprehensible in its own terms and does not need, therefore, to be elucidated through the story recounted in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most). Finally, in the last section, I will return to the direct tradition of the Strasbourg papyrus and show that it provides evidence for the location of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) within *On Nature*.

1.1 Evidence from the Strasbourg Papyrus

Before delving into a close analysis of the lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), it is necessary to introduce the extraordinary finding of the Strasbourg papyrus.[3] Shedding new light on the issue of the doctrinal unity of Empedocles' thought, this finding also provides evidence for a new reconstruction of the proem to Empedocles' physical poem and the allocation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) within it. The present section therefore provides a general outline of the papyrus fragments relevant to the main aim of this chapter, along with a survey of their background scholarship.

As I mentioned in the Introduction to this book, the Strasbourg papyrus is an extraordinary document for a number of reasons, but most importantly because it hands down to us a piece of the work of a pre-Socratic author, hitherto known only through indirect tradition; that is, through quotations from much later authors. The Strasbourg papyrus is dated between the first and the second century CE and was purchased in 1904

[3] The *editio princeps* is by A. Martin and O. Primavesi for the German press De Gruyter: see Martin-Primavesi (1999).

by the German archaeologist Otto Rubensohn from the boutique of an antiquarian dealer in Achmîm, Upper Egypt, on behalf of the Deutsches Papyruskartell. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was then sold to the *Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire de Strasbourg*. However, it was only in 1992 that it was identified as Empedoclean by the Belgian scholar A. Martin who, together with the German colleague O. Primavesi, restored from its fifty-two fragments, each containing no more than a few letters, eleven *ensembles*, classified in alphabetical order,[4] comprising verses from Empedocles' physical poem.[5] Two of the *ensembles* stand out due to their size: *ens.* a is restored out of twenty-four papyrus fragments, *ens.* d out of eleven fragments.[6] The other *ensembles* are in contrast much smaller.[7] The sum of the visible lines on the six major ensembles is approximately seventy-four.

Several verses, visible on the first column of *ens.* a, coincide with the last lines of an already known Empedoclean fragment, DK 31 B 17 (= EMP D 73.233–66 Laks-Most), which is quoted by Simplicius from the first book of *On Nature*[8] and represents one of the most important pieces for the interpretation of Empedocles' cosmic cycle.[9] In fact, the thirty-five lines forming B 17 (= EMP D 73.233–66 Laks-Most) are generally considered to be the beginning of Empedocles' genuinely physical exposition, indeed the first introduction of the cosmic cycle after the proemial section.[10] Thus, the rest

[4] *Ens.* a–k, see Martin-Primavesi (1999: 3–6).

[5] Since all papyrus fragments derive from the same papyrus scroll, Martin-Primavesi (1999: e.g., 8) argued that the verses of the Strasbourg papyrus derive from Empedocles' physical poem, and more precisely from Books I and II. Janko (2004: 3), on the contrary, has convincingly demonstrated that all the fragments attested on the papyrus come from the same book, namely the first book of *On Nature*.

[6] Moreover, *ens.* a presents the traces of two papyrus columns. From the first we can read the rest of the last nine lines, the second contains all thirty lines. *Ens.* d contains the first eighteen lines of another column.

[7] Specifically, *ens.* f is restored out of six fragments, while *ens.* b, c and g out of just two fragments each. Moreover, on *ens.* b the lower edge of a column can be clearly seen, while *ens.* c, d and e present the top margin of a column. In addition, *ens.* f is to be placed between two columns, as it contains traces from the right edge of one column and the left edge of the following column. In a 2004 article, Janko proposed that *ens.* c be reconstructed as the rest of the column following the second column of *ens.* a, while he also showed that *ens.* f represents the inferior and right portion of the same column attested by *ens.* d. Janko's reconstruction is endorsed by Primavesi (2008a).

[8] Simplicius, *Phys.* 157.25, by quoting the lines of B 17, reports that they are to be found ἐν τῶι πρώτωι τῶν Φυσικῶν. Since all papyrus fragments derive from the same papyrus scroll, Martin-Primavesi (1999: e.g., 8) argued that the verses of the Strasbourg papyrus derive from Empedocles' physical poem, namely Books I and II. Janko (2004: 3), on the contrary, has convincingly demonstrated that all the fragments attested on the papyrus come from the same book, namely the first book of *On Nature*.

[9] Portions of this fragment will be examined in Chapters 5.1 and 7.1.

[10] In *Phys.* 161.14–15 Simplicius quotes B 17.1–2 (= EMP D 73.233–4 Laks-Most) and notes that these lines come εὐθὺς ἐν ἀρχῇ. O'Brien (1981: 23) takes it as an indication that these lines belong '"au tout début" du poème'. In light of the evidence of the papyrus that, as we are going to see, enables us to reconstruct B 17.1 as line 232 (or 233, see n.12 below) of the first book of Empedocles' *On Nature*, Simplicius' indication can be taken as referring to the beginning of the physical exposition, rather than to the *incipit* of the poem.

of the text displayed on *ens.* a and on all other reconstructed papyrus fragments is to be taken as the continuation of this cosmological exposition. Moreover, on the left margin, in correspondence to the last line of the second column of *ens.* a (= a[ii]30), we can read a stichometric sign, a Γ, indicating that the verse corresponds to the three-hundredth line of Empedocles' poem.[11] This indication enables the exact collocation of the lines of B 17 (= EMP D 73.233–66 Laks-Most) within the first book of *On Nature* and thus we can now consider B 17.1 (= EMP D 73.233 Laks-Most) to correspond to line 232.[12] In parallel, the stichometric sign indirectly reveals that the proem to *On Nature* included over two-hundred lines and, by virtue of its considerable length, very likely comprised a broad variety of topics and verses besides those that have generally been considered part of the proem.[13]

As mentioned in the Introduction, the indication of a theme that likely belonged to this prologue comes from another papyrus fragment, labelled *ens.* d–f. Here we find two lines (*ens.* d–f 5–6 [= EMP D 76.5–6 Laks-Most]) that correspond to an already known Empedoclean fragment, DK 31 B 139 (= EMP D 34 Laks-Most):

ιΟἴμοι ὅτ(ι) οὐ πρόσθεν με δι̣ ιώλεσε νηλ λεὲς ἦμαρ, 5
ιπρὶν̣ λ χηλαῖς̣ ισχέλ τ̣λι̣᾽ ἔργα βορ̣ ιᾶς πέρι μητλ ἰ̣ǫ̣ι̣ ισθαι·λ

Alas that the pitiless day did not destroy me earlier, 5
before I contrived terrible deeds about feeding with my claws.

By quoting these two lines, the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry of Tyre related Empedocles' 'terrible deeds' with a 'sin concerning food' that requires healing 'by means of purifications'.[14] Because of their pathos-filled tone, their thematic connection to food deemed unfit to be eaten, and their contextualization in our source against a purifying backdrop, scholars have generally attributed these two verses to the *Purifications*. On the contrary, the papyrus demonstrates that they are part of a physical context dealing with biology and the origin of living beings.

[11] See Martin-Primavesi (1999: 22): 'La lettre Γ que présente le papyrus d'Empédocle, en regard de a(ii) 30, signifie donc que le copiste en est à la 300^{e} ligne de son labeur'.

[12] Primavesi (2008a: 64). According to Janko (2004), Martin-Primavesi (1999: 104) and Laks-Most (2016: EMP D 73), B 17.1 corresponds to line 233. The different numbering of the verses is based on whether the line reconstructed by Berg, οὕτως ἦι μὲν ἓν ἐκ πλεόνων μεμάθηκε φύεσθαι, which in the edition by Diels-Kranz corresponds to line 9, is accepted or not.

[13] Therefore, the proem to *On Nature* must be considered much longer and more elaborate in terms of content than the introductions reconstructed by recent scholars in their editions (all *post* Strasbourg papyrus), such as Tonelli (2002), Viték (2006), Montevecchi (2010), Graham (2010), Mansfeld-Primavesi (2011) and Laks-Most (2016).

[14] *De Abst.* 2.31 = DK 31 B 139 (= EMP D 34 Laks-Most).

The crucial importance of this evidence lies in the fact that it bridges the gap between what have been regarded as religious and physical topics, showing that Empedocles' physics can accommodate themes of personal responsibility and guilt regarding the consumption of forbidden foods, as well as the topic of the resulting miserable condition as human beings in this world. As P. Curd emphasized, 'the Strasbourg evidence shows pretty clearly that one can no longer allocate lines of text because they seem to an interpreter "purificatory" or "physical"', instead 'that evidence suggests that some purificatory material appeared in *On Nature*'.[15] Thus, the Strasbourg evidence is a strong indication that Empedocles' philosophy accommodates both religious and physical doctrines, indeed, *On Nature* discloses a fundamental doctrinal unity. Empedocles' thought needs therefore to be reinterpreted and reassessed in the light of this crucial evidence.

Consequently, the publication of the papyrus has lent new popularity to the proposition, promoted in 1987 by C. Rowett, that we consider Empedocles as the author of a single poem, which our ancient sources indifferently referred to by the titles *Purifications* and *On Nature*. Since the publication of the papyrus, a growing number of scholars have supported Rowett's assumption, even though, as I pointed out in the Introduction, the account of at least one ancient source, notably Diogenes Laertius, suggests that Empedocles wrote two distinct poems.[16] In any case, the papyrus evidence prompts a reconsideration of the criteria according to which Empedocles' fragments should be allocated between *On Nature* and the *Purifications*. Indeed, it invites us to rethink the collocation within *On Nature* of topics that have generally been considered religious and therefore attributed to the *Purifications*. For this reason, the first editors of the Strasbourg papyrus, Martin and Primavesi, suggested reconstructing B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) within the prologue of the physical

[15] Curd (2005: 139).

[16] See Diog. Laert. 8.77: τὰ μὲν οὖν Περὶ φύσεως αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ Καθαρμοὶ εἰς ἔπη τείνουσι πεντακισχίλια. As I argued in the Introduction, in this passage Empedocles' two poems are mentioned in one breath in relation to the number of verses they amount to. Moreover, at 8.54 Diogenes Laertius quoted the opening lines of the *Purifications* (B 112 [= EMP D 4 Laks-Most]), where Empedocles addresses his fellow citizens of Agrigento, and at 8.60 the dedicatory line of *On Nature* is cited, in which he speaks to his disciple Pausanias, son of Ankytos (B 1 [= EMP D 41 Laks-Most]). This suggests that Diogenes Laertius is aware not merely of Empedocles' different titles, but also of separate works that he distinguishes in terms of address. Therefore, although Rowett's pivotal study has the merit of having challenged the traditional allocation of Empedocles' fragments that was based on an anachronistic interpretation of his doctrinal dualism, my point is that Diogenes Laertius' report on Empedocles' two poems cannot be dismissed easily.

poem.[17] However, from 2001 onwards Primavesi changed his view and vehemently advocated the conservative collocation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) among the fragments of the *Purifications.* This conclusion has since been followed by other Empedoclean editors; in fact, it has been followed by all those who argue for Empedocles as the author of two poems.[18] Yet, why do they continue advocating an old arrangement of the fragments despite the new evidence?

On the one hand, scholars ground their conservative reconstruction in the indirect tradition, which is generally thought to provide evidence for the attribution of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to the *Purifications*. For instance, O'Brien in 1981 used Plutarch's quotation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to reconstruct a sort of standard criterion according to which Empedoclean verses could be attributed to the *Purifications* with a greater level of certainty. In 2001, however, O'Brien dismissed Plutarch as conclusive evidence for the attribution of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to the *Purifications* in favour of Hippolytus. Yet, as I will show in 1.3, a close reading of the Strasbourg papyrus challenges both O'Brien's 1981 reconstruction and his 2001 interpretation.

On the other hand, scholars generally consider that the similarity in content between B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) and the proem to the *Purifications* (B 112 [= EMP D 4 Laks-Most]) – namely the fact that, in both fragments, Empedocles claims to be a god – is a major reason to allocate B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) in the religious poem. In this respect, Primavesi maintains that Empedocles' claim to divine nature in B 112 can only be understood on the basis of the doctrine of reincarnation enunciated through the lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) which, for this reason, must be read within the same context. Additionally, Primavesi distinguishes the two poems according to two different fictional narrators, a god in the *Purifications* and a human being in *On Nature*.[19] In contrast, in 1.4 it will be shown that Empedocles' claims to be a god in B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) and B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) are perfectly comprehensible in their own terms and do not need, therefore, to be read together, while the way in which Empedocles styled himself in *On Nature* is

[17] Martin-Primavesi (1999: e.g., 113).

[18] See Tonelli (2002), Bollack (2003), Vítek (2006), Gemelli-Marciano (2009), Graham (2010), Montevecchi (2010), Mansfeld-Primavesi (2011 and 2021) and Laks-Most (2016). It is worth noting that, even before the publication of the Strasbourg papyrus, two scholars argued for apportioning Empedocles' B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) and other religious verses related to it within *On Nature*: van der Ben (1975) and Sedley (1989, 1998). Their reconstructions have been discussed in the Introduction.

[19] Mansfeld-Primavesi (2021: 392–93; see already Primavesi [2013: 687–88]).

comparable to his portrait as a god in the *Purifications*. For this reason, B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) can well be part of the physical poem. Finally, in contrast to those scholars advocating an old arrangement of fragments, in Section 1.5 I argue that the question of the attribution of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to Empedocles' physical poem is conclusively settled by the Strasbourg evidence and precisely, by PStrasb. d–f 3–10 (= EMP D 76.3–10 Laks-Most), which I have already partially discussed above. This result will be then compared with a report of Plutarch on some lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to conclude that the story of the guilty gods belongs to the *incipit* of *On Nature*.

1.2 B 115 and the Story of the Guilty God

Having now introduced the papyrus fragments in question and the scholarly background to their study, let us look more closely at B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), which reads as follows:

ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,
ἀΐδιον, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὅρκοις·
εὖτέ τις ἀμπλακίῃσι φόνωι φίλα γυῖα μι<ή>ν<ηι>
†ὅς καὶ ἐπίορκον ἁμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσηι†,
δαίμονες οἵτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο
τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
φυόμενον παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἴδεα θνητῶν
ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὖδας ἀπέπτυσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς
ἠελίου ἀκάμαντος, ὁ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·
ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.
τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
νείκεϊ μαινομένωι πίσυνος.

There is an oracle of Necessity, an ancient decree of the gods
eternal, sealed with broad oaths:
whenever a god nefariously stains his limbs with blood,
(and/or) takes by his error a false oath
– gods who have won long-lasting life –
this wanders for thrice ten thousand seasons away from the blessed ones
being born throughout the time as all kinds of mortal forms
interchanging the hard paths of life.
For the strength of Ether pursues him into Sea,
and Sea spits him onto the surface of Earth and Earth into the rays
of tireless Sun, and this throws him into the eddies of Ether;

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009392600.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and one after another they receive him, but all hate him.
I too am now one of these, an exile from the gods and a wanderer,
trusting in mad Strife.

As mentioned above, B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) is one of the most quoted fragments by ancient authors from the whole Empedoclean corpus. The text I printed above follows the reconstruction of Diels-Kranz, to which modern editions of Empedocles essentially conform, except for some minor variations.[20] Diels-Kranz's text of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) derives from the comparison and integration of two major quotations, that by Plutarch in *De exilio* – which preserves the original sequence of lines, but omits some of them – and that by Hippolytus in the seventh book of his *Refutatio Omnium Heresium* – which quotes thirteen of its fourteen lines but not in the original order.[21] However, despite the standard set by Diels-Kranz, its reconstruction and interpretation remain problematic, especially with regard to questions of text and meaning.[22]

Nevertheless, its content is clear in its broad outline. An oracle of Necessity, followed by an ancient and eternal decree of the gods, which was sealed by broad oaths, has established that gods who commit certain kinds of crimes, on which we shall return below, are banished from the divine abode for a very long time, during which they must wander the earth and be re-born as every kind of mortal being. In the last two lines, moreover, Empedocles declares that he is one of these guilty gods: he is a wanderer and an exile because of his trust in Strife.

The juxtaposition, in asyndeton, of the divine oracle of Necessity (ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα), the ancient and eternal decree of the gods (θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,/ἀΐδιον) and the broad oaths (πλατέεσσι … ὅρκοις) bestows a solemn tone to the ensuing story. This impression is strengthened by the fact that it is constructed upon a Hesiodic reminiscence. The expression πλατέεσσι ὅρκοις calls to mind Hesiod's notion of the 'great oath of the gods', θεῶν μέγαν ὅρκον, which he introduced in his *Theogony* to complete the depiction of Styx and Hades.[23] In order to unmask and ward off those who lie, Zeus demands that the gods take the great oath, which

[20] But see Gallavotti (1975: 74–77 = Fr. 103) and Rashed (2008), which assume variations in the sequence of verses.

[21] Hipp. *Ref.* 7.29.14–23 quotes, in this order, ll. 13, 14, 4–5, 6, 7–8, 9–12, 1–2. Plut. *De exil.* 607c quotes ll. 1, 3, 5–6 and 13.

[22] For a philological discussion of this fragment see van der Ben (1975: 128–40), Wright (1995: 270–75), Primavesi (2001: 30–43), Bollack (2003: 60–69) and Ferella (2013).

[23] *Theog.* 784–806. It has long been acknowledged that these Empedoclean lines are reminiscent of Hesiod's account of the perjured gods: see Wright (1995: 275); Most (2007: 284–92); A. Long (2019: 26) and Santamaría (2022).

Iris then brings to Styx. Then, Hesiod describes what happens to gods who swear a false oath: they must lie, breathless and speechless, for a long year, without ambrosia and nectar and surrounded by a terrible numbness, their condition effectively resembling that of the dead. When eventually recovered, they must remain apart from the gods' community, their assemblies and feasts for another nine years. Only in the tenth year can they come back and join their divine abode.[24] The analogies with Empedocles' guilty gods are striking: not only the concepts of oaths and perjurers, but Empedocles also takes up the notion of the exile of the gods from the divine community as a punishment for their wrongdoing.[25]

The idea that gods could be punished through the temporary loss of their divine abode is a traditional motif, which is also elaborated in the story of Apollo's exile, as is narrated in the ps.-Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*.[26] According to this myth, Apollo was banished from the assembly of the gods because he was guilty of the murder of the Cyclops, whom he killed to avenge the death of his son Asclepius. In fact, the Cyclops forged the thunderbolt that, through Zeus' hand, killed Asclepius. For his murder Apollo was sentenced to a term of penance in our world as a servant of the mortal Admetus. Like Apollo, Empedocles' gods are similarly banished from the divine community and punished through a very long exile on earth,[27] during which they are compelled to be reborn as all kinds of living beings. Whereas the notion of reincarnation as a punishment for the guilty gods is absent from the myth of Apollo's exile, it is worth noting – briefly, as I shall return to this in the next two chapters – that the idea of a god working through rebirths refers to Pythagoras, who was said to be a god

[24] See esp. *Theog*. 784–93.

[25] Other Empedocles' reminiscences of the Hesiodic passage highlight that Empedocles wrote B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) with Hesiod in mind. In fact, B 115.12 (= EMP D 10.12 Laks-Most), ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες, is constructed on the model of *Theog*. 800, ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται χαλεπώτερος ἄθλος. Note that also B 115.4 (= EMP D 10.4 Laks-Most), ὅς κ(ε) ἐπίορκον ἁμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσηι, could be taken as a parallel of *Theog*. 793, ὅς κεν τὴν ἐπίορκον ἀπολλείψας ἐπομόσσῃ. On B 115.4 (= EMP D 10.4 Laks-Most) and its Hesiodic counterpart, see below.

[26] Fr. 51–52 and 54a–c Merkelbach-West. This myth is alluded to by Aesch. *Suppl*. 214.

[27] Shall we interpret Empedocles' reference to 'thrice ten thousand seasons' literally? Gemelli Marciano (2001: 226–27) pointed out that

> for Empedocles, as indeed for other esoteric doctrines, whether Orphic or Pythagorean, the definition of the exact time of punishment [has] a very relative importance and a much lower significance than that attributed to them by modern commentators. The value of these numbers is symbolic and lies rather in being key numbers ('numeri-chiave') such as three and its multiples or ten and its multiples, and not in the exact temporal determination.

(according to some sources he is the Hyperborean Apollo),[28] reborn several times as diverse mortal forms.

Returning to the lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), we can see that Empedocles clarifies that exile and rebirths are punishment for a guilt that seems to be personally and voluntarily committed. Yet it is not at all clear what type of fault the god is punished for. The lines as printed here point to slaughter (l. 3) and perjury (l. 4). However, they present textual problems.[29] On the one hand, line 3 is only transmitted by Plutarch's manuscripts, which have φόβωι, 'fear', instead of φόνωι, 'slaughter'. The latter is the emendation by Stephanus, which must be accepted in the text, despite several attempts to maintain the transmitted term.[30] Indeed, other Plutarchean passages prove that Empedocles' doctrine of rebirth is connected to slaughter, consumption of fleshes and cannibalism (or *allelophagia*).[31]

With regard to perjury as a guilt deserving exile, on the other hand, the textual tradition is more complicated. While line 3 is only attested by Plutarch, line 4 is transmitted by Hippolytus' manuscripts, which offer the line in a damaged form: ὅς καὶ ἐπίορκον ἁμαρτήσας ἐπομώσσει. Specifically, the transmitted line does not fit the hexameter, which has to be restored in the first foot, and it displays a dubious ἁμαρτήσας, a late form of the participle of ἁμαρτάνω, which does not appear in Greek texts before the Greek Old Testament, or Septuagint (completed by 132 BCE). Homer and Hesiod, who are Empedocles' linguistic models, only knew the second aorist ἥμαρτον. For these reasons, scholars have advocated opposite views concerning this line. Those who argue for its authenticity defend in various ways the sigmatic aorist of ἁμαρτάνω as a possible form

[28] For Pythagoras as the reincarnation of Apollo, see Arist. *Περὶ τῶν Πυθαγορείων* Fr. 1 Ross (= Fr. 191 Rose [Ael. *VH* 2.26; Diog. Laert. 8.11; Iamb. *VP* 28.140–43]); see Burkert (1972: 141–43). For the series of incarnations Apollo-Euphorbus-Pythagoras, which is probably the earliest, see Heracl. Pont. fr. 89 Wehrli. See also Kerényi (1940: 12–23) and Burkert (1972: 138–43). On Pythagoras' legend as a model for Empedocles' self-representation, see Primavesi (2008b: 261–62) and Chapters 2.3 and 3.4.

[29] See Wilamowitz (1929: 634), van der Ben (1975: esp. 130–33), Wright (1995: 272–73), Primavesi (2001: 33–42), Bollack (2003: 66–67), Picot (2007: 47–50) and Rashed (2008: 8–18).

[30] See above all Picot (2007: 47–50), who assigns to the term the meaning of 'flight (from danger)', and Rashed (2008: 9–10).

[31] Cf. e.g., *De esu. carn*. 996 b–c: οὐ χεῖρον δ' ἴσως καὶ προανακρούσασθαι καὶ προαναφωνῆσαι τὰ τοῦ Ἐμπεδοκλέους· … ἀλληγορεῖ γὰρ ἐνταῦθα τὰς ψυχάς, ὅτι φόνων καὶ βρώσεως σαρκῶν καὶ ἀλληλοφαγίας δίκην τίνουσαι σώμασι θνητοῖς ἐνδέδενται. On this particular point, see the discussion in Primavesi (2001: 33–38). According to an interpretation by Zuntz (1971: 273), the gods' act of slaughter occurred when they accepted the honour of ritual sacrifice for the first time. It is worth noting that, as is also evident from Plutarch's passage quoted here, the concept of *phonos* in Empedocles refers not only to the killing of a living being but, given the almost direct reference to the practice of sacrifice, also to the eating of meat, since these constitute stages of the same ritual act.

in a poet of the fifth century BCE.[32] In contrast, those who argue that the line is not Empedoclean usually take it as a later insertion; indeed, as a bad adaptation of a Hesiodic line.[33]

In fact, line 4 closely resembles Hesiod's *Theogony* 783, ὅς κεν τὴν ἐπίορκον ἀπολλείψας ἐπομόσσῃ, a line from the passage on the great oath of the gods to Styx which, as we have seen above, Empedocles intentionally recalls through his verses. However, the fact that the gods' oath depicted by Hesiod stay in the background of Empedocles' story may cast doubts on the authenticity of a badly transmitted line. Specifically, it may be argued that an ancient reader of Hippolytus noted the parallel between Empedocles' lines and Hesiod's *Theogony* and wrote the Hesiodic line as a margin note to Empedocles' verses. A careless copyist may then have inserted the Hesiodic line within Empedocles' verses, (poorly) adjusting it to the new context. According to this reading, both the fact that the line does not accord with the metrical system and the oddly weak aorist ἁμαρτήσας are taken as signals of a later insertion and a bad adaptation of the Hesiodic line.

However, it can also be argued that Empedocles wanted to compose a literary reference to his model to offer something of his own version of 'the great oath of the gods'. According to this reading, line 4 is genuinely Empedoclean but underwent corruption at some point in its transmission. Be that as it may, we still need to explain perjury as a crime deserving exile, as our sources are silent on this. One explanation could be related to the fact that, as we read in lines 1–2, the gods seal with an oath the divine decree, which, presumably, ratifies the prohibition on slaughter. Thus, a god who commits slaughter is *ipso facto* a perjurer.[34]

Alternatively, we could relate the Empedoclean idea of perjury as a crime leading to rebirths to a famous passage of Pindar's second *Olympian Ode* – a composition written for the tyrant of Acragas, in which Pindar offers his own perspective on the belief in rebirth.[35] While I will explore Pindar's poem more attentively in the next chapter, for now it is worth observing

[32] The participle can be accepted according to van der Ben (1975: 132–33), Wright (1995: 273), Bollack (2003: 66–67) and Rashed (2008: 18).

[33] According to Wilamowitz (1929) the form of the verb is a barbarism, while Zuntz (1971: 195) argues that 'no one would dream of defending it in the text of Empedocles'. Primavesi (2008a: 50 n.136) is of the same opinion and in the edition of Empedocles' fragments by Mansfeld-Primavesi (2021), B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) is printed without the problematic line: see F 8.

[34] This point was made by van der Ben (1975: 131–32).

[35] For a more extensive discussion of the parallels between Empedocles' doctrine of rebirth and Pindar's second *Olympian Ode*, see Chapter 2.2.2.

that, through lines 57–75, Pindar voices the opinion that the dead pay the price for their behaviour in life and, because of a terrible necessity (see Empedocles' oracle of Necessity), they must be punished for their guilt or rewarded for a just life. Indeed, 'a tearless existence' is assured to those 'who joyfully *kept their oaths*' (my emphasis).

Thus, according to Pindar, loyalty to oaths – a traditional instrument to distinguish liars from just people – is taken as a criterion to establish a commensurate destiny of punishment or reward after death. As Pindar's passage attests to doctrines of rebirth spread in Acragas in the fifth century BCE, it can be assumed that these doctrines held loyalty to oaths in high esteem. Moreover, since Empedocles was accustomed to those doctrines and the beliefs they spread, Pindar's version constitutes an important parallel for Empedocles' own doctrine of rebirth. For this reason, I am inclined to accept line 4 as genuinely Empedoclean, indeed as an attestation of the importance reserved to oaths in doctrines of rebirth spread in fifth-century Sicily. However, the *cruces* enclosing the line are necessary to indicate that its textual problems are not solved yet, above all with reference to ἁμαρτήσας, since the weak form of the aorist in Empedocles is not convincing.

Moving on in the interpretation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), throughout lines 9–12, the guilty gods are depicted as compelled to wander everywhere in our world, being reborn as every kind of mortal form. Indeed, they wander through the cosmic masses of the universe, from Ether to Sea, from Sea to Earth, from Earth to Sun and from Sun to Ether. As has already been observed, Empedocles refers here to the four elements of earth, water, air and fire, principles of his physical system. These are depicted as the personified masses of the cosmos that first welcome and then reject the guilty gods. In the context of a doctrine of rebirth, this can be taken as a hint at the regions of the universe the guilty gods under a certain mortal form will inhabit from time to time, hence indirectly to the mortal forms the gods will take during their exile. Accordingly, earth and water could refer to terrestrial and aquatic plants and animals, while air, sun and ether could indicate the sky as a whole and refer to all sorts of winged beings.

Finally, we turn to the last two lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most):

> τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
> νείκεϊ μαινομένωι πίσυνος.
>
> I too am now one of these, an exile from the gods and a wanderer,
> trusting in mad Strife.

These two lines constitute Empedocles' poetical signature. By means of it, the mythical, impersonal account of the guilty gods becomes the story of Empedocles himself: because of his trust in Strife, he is now exiled to this world.

The antecedent of the pronoun τῶν at line 13[36] is δαίμονες mentioned at line 5. This is strongly suggested by the expression φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης in the same line. Indeed, this phrase, by resembling the wording ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι at line 6, hints at the 'gods who have won long-lasting life', δαίμονες οἵτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο in line 5.[37] As a result, Empedocles claims to be a god who, because of his fault, is exiled from the divine community and temporarily compelled to be reborn as every kind of living being. Moreover, the reference to Strife as the evil power that permits the crime connects Empedocles' personal story to that of the whole cosmos, which is under the influence of Love and Strife. In fact, while these forces rule over the elements in the cosmic cycle, so too do they govern the destiny of the individual person (as we will see more thoroughly in Chapter 7). Finally, at line 13, the present tense εἰμι and the temporal specification through the adverb νῦν indicate that exile and rebirths correspond to Empedocles' present situation. Yet, despite the present mortal form, Empedocles is truly a god who is currently but temporarily wandering our earth.

1.3 The *testimonia* of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most)

Having established the necessary background information on the fragment and its transmission, as well as outlining its content, I am now going to look at the first of the reasons, mentioned above, why scholars continue to maintain a nineteenth-century position with regard to the allocation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to Empedocles' *Purifications*. This approach is best exemplified by O'Brien and the present section is, therefore, largely a reaction to his thesis. Specifically, it aims to show that our major sources for the reconstruction of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) cannot provide conclusive evidence that the story of the guilty gods was part of the *Purifications*, whereas there are reasons to believe that one of them, Simplicius, may

[36] Note that τῶν is the variant reading of Hippolytus' manuscripts, while Plutarch's tradition transmits τήν, which, in context, gives the following meaning: 'on this (scil. road) now I am, an exile and a wanderer'.

[37] For this reason, any attempt to reconstruct another referent by virtue of a different arrangement of the lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), as Rashed (2008: 29) proposed, remains unconvincing.

have read it in the physical poem.[38] However, from the outset I submit the view that the Strasbourg evidence, once attentively examined, undermines the indirect tradition with reference to the question in hand. Thus, after having analyzed separately Plutarch, Hippolytus and Simplicius, I shall return to the papyrus lines and show that they settle the question of the attribution of the story of the guilty gods to *On Nature* with a good level of certainty.

1.3.1 Plutarch

Plutarch was an expert on Empedocles' work. He is credited with a ten-book treatise on his philosophy,[39] which is quoted as a source by later authors, among them by Hippolytus.[40] Such a treatise, together with Plutarch's numerous Empedoclean quotations, is an indication that he held Empedocles' poems in great esteem and, presumably, read them first-hand. For this reason, he can be considered a reliable source for Empedocles' thought.

In *De exilio* 17.607c, Plutarch quotes five lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) – specifically lines 1, 3, 5–6 and 13 – and introduces them by indicating that they were found 'at the beginning of Empedocles' philosophy, by way of prelude': ὁ δ' Ἐμπεδοκλῆς ἐν ἀρχῇι τῆς φιλοσοφίας προαναφωνήσας. Plutarch's use of the verb προαναφωνεῖν suggests that the Empedoclean lines served as an introduction to the doctrine proper. The prefix προανα- defines the concept of anticipation, emphasizing the notion of something preceding, preluding or preparing the main action.[41] By using this word, therefore, Plutarch accentuated the introductory character of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) – a prelude to the exposition of the poem's central themes.

Yet to which poem are these verses the prelude? What Plutarch intended by the term *philosophia* is not self-evident. Rather, as scholars have already emphasized, because his philosophical conception connects physics and

[38] Simplicius is not mentioned as a source for B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) in Diels-Kranz.

[39] Lamprias' catalogue number 43.

[40] Hippolytus mentions Plutarch's work on Empedocles in *Ref.* 5.20.6. On Plutarch as a source for Hippolytus, see the discussion in Rowett (1987b: 92–94, 96). See also Mansfeld (1992: 50–52).

[41] Cf., e.g., προανα-βάλλομαι ('say or sing *by way of prelude*'), προανα-βλέπω ('look up *before*'), προανα-γυμνάζω ('exercise *before*'), προανα-ζωγραφέω ('delineate *first*'), προανα-κεφαλαίωσις ('*anticipatory* summary'), προανα-κηρύσσω ('announce *beforehand*') and προανα-κρούμαι ('introduce *by way of a* [musical] *prelude*', cf. Plutarch, *De es.* 996b: τὰ τοῦ Ἐμπεδοκλέους) and προαναφθέγγομαι ('say *by way of preface*'). For an accurate analysis of the main compounds of προανα- see van der Ben (1975: 19).

demonology, Plutarch could have used the term *philosophia* to refer to Empedocles' physical theories as well as to the story of the exiled god and the doctrine of rebirth[42] – topics that are generally considered as part of the religious poem. Consequently, Plutarch's remark 'in the beginning of his philosophy' provides no evidence to attribute B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to either poem.

Scholars have also argued that evidence for an attribution of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to the *Purifications* can be found in a passage of *De Iside et Osiride* (361c), in which Plutarch quotes and comments upon B 115.9–12 (= EMP D 10.9–12 Laks-Most). There Empedocles' verses are introduced and commented upon as follows:

> Ἐμπεδοκλῆς δὲ καὶ δίκας φησὶ διδόναι τοὺς δαίμονας ὧν ἂν ἐξαμάρτωσι καὶ πλημμελήσωσιν
> αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
> πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὖδας ἀπέπτυσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς
> ἠελίου φαέθοντος, ὁ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·
> ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες,
> ἄχρι οὗ κολασθέντες οὕτω καὶ καθαρθέντες αὖθις τὴν κατὰ φύσιν χώραν καὶ τάξιν ἀπολάβωσι.
>
> Empedocles says that the gods make amends for their errors and faults
> For the strength of Ether pursues them into Sea,
> and Sea spits them onto the surface of Earth and Earth into the rays of shining Sun, and this throws them into the eddies of Ether;
> and one after another receives him, but all hate him,
> until being punished in this way and again purified, they recover their natural place and status.

In his 1981 essay, O'Brien considers that Plutarch's use of the participles κολασθέντες . . . καὶ καθαρθέντες, 'being punished and . . . purified', in his commentary upon Empedocles' quotation provides 'eloquent proof' ('[p]reuve éloquente') that B 115 belongs to the *Purifications*.[43] In more general terms, O'Brien argued that a source's reference to guilt, punishment and purifications when introducing or commenting on

[42] E.g., Primavesi (2001: 12): 'Precisely the designation as "philosophy" of a combination of demonology ("daimonologia") and physics corresponds exactly to Plutarch's own conception, as seems to be derived from his writing *De facie in orbe lunae*: a speculation of natural philosophy with an ethical-parenetic destination'. However, if we work under the hypothesis that only *On Nature* is a narrative exposition, while the *Purifications* are merely a collection of purifying oracles, ritual prescriptions and ascetic rules, as I argued in the Introduction by following Sedley's 1989 hypothesis, then the notion of 'philosophy' used by Plutarch can only refer to the physical poem.

[43] O'Brien (1981: 18).

Empedocles' lines can be taken as a standard criterion to attribute these to the *Purifications* with greater certainty.

However, this criterion is invalidated by the Strasbourg papyrus. As we have seen above, *ens.* d–f 5–6 has a highly religious character but belongs to a physical context. Moreover, when quoting the two papyrus lines, Porphyry connects them with the context of meat eating and purifications through the expression διὰ τῶν καθαρμῶν. Before the publication of the Strasbourg papyrus, Porphyry's phrase was considered as a clear reference to the *Purifications* as the poem to which the Empedoclean lines belong. However, the Strasbourg papyrus unmistakably shows that neither Empedocles' focus on a topic such as guilt for consuming a prohibited food (hence, indirectly his reference to rebirth, as it may be argued), nor our sources' link between his fragments and the notion of punishment and purifications ensure that Empedocles' lines belong to the religious poem.[44] Indeed, as we can now appreciate, Empedocles inserted lines of a rather religious tone that our source connected with his purifications within a physical discourse belonging to the first book of *On Nature*.

To sum up, first, Plutarch's words 'by way of prelude' in his *De Exilio* indicate that the lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) are lines premising and introducing the doctrine proper. Plutarch's phrase 'in the beginning of his philosophy', however, does not disclose to which poems they belong, as Plutarch could have labelled as 'philosophy' both Empedocles' strictly physical themes and his demonology. Second, in *De Iside et Osiride*, Plutarch's use of notions related to the concepts of punishment and purifications in connection with Empedocles' verses is no firm criterion to attribute those verses to the *Purifications*. Indeed, the Strasbourg evidence displays that our sources can relate religious themes to religious, purificatory practices, even when they are found within *On Nature*. It is probably because of the Strasbourg evidence that, in his 2001 contribution, O'Brien made no case for Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* as attesting to the allocation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) within the *Purifications*. Nevertheless, as we will now see, O'Brien applied a similar standard to the words of Hippolytus and argued that he could find therein elements for a secure attribution of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to the *Purifications*.

[44] Contra Laks-Most who attribute B 139 within the *Purifications* as fragment EMP D 34. However, their proposal can only be justified by evaluating Porphyry's commentary on the Empedoclean quotation at the same level as the evidence from the Strasbourg papyrus. But it is methodologically questionable to equate a piece of direct papyrus testimony with a report from an indirect source, who lived centuries after Empedocles and most likely did not even have access to his poem, but was acquainted with it through third-party authors.

Let us therefore move on to the analysis of (O'Brien's reading of) Hippolytus' passage.

1.3.2 *Hippolytus*

In his *Refutation of All Heresies* 7.29–30, Hippolytus extensively discusses Empedocles' theories in order to refute the heresy of Marcion of Sinope, an influential leader of early Christianity, whose beliefs knew a significant following in the second century CE. Hippolytus reports that Marcion professed an anti-cosmic dualism,[45] according to which there is not only a good and perfect god, who inhabits heaven and whose existence was proven by Jesus, but also an evil and bad god – the god of the Old Testament and the creator of this world. In order to refute the evil god, therefore, Marcion professes a rigorous asceticism that demands abstinence from animal flesh and sexual intercourse. According to Hippolytus, there is a suspicious coincidence between Marcion's doctrines, so far as Hippolytus presents them, and the doctrines Empedocles professed many centuries before. Indeed, Hippolytus accused Marcion of plagiarism, suggesting he derived his theology from Empedocles rather than from the Holy Scriptures. Undoubtedly, it was Empedocles who first postulated the existence of two opposite gods (good Love and evil Strife), believed that our world was the product of the evil god and taught purifications through an ascetic way of life.

Thus, after a brief overview of Marcion's main doctrines, Hippolytus presents the rudiments of Empedocles' philosophy, correlated by the quotation of Empedocles' own words.[46] Specifically, Hippolytus first quotes some Empedoclean lines depicting the main components of Empedocles' system: the four elements and the two opposite forces of Love and Strife (B 6 [= EMP D 57 Laks-Most] and 16 [= EMP D 63 Laks-Most]). He emphasizes that the

[45] According to the definition by Rowett (1987b: 108).

[46] Specifically, DK 31 B 6 (= EMP D 57 Laks-Most), B 16 (= EMP D 63 Laks-Most), B 29 (= EMP D 92 Laks-Most), B 110 (= EMP D 257 Laks-Most) and B 131 (= EMP D 7 Laks-Most). It is worth noting that they all come from *On Nature*. Diels was largely of the same opinion, except for the lines numbered as B 131 (Hipp. *Ref.* 7. 30. 4 [= EMP D 7 Laks-Most]), which correspond to Empedocles' invocation to the Muse Calliope in order that she stands by him as he reveals 'a good account about the blessed gods'. It is probably Empedocles' claim to reveal a discourse about the gods that led Diels to set this fragment within the *Purifications*. Yet Empedocles' *On Nature* is a very appropriate place for a 'good account' of the gods and the divine. Moreover, the invocation to the Muse connects B 131 (= EMP D 7 Laks-Most) with B 3 (= EMP D 44 Laks-Most), which Diels rightly considered as part of *On Nature*. This supports the collocation of B 131 (= EMP D 7 Laks-Most) within Empedocles' physical poem, as has already been advocated by Bignone (1916: 636–39), Kingsley (1996: 111) and Mansfeld-Primavesi (2021). *Contra* recently Laks-Most (2016), who assign the fragment to the *Purifications*.

opposition between Love and Strife corresponds to the opposition of One due to Love, 'the most beautiful form', and Many due to Strife. Then, Hippolytus quotes and discusses in detail the verses of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), beginning with the last couplet of the fragment (ll. 13–14) as an instance of Empedocles' claim to his own origin.[47]

Why did Hippolytus choose to quote the last two lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) at this point in the discussion? Possibly, Hippolytus was in search of some Empedoclean lines that could corroborate the notion of the demiurgic action of the evil god and therefore of Strife's generative function. Thus, as Empedocles associates his 'birth' into this world with Strife's influence,[48] Hippolytus could take the two Empedoclean lines as attesting to Strife's creative role. Moreover, after having depicted Sphairos as Love's most beautiful product, Hippolytus connects Strife with the existence of the world as a result of wrongdoings that were punished with banishment. It is worth noting that Hippolytus interprets B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) as an allegory of the cosmic cycle. In particular, he envisaged the crime of slaughter committed by the gods in terms of Strife's separation of the One, whereas the gods who committed the crime were taken as souls being torn apart from the One and 'manufactured' by Strife as mortals in this world (7.29.15). In other words, Hippolytus seems to read the story of the guilty gods narrated in B 115 as accounting for the cosmic opposition between Love's One and Strife's Many. On the one hand, the guilty souls that take mortal bodies are read as proofs of Strife's creative action at the expense of Love's union; on the other hand, the divine community that the guilty gods must leave because of Strife (ἀπὸ μακάρων at l. 6) is interpreted as a conceptual place where Love strives to gather together souls out of Strife's Many 'into the unity of the intelligible Cosmos' (7.29.17). Finally, the birth of Empedocles, with the explicit mention of Strife's influence, must have appeared to Hippolytus as a clear indication of Strife's power of separation and generation at the expense of Love and the One (7.29.14–15).

Furthermore, in Hippolytus' view of Empedocles' philosophy, the moral rules of abstention from meat and sexual intercourse, connected to the souls' rebirths and B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), are deeply intertwined with the cosmic order governed by the good and evil forces (7.22.1–3). Indeed, they derive from it. Thus, people are required to conduct an ascetic way of life, by especially abstaining from killing animals and from having sexual intercourse, in order not to 'aid and

[47] *Ref.* 7.29.14: τοῦτό ἐστιν ὃ λέγει περὶ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γεννήσεως.
[48] See Empedocles' phrase νείκεϊ μαινομένωι πίσυνος in B 115.14 (= EMP D 10.14 Laks-Most).

contribute towards the works Strife creates, always dissolving and scattering the work of Love'. However, instead of quoting those Empedoclean verses that include ascetic rules, Hippolytus quotes the first two lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most):

> There is an oracle of Necessity, an ancient decree of the gods
> eternal, sealed with broad oaths

Why then did he prefer to quote two lines thematizing Necessity's oracle, the gods' decree and the broad oaths over lines attesting Empedocles' ascetic rules against the killing of animals and sexual intercourse? The answer to this question lies in Hippolytus' interpretation of these two lines, whereby he elucidates the oracle of Necessity and the ancient decree of the gods as referring to the cosmological transition from One to Many under the opposite forces of Love and Strife. Simply put, the oracle of Necessity and the decree of the gods are understood as proclaiming the exchange of power between Love and Strife in the cycle. By quoting these lines, therefore, Hippolytus meant to zoom in on this turn of power and, therefore, on the cosmic transition from good to evil. It seems, in other words, that Hippolytus was more interested in the theoretical background (the cosmic alternation between Love and Strife) against which he assumed Empedocles' purificatory rules are played out, rather than in those rules themselves.

Moreover, at the end of his summary of the three major points of criticism against Marcion, Hippolytus explicitly connects Marcion's ascetic prohibitions with the Empedoclean purifications. The entire passage reads as follows:

> Come Marcion, just as you make a comparative juxtaposition of good and evil, so today, following your doctrines as you understand, I will myself make such a juxtaposition. You say the creator of the world is wicked; well then are you not concealing the fact that you are teaching the church the doctrines of Empedocles? You say that the god who undoes the things made by the creator is good; well then are you not blatantly evangelising Empedocles' Love to those who hear about the good god? You issue prohibitions on marriage and procreation and on abstention from food which God created for the partaking of the faithful and those who know the truth; you are secretly teaching the purifications of Empedocles (τοὺς Ἐμπεδοκλέους λανθάνεις διδάσκων καθαρμούς).[49]

[49] Hipp. *Ref.* 7.30.2–4. Text and translation are according to Rowett (1987b: 320–23).

In 2001, O'Brien took Hippolytus' last sentence as a clear indication that the lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) came from the *Purifications*.[50] According to him, Hippolytus' explicit mention of τοὺς Ἐμπεδοκλέους καθαρμούς in reference to the ascetic prohibitions on meat and sexual intercourse, which were previously connected with the first two lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), is a clear indication that it comes from the *Purifications*.[51]

However, O'Brien's conclusion faces two main objections. First, Hippolytus can be a further case of an indirect source that reads verses with a religious tone and connects them to Empedocles' purifications. The example of Porphyry examined above has shown that similar links are no criterion for a secure attribution of religious lines to the *Purifications*. Indeed, as the Strasbourg evidence highlights, ancient sources may refer Empedoclean verses with a religious touch to his purifications even though they read them within the physical poem.

Second, by his quotation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), as we have seen above, Hippolytus claimed to establish not as much Empedocles' ascetic prohibitions as Empedocles' physical theories about the exchange of power between the evil and good god; that is, the theoretical background which, according to Hippolytus, ultimately substantiates those prohibitions. In this respect, Hippolytus considers B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) as a deeply cosmological fragment; indeed, he takes it as the fragment that summarizes the essential tenet of Empedocles' cosmic cycle, with Strife being able to tear apart the δαίμονες/souls from the One and to create the Many, and Love working towards the reunification of 'the blessed gods' out of the Many into the One.

Moreover, despite O'Brien's reconstruction, Hippolytus uses B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) in connection to all three main points of criticism against Marcion's plagiarisms. In fact, as O'Brien acknowledges, B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) is certainly thought to substantiate the abstention from eating meat and having sexual intercourse (third point of criticism). However, as we have seen, Hippolytus did not relate those rules to the fault, punishment or

[50] According to O'Brien (2001: esp. 104–6), τοὺς Ἐμπεδοκλέους λανθάνεις διδάσκων καθαρμούς refers to the title of Empedocles' religious poem.

[51] O'Brien (2001: 104–5):

> Abstinence from killing animals and from sexual intercourse with women were precisely the two points that Hippolytus had claimed to establish by his quotation of verses where Empedocles tells the story 'of his own birth' . . . By far, the most natural inference will be that the verses which Hippolytus had quoted, to establish precisely those two points of Empedocles' teaching (fr. 115.10–12), have been taken, so at least Hippolytus believes, from the *Katharmoi*.

rebirths of the guilty gods, but rather to those verses of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) that, by presenting the oracle of Necessity and the divine decree, are taken to introduce one of Empedocles' major cosmological tenets: the exchange of power between Love and Strife. Furthermore, B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) also serves Hippolytus to substantiate his first and second point of criticism. In fact, the last lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) are precisely employed to demonstrate that our world and our existence is brought about by evil Strife and therefore to argue that Empedocles preceded Marcion's claim that the demiurge of the world is an evil god (first point). Finally, Hippolytus read B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) in such a way as to claim that the god who undoes the works of the demiurge is good (second claim). As mentioned above, this is specifically shown by his interpretation of ἀπὸ μακάρων in l. 6 which is taken to illustrate the beneficial influence of Love who brings back the blessed ones (that is, the souls, according to Hippolytus) out of Strife's Many into the One.[52]

In conclusion, the fresh reading of Hippolytus' commentary on B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) provided here challenges O'Brien's assumption that it is proven to come from the *Purifications*. It shows, in contrast, that Hippolytus takes this fragment as fundamentally physical. This does not prove, however, that B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) comes from the physical poem and we are then left with the conclusion that Hippolytus offers no evidence for its sure attribution of either one of Empedocles' poems.

1.3.3 *Simplicius*

In line with Hippolytus' interpretation, the author who more than any other source seems to read B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) within *On Nature* is Simplicius. His citation is confined to the first lines of this fragment, which are quoted within a broader comment on Aristotle's *Physics* 8.1.252a 5–19. Here, Aristotle puts forward a criticism against

[52] See, e.g., 7.29.21–22: after the quotation of B 115.10–12 (= EMP D 10.10–12 Laks-Most), Hippolytus remarks:

> The souls are, therefore, hated and tortured and punished in the world according to Empedocles, but Love brings them together. She is a good thing and pities their misery and the bad disorderly set-up of 'raving Strife' and she is keen to bring them out of the world little by little and adapt them to the one and she strives to bring it about that everything be brought out by her and return to the unity.

This is a clear example of Love undoing Strife's demiurgic works.

Empedocles' theory of motion and concluded that Empedocles did not properly argue for the cause governing the alternation of movement and rest in the cosmic cycle, but merely said that this occurs by necessity, ἐξ ἀνάγκης. In his commentary upon the Aristotelian criticism and particularly with reference to Aristotle's mention of necessity, Simplicius quotes the first two lines of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), in which the oracle of Necessity (Ananke) plays a major role. Moreover, Simplicius cites them in conjunction with other Empedoclean fragments[53] to corroborate Aristotle's criticism of Empedocles' theory of motion through Empedocles' own words.

According to O'Brien, Simplicius' quotation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) is not motivated by the content of Aristotle's criticism against Empedocles' theory of motion, but rather by the sole mention of Ananke.[54] Simply put, Simplicius aims to quote those verses that give prominence to Empedocles' notion of necessity even though these have nothing to do with the reasons and arguments of Aristotle's criticism. In fact, according to O'Brien, Simplicius' purpose 'is to quote verses that will illustrate whatever concept Aristotle has called into question'.[55] Accordingly, Simplicius' comment upon Aristotle's criticism to Empedocles 'in no way implies that the reference to Necessity in fr. 115 came from the context which Aristotle draws upon in formulating his criticism'.[56] According to O'Brien, the fact that Aristotle is criticizing an aspect of Empedocles' physical theories does not entail that Simplicius, who intends to corroborate Aristotle's criticism by quoting Empedoclean fragments, takes B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) from the same context or the same poem, namely *On Nature*, to which those theories belong. In fact, O'Brien had already settled the issue of the provenance of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) from the *Purifications* by arguing that Hippolytus explicitly said so.

However, while we have seen above that Hippolytus cannot be taken as evidence for the attribution of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to the *Purifications*, it is worth noting that O'Brien's reading of Simplicius presents a few problems. First, all other Empedoclean fragments Simplicius quotes in the context of Aristotle's criticism of Empedocles' theory of motion are appropriate to that criticism. For instance, when explaining that, in Empedocles' cycle, rest occurs in the period of the Sphairos as

[53] Specifically, B 27 (= EMP D 89 Laks-Most), B 31 (= EMP D 95 Laks-Most), B 17.29 (= EMP D 73.259 Laks-Most) and B 30 (= EMP D 94 Laks-Most).
[54] O'Brien (2001: 84–88). [55] Ibid. 84. [56] Ibid. 86.

a consequence of Love's total union, Simplicius quotes B 27 (= EMP D 89 Laks-Most), namely Empedocles' verses depicting the Sphairos as the unmovable form of the universe. Motion occurs because of Strife's intervention into the Sphairos, as Simplicius' quotation of B 31 (= EMP D 95 Laks-Most), with its illustration of the shaking limbs of the Sphairos, is made to substantiate. This runs counter to O'Brien's assumption that Simplicius may have quoted whatever verses of Empedocles, independently from the Aristotelian context he was commenting upon.

Moreover, when quoting B 115.1–2 (= EMP D 10.1–2 Laks-Most) to comment upon Aristotle's words that the alternation between rest and motion happens ἐξ ἀνάγκης, Simplicius adds that Empedocles 'says that because of necessity and these oaths each (force) predominates in turn'. Put differently, Simplicius interprets Ananke and the divine oaths in B 115 as regulating the cyclical oscillation between Love and Strife. This means that, according to Simplicius, B 115.1–2 (= EMP D 10. 1–2 Laks-Most) attests to precisely that alternation between One and Many (that is, between rest and movement), of which Aristotle was speaking in his critique of Empedocles' theory of motion. Simplicius' claim is then followed by the quotation of B 30 (= EMP D 94 Laks-Most) which, by depicting Strife regaining power, destroying the Sphairos and setting things in motion, indicates the exact moment in which the exchange of power from Love's One to Strife's Many begins.[57] Moreover, B 30 (= EMP D 94 Laks-Most) also states that this exchange is established by a divine oath.

Thus, Simplicius does not seem merely to be quoting 'verses that will illustrate whatever concept Aristotle has called into question'. Rather, he is *explaining Aristotle* by making Empedocles' verses concerning the transition between rest and movement more accessible to Aristotelian readers who are not familiar with Empedoclean philosophy. Furthermore, his remark on B 115.1–2 (= EMP D 10.1–2 Laks-Most), namely the clarification that Love and Strife predominate in turn according to necessity, suggests that these lines are quoted not merely because of the role that Ananke plays in them; rather, Simplicius seems to believe that they precisely thematize what Aristotle is criticizing. His comment invites the reading that, in line with a Neoplatonic line of interpretation of Empedocles' philosophy, Simplicius takes Necessity's oracle and the gods' ancient decree as proclaiming the exchange of power between Love and Strife in the cycle. It seems that, just like Hippolytus, Simplicius takes B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) as

[57] αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ μέγα Νεῖκος ἐνὶμμελέεσσιν ἐθρέφθη / ἐς τιμάς τ' ἀνόρουσε τελειομένοιο χρόνοιο, / ὅς σφιν ἀμοιβαῖος πλατέος παρ' ἐλήλαται ὅρκου.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009392600.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

a profoundly physical fragment, which illustrates one of the central tenets of Empedocles' cosmic cycle: the exchange of power between Love and Strife and the transition from rest to movement.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that, as mentioned in the Introduction to this book, Simplicius had a detailed knowledge of Empedocles' *On Nature*, which he frequently quoted,[58] often together with the precise reference to the parts and books of *On Nature* from where the cited verses come from.[59] This is evidence of the great esteem he reserved for Empedocles' physical poem, whereas he seemed to have no interest in the *Purifications*, which he never quoted or referred to. According to O'Brien's interpretation, therefore, Simplicius' quotation of B 115.1–2 (= EMP D 10.1–2 Laks-Most) would be the sole exception.

However, there is no indication in Simplicius' passage that B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) is part of the religious poem, as O'Brien assumed. In fact, O'Brien's interpretation requires an accumulation of evidence: not merely Simplicius, but Simplicius in light of Plutarch (1981) and Hippolytus (2001). Since we have already seen that neither Plutarch nor Hippolytus provide evidence for a certain attribution of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to the *Purifications*, O'Brien's reconstruction fails to hold. Additionally, although Simplicius did not explicitly connect B 115.1–2 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to *On Nature*, in his criticism against van der Ben – who took Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* as the main source attesting to the collocation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) within Empedocles' physical poem[60] – O'Brien was willing to concede that, if we ought to judge this fragment exclusively on the basis of Simplicius, the conclusion that seems obvious ('la conclusion qui pourrait s'imposer') is precisely that it is part of *On Nature*.[61] Indeed, Simplicius' emphasis on the physical character of B 115.1–2 (= EMP D 10. 1–2 Laks-Most), his quotation in the same context of other very physical fragments being appropriate to Aristotle's criticism towards a major aspect of Empedocles' physics and his general preference for Empedocles' physical poem in contrast to the *Purifications* are indications that he could find B 115 in the only Empedoclean poem he cared to quote from: *On Nature*.

[58] Simplicius' Empedoclean quotations account for nearly 8 per cent of the whole poem and include over 150 verses or parts of verses, often repeating them: see O'Brien (1969: 150).

[59] For instance, we owe to him the precious evidence, among various other indications, that B 17 (= EMP D 73.233–66 Laks-Most) comes from the first book of the physical poem: see *Phys*. p. 157.25 Diels.

[60] On van der Ben's reconstruction of Empedocles' fragment, see my Introduction.

[61] O'Brien (1981: 73).

To summarize the discussion on the three major sources for B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), we have seen that neither Plutarch, nor Hippolytus nor Simplicius give us firm clues to establish the provenance of this fragment. On the one hand, the Strasbourg papyrus clearly displays that our sources could and in fact did relate themes such as fault, punishment and rebirth to purificatory rules when commenting upon verses coming from *On Nature*. This evidence invalidates O'Brien's standard criterion to attribute to the *Purifications* those verses our sources explicitly relate to more religious aspects, while ultimately undermining the weight of both Plutarch and Hippolytus as sources for a sure attribution of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to Empedocles' religious poem. On the other hand, one of the most reliable sources for Empedocles' thought and fragments, Simplicius, seems to suggest that he took B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) as a fundamentally physical fragment, which he most probably found in *On Nature*.

1.4 Empedocles, Divine Narrator of *On Nature*

Despite the fact, as I have just shown, that there is no firm clue in our sources to settle the issue of the allocation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to either one of Empedocles' poems, scholars have remained determined in allocating it to the *Purifications*. As I mentioned in Section 1.1, another reason they justify this view is based on the claim that B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) presents striking similarities with the lines of B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most), the proem to the *Purifications*. Undoubtedly, both fragments focus on an essential element of Empedocles' self-presentation: his claim to divine nature. In virtue of this, Primavesi maintains that the attribution of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to the *Purifications* is required by the analogy between Empedocles' self-proclaimed divine nature in both sets of verses; indeed, Empedocles' claim to divine nature in B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) can only be comprehended – so argues Primavesi – if it is read together with the story of Empedocles' fault and punishment in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most). In contrast, I will challenge this reading by arguing that Empedocles' claim to divine nature in the *Purifications* is perfectly comprehensible in its own terms, and therefore does not require the story recounted in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most). Moreover, I will show that the similarities between B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) and B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) do not indicate that they come from the same context and poem; rather, they suggest that the two sets of verses were designed with an analogous function as introductions to different poems: B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) to the *Purifications* and B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) to *On Nature*.

Let us first look at B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most), which reads as follows:

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.
τοῖσιν † ἄμ' † ἂν ἵκωμαι ἄστεα τηλεθάοντα,
ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξί, σεβίζομαι· οἱ δ' ἅμ' ἕπονται
μυρίοι ἐξερέοντες, ὅπηι πρὸς κέρδος ἀταρπός,
οἱ μὲν μαντοσυνέων κεχρημένοι, οἱ δ' ἐπὶ νούσων
παντοίων ἐπύθοντο κλυεῖν εὐηκέα βάξιν,
δηρὸν δὴ χαλεπῆισι πεπαρμένοι <ἀμφ' ὀδύνηισιν>.

Friends who dwell in the great town of the tawny Acragas
on the heights of the citadel, caring for good deeds,
havens of kindness for strangers, inexperienced in evil things
greetings! I will tell you: I, an immortal god, mortal no longer
travel, honoured by all, as is fitting,
wreathed with ribbons and fresh garlands.
Whenever I enter prospering cities
I am revered by every man and woman. They follow me
in their thousands asking where their advantage lies
some seeking prophecies, others in all sorts of illnesses
ask to hear the word of healing
having pierced about by harsh pains for too long time.

Empedocles introduces himself as a glorious god ('I, an immortal god, mortal no longer'), being followed and revered by everyone wherever he goes. People honoured him 'as is fitting' for a deity with divine garments such as ribbons and garlands. Moreover, they pray to him for his divine wisdom and aid, seeking prophecies and words of healing for all kinds of illnesses. It is worth noting that Empedocles' greeting to the citizens of Acragas in line 4, χαίρετ'· ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος, imitates divine speeches, such as Demeter's greeting in the Homeric Hymn dedicated to her, χαίρετ᾽· ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν μυθήσομαι,[62] and Hermes' divine epiphany when, upon entering Achilles' tent, he reveals himself to be a god disguised as a human: ἐγὼ θεὸς ἄμβροτος εἰλήλυθα.[63] The imitation of epic, divine speeches invites the reading that Empedocles aims to ascribe to himself the same divine status attributed to traditional gods.[64]

[62] *Hymn. in Cerer.* 120. [63] *Il.* 24.460.

[64] It has been argued – mistakenly in my view – that Empedocles does not really commit himself to self-presentation. In particular, the phrases ὑμῖν θεός at line 4 and ὥσπερ ἔοικα at line 5 are taken to show that here Empedocles is not saying that he is a god, but only that the people of Acragas perceive

In contrast, in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), Empedocles' claim to divine nature is mitigated by the depiction of his present condition of fault and exile. His status is still that of an exceptional, divine individual with superior power and wisdom,[65] but his actual situation undermines his divine nature by confronting him with the wretched circumstances of an ordinary mortal: a miserable terrestrial existence and a series of rebirths under the influence of Strife.[66] Moreover, as we will see in the next chapter, in the so-called demonological fragments, which are closely related to the story narrated in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), Empedocles affirms that he is greatly suffering for his present condition.[67]

Admittedly, we gain two different pictures of godhood from Empedocles' self-representations in B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) and B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most).[68] Whereas the former highlights his blissful condition with no allusion to sufferance, fault or exile, the latter draws precisely on these elements to convey the notion of a god reborn as a mortal. Moreover, in B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) Empedocles does not relate his dwelling on earth to punishment and rebirths or to his trust in Strife. Even more relevant, in B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) Empedocles does not provide an explanation or justification to his claim to divine nature, which is instead given as an established and acknowledged fact: everyone, everywhere, recognizes and honours Empedocles' divine nature and the wisdom he is able and eager to offer. This granted him a significant following. Nor does his claim to godhood need to be substantiated further; for instance, through the story of the gods' fault and exile. Rather, this is perfectly comprehensible in its own terms as a traditional divine epiphany. Because 'the acknowledgment of a deity is a matter, not of the god's claim but of man's perception', as G. Zuntz has pointed out,[69] Empedocles in B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) makes it clear that every person who meets him *perceives and recognizes that he is a god*.

him as such (Trépanier 2004: e.g., 84). However, ὑμῖν in this context can be explained as an 'ethical' dative (see Wright [1995: 266] with her translation 'I tell you'). The phrase ὥσπερ ἔοικα points to what the speaker deserves rather than to what the audience perceives. In other words, Empedocles is honoured *as he deserves*; that is, as is fitting or appropriate. Therefore, any interpretation such as 'as I seem to you' must be rejected: see Ferella (2013).

[65] He can perform and teach extraordinary things: see, e.g., B 111 (= EMP D 43 Laks-Most) with my commentary in Chapter 2.5.

[66] Tor (2017: 335) argues that this divergent representation of Empedocles as a divine being and a mortal, ephemeral creature is a paradox that we should embrace rather than try to explain away.

[67] See the comparable suffering condition Empedocles describes in PStrasb. d–f 1–10a (= EMP D 76.1–10 Laks-Most), which I will analyze below.

[68] This point was already made by Sedley (1989: 275–76). On Sedley's reading, see below.

[69] Zuntz (1971: 190).

Clearly the same does not hold true with reference to the woeful picture Empedocles offers of himself as an exile and wanderer working through rebirths in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most). In fact, following a suggestion by Sedley, I maintain that this difference in divine condition suggests that the two self-presentations, although not contradictory, are better allocated within different contexts. As Sedley puts it:

> The most natural interpretation is that B 115 comes from a poem in which Empedocles classed himself as a fallen *daimon* still working through its long cycle of transmigrations, whereas in the *Katharmoi*, opening as he does with his confident self-proclamation as a god 'no longer mortal', he presented himself as having now completed the cycle and recovered his divinity.[70]

In these respects, I would argue that Empedocles' different but comparable depiction of godhood in both sets of verses invites the reading that B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) and B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) were designed with a similar function as prologues to his poems: the former to the *Purifications* and the latter to *On Nature*. This suggests that Empedocles intended to open both his works through an analogous pattern of motifs, which give prominence to the poet's self-presentation as an extraordinary individual with exceptional wisdom. In the next chapter we will see that the fundamental idea behind these kinds of introductions is, for the poet, to claim authority on matters well beyond ordinary human ken.

However, in his 2011 edition of Empedocles' fragments (reprinted in 2021), Primavesi suggested that *On Nature* and the *Purifications* are distinguished by the way in which Empedocles portrays himself as a fictional narrator. In the *Purifications*, Empedocles, by establishing a mythical perspective, styled himself as a narrator who appears in the role of an incarnated god and communicates, in writing, a mythical law as part of a farewell letter. In *On Nature*, on the other hand, Empedocles portrayed himself as a human narrator who – so argues Primavesi – recites by word of mouth his ideas on natural philosophy to his beloved disciple Pausanias.[71]

[70] Sedley (1989: 276, 1998: 9–10). Similarly, A. Long (2017: 16).

[71] See Primavesi in Mansfeld-Primavesi (2011: 392–93):

> Regardless of his consistent epic form, the author faces us in the mask of two very different text-immanent narrators: on the mythological side, he acts as the narrative instantiation ('Erzählinstanz') of the divine writer of an open letter to his mortal friends, whereas on the physical side the narrator is the narrative instantiation ('Erzählinstanz') of a teacher who gives his chosen disciple Pausanias exclusive oral instruction and who, as a human, is dependent on the help of the Muse.

Analogously, Primavesi (2013: esp. 667–68) and Mansfeld-Primavesi (2021: 392–93).

As the two fictional narrators 'cannot write or speak side by side within a single work, but are in fact associated with different poems',[72] Primavesi's reconstruction entails that Empedocles in his physical poem never alludes to himself as a god and this would assure an allocation of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) within the *Purifications*.

However, Primavesi's hypothesis of two distinct fictional narrators is called into question by many poetical elements – above all Homeric echoes and epic parallels evoking gods in action – which are scattered throughout *On Nature* and contribute to Empedocles' self-representation as a god. For instance, in B 2.8 (= EMP D 42.8 Laks-Most), after having pointed out the cognitive weakness of ordinary people who are unable to understand the physical world, Empedocles turns to his disciple Pausanias and reveals that he will know the truth. For Pausanias, 'turned aside', σὺ δ' οὖν, ἐπεὶ ὧδ' ἐλιάσθης. This expression echoes a Homeric line (*Il.* 22.12: σὺ δὲ δεῦρο λιάσθης) within a scene in which Apollo, disguised as the Trojan Agenor, turns to Achilles and reveals his truly divine nature. Because of the audience's great familiarity with Homer, it is likely that Empedocles' public, on hearing the Empedoclean line for the first time, was moved first to recall the more familiar Homeric scene, in which a similar line was put in the mouth of a god, and second to link Empedocles' speech to Pausanias with Apollo addressing Achilles.

Similarly, in B 17.26 (= EMP D 73.256 Laks-Most), Empedocles urges Pausanias to listen to his non-deceitful discourse: σὺ δ' ἄκουε λόγου στόλον οὐκ ἀπατηλόν. Empedocles' words evoke two Homeric lines (*Il.* 1.526–27: οὐ γὰρ ἐμὸν παλινάγρετον οὐδ' ἀπατηλὸν / οὐδ' ἀτελεύτητον ὅ τί κεν κεφαλῇ κατανεύσω) in which Zeus asserts that what he decrees is 'not deceitful'. Therefore, the expression οὐκ ἀπατηλόν in the same metric position as in Homer very likely called to mind, for Empedocles' public, the Homeric passage, thereby prompting a comparison between Empedocles and Zeus. The expression λόγου στόλον οὐκ ἀπατηλόν in B 17.26 (= EMP D 73.256 Laks-Most) also evokes the words of Parmenides' goddess, who defined her own cosmology as a deceitful discourse: δόξας δ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε βροτείας / μάνθανε κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων (DK 28 B 8.51–52 [= PARM D 8.56–57 Laks-Most]). Scholars usually take Empedocles' echo as his way to characterize his own cosmology in opposition to Parmenides'.

[72] Mansfeld-Primavesi (2011: 393): 'diese beiden Erzählinstanzen können klarerweise nicht innerhalb ein und desselben Werkes nebeneinander schreiben bzw. sprechen'. In a similar vein, see also Mansfeld-Primavesi (2021: 393).

While I will return, in Chapter 6.2.1, to Empedocles' claim to a non-deceitful account, also in relation to his Parmenidean reminiscence, it is here worth noting that Empedocles' re-use of the words Parmenides attributed to his goddess can be taken as an intentional echo of a divine speech. In fact, Empedocles' use of Parmenides is extensive in didactic passages in which he addresses Pausanias through expressions deliberately evoking the words of Parmenides' goddess.[73] By calling to the audiences' mind an epic speech of Hermes or Zeus, as well as by echoing the speeches of Parmenides' goddess, Empedocles has his own agenda: he is ascribing to himself the same status and authority that traditionally belongs to gods. Thus, Empedocles' Homeric and Parmenidean reminiscences, scattered throughout his physical poem, are a highly evocative way to portray himself as a god.

Another very clear argument in this regard is the last line of fragment B 23 (= EMP D 60 Laks-Most):

> ἀλλὰ τορῶς ταῦτ' ἴσθι, θεοῦ πάρα μῦθον ἀκούσας
>
> But know this clearly, having heard the word of the god.

This line, by attesting that the source of Empedocles' philosophy is a θεός (*theos*), raises the question of the identity of the god. Numerous scholars, in particular, interpret θεοῦ, despite the masculine form, as referring to the Muse,[74] on account of the fact that Empedocles recurs to her aid for inspiration elsewhere in his physical poem.[75] Although the Homeric poems display several uses of θεός instead of θεά to indicate a goddess,[76] the Homeric passages clearly show that the option for the masculine follows metrical criteria: it replaces the feminine form when this is forbidden by the metrical scheme, whilst the feminine form is generally preferred when metrically possible.[77] In the Empedoclean line, the feminine form is as possible as the masculine. Why then would Empedocles have preferred the masculine θεοῦ to refer to the Muse, if he could have used θεᾶς and dispelled any ambiguity? Most simply, the use of θεός attests that Empedocles is referring here to a male god; that is, to himself as the divine source of his philosophy.

[73] On this aspect of Empedocles' poetry, see my detailed discussion in Chapter 6.2.1.

[74] See e.g., Bignone (1916), Wright (1995) and Mansfeld-Primavesi (2021). Bollack (1965: 265 with n.2, 310 with n.2) refers it to Aphrodite. *Contra* e.g., Bidez (1894: 102), Nestle (1906: 545–57) and Trépanier (2004: 38).

[75] B 3 (= EMP D 44 Laks-Most) and B 131 (= EMP D 7 Laks-Most), whose collocation in *On Nature* I discussed above in 1.3.2, n.46.

[76] See, e.g., *Il.* 8.7: μήτέ τις οὖν θήλεια θεὸς τό γε μήτέ τις ἄρσην.

[77] Cf. Willi (2008: 240 and n.32): 'where in the early Greek epic θεά is metrically possible, the feminine is preferred to θεός' ('wo im frühgriechischen Epos θεά metrisch möglich ist, wird es femininem θεός vorgezogen').

On the same tone, fragment B 111 (= EMP D 43 Laks-Most) rather clearly displays Empedocles' divine nature. As we will see in detail in the next chapter,[78] through these verses Empedocles promises to his disciple that he will gain divine powers and wisdom at the end of his learning process. The training in Empedocles' philosophy will result not only in knowledge of the forces of nature but also in their *control*:

> You shall learn all remedies which there are for ills and defence against old age . . . You will calm the force of tireless winds . . . and then, if you so wish,[79] you shall bring the winds back again. From black rain you shall make a draught timely for humans, and from summer draught you shall make tree-nourishing streams that will dwell in ether; and from Hades you shall bring back the strength of a dead man.

Mastering the forces of nature in the way Empedocles promises is a divine prerogative. Whereas control over winds and rains traditionally belongs to Zeus' sphere of power, the ability to 'bring from Hades the force of a dead man' is outrageous even for a god. For instance, Asclepius, the son of Apollo and a god himself, was incinerated by Zeus' thunder precisely because he favoured mortals by bringing them back from Hades, delaying their death. Furthermore, Orpheus, the divine singer, although he was allowed by the gods to go to Hades to retrieve his dead wife, failed at the task and lost her forever. Analogously, old age and mortal ills were imposed on human beings as a mark of gods' superior power. By teaching how to delay or remove them, Empedocles was, according to Kingsley,

> issuing a flagrant challenge to the standard Greek view, embodied in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, of humanity as 'senseless and helpless, incapable of finding a remedy for death and a defence against old age (γήραος ἄλκαρ, 192–3)'. In turning the words of the hymn on their head Empedocles was affronting not only literary tradition but also . . . the most fundamental of religious attitudes and assumptions. Essentially *there is little to choose between his implied message here and his declaration elsewhere that he was no longer a human but a god*.[80]

[78] Scholars of Empedocles generally allocate B 111 (= EMP D 43 Laks-Most) within *On Nature* – with the only exception of Sedley (1989: 273). In Chapter 2.5 I reconstruct these lines within the proem to the physical poem.

[79] The epic formula ἦν ἐθέλῃισθα at line 5 was deliberately chosen, as Kingsley (1995: 224 with n.23) argues, 'because of its frequent use in Homer and Hesiod when referring to the special divine powers of gods and goddesses'. See also Bollack (1969: vol. 3, 24): 'the formula constantly refers to the goodwill of the gods' ('La formule se réfère constamment au bon vouloir des dieux').

[80] Kingsley (1995: 223); my emphasis.

Our sources report that Empedocles himself accomplished several of the extraordinary deeds mentioned in B 111 (= EMP D 43 Laks-Most).[81] Diogenes Laertius, for instance, attests that Empedocles was known by the nickname 'wind tamer', a clear reference to his promise to Pausanias that he will control the force of winds and rain. Indeed, Diogenes explains Empedocles' alleged engineering ability to capture and thereby reduce the wind by setting donkey leathers on high grounds.[82] Analogously, Diogenes reports that Empedocles diverted and bound the path of two rivers in order to soothe their water and contain a lethal pestilence (Diog. Laert. 8.70). Similarly, Plutarch linked Empedocles' ability to capture the winds to the necessity of containing a pestilence.[83] Along the same line, Empedocles' promise to bring the dead back to life has been linked to the miraculous case of the so-called 'lifeless woman', who remained 'without breath and pulse for thirty days'.[84]

By a similar standard, the stories about Empedocles' death, collected by Diogenes Laertius,[85] show that part of Empedocles' biographical tradition tended to ridicule his claim to divine nature. The story that Empedocles threw himself into the crater of the Sicilian volcano Aetna, 'aiming at confirming the rumour that he was a god', displays an unmistakably sarcastic tone,[86] which is clearly revealed at the end: the volcano spat out one of Empedocles' boots and finally disclosed his truly human nature. Analogously, other sources, such as Timaeus,[87] considered Empedocles 'boastful and eccentric' with reference to his claim to divine nature. Other authors mentioned his extravagant clothing, his purple robe, his bronze sandals (a symbol of divinity[88]) and the crowns that he wore on his head or held in his hand 'to benefit from the great esteem which is usually attributed to the gods' (see *Suidas*). All this is a strong indication that Empedocles contributed through his verses to create his own reputation. Indeed, he was the creator of his own legend,[89] which is clearly

[81] On Empedocles' biography see Bidez (1894: 159–74); Lefkowitz (1981) and Chitwood (1986, 2004: 12–58).
[82] The same version by *Suda* s.v. Ἐμπεδοκλῆς.
[83] See *De curios.* 1. 515c and *Adv. Colot.* 32.4 p. 1126b. [84] See Diog. Laert. 8.61.
[85] Ibid. 8.67–73.
[86] Horace (*Ars Poet.* 463–67 = DK 31 A 16) knows the story: *Siculique poetae/narrabo interitum. Deus immortalis haberi / dum cupit Empedocles, ardentem frigidus Aetnam / insiluit.*
[87] See Diog. Laert. 8.66. [88] Ibid. 8.73; *Suda* s.v. Ἐμπεδοκλῆς.
[89] Dodds (1951: 145). See also Burkert (1972: 153–54). Kingsley (1995: 228): 'we do not have to be told that Diogenes Laertius "says that Satyrus believed that Empedocles laid claim to the power mentioned in fragment 111" [according to Chitwood 1986, 184]; we know that Empedocles laid claim to the powers in question from the fragment itself'. Analogously, Trépanier (2004: 199 n.50):

> [I]f one can easily produce a more secular Empedocles by simple omission of his supernatural aspects, it is difficult to imagine why he should have inspired such fabulist elaboration had this element not been present from the beginning. No such legends gathered around Anaxagoras.

connected with his physical poem too, as our sources' praise of Empedocles' engineering and medical abilities, being closely linked to B 111 (= EMP D 43 Laks-Most), show.

A reference to Empedocles' claim to divine nature can also be read in Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura* 1.731–33):

> *carmina quin etiam divini pectoris eius*
> *vociferantur et exponunt praeclara reperta*
> *ut vix humana videatur stirpe creatus.*
>
> Moreover, the poems of his divine mind
> utter a loud voice and declare illustrious discoveries,
> so that he seems hardly to be born of mortal stock.
>
> (transl. Rouse [1975])

Lucretius' praise of Empedocles as one that hardly seems to belong to the human stock could be seen as Lucretius' hint at Empedocles' own claim to divine nature. It is worth noting, however, that there is no hint of sarcasm towards Lucretius' verses, nor the intention to ridicule Empedocles' claim.[90]

To sum up, whereas Empedocles' claim that he is a god is explicit in B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) and B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), several fragments that are chiefly physical abound in reminiscences of epic scenes with gods in action and in echoes of divine speeches. Through these, Empedocles constructs his own image as a god. Additionally, the lines of B 111 (= EMP D 43 Laks-Most) ascribe to Empedocles not merely knowledge of, but also control over, the forces of nature. As scholars have already observed, this is essentially comparable to his explicit claim elsewhere that he is a god. Further, as we have seen, such a claim is also found in a physical fragment, B 23.11 (= EMP D 60.11 Laks-Most), where Empedocles affirms that the source of his philosophy is a god, namely himself. Finally, plenty of stories about Empedocles' allegedly divine nature show that he was the maker of his own legend. These tales are associated with both his explicit claim to be a god in B 112 (= EMP D 4 Laks-Most) and B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) and the representation of his exceptional power over the forces of nature in B 111 (= EMP D 43 Laks-Most). Therefore, *pace* Primavesi, there seems to be no dichotomy between the fictional narrators of the *Purifications* and *On Nature*. Indeed, Empedocles is consistent in depicting himself as a god in both poems. Thus, as I will show below, it only remains to place due value on

[90] This claim is echoed in Proclus' description of Empedocles as a 'divine dogmatic'; that is, a person who can attain knowledge without intermediary people, just like a god (in *Timaeus* 29d 351).

the papyrus evidence before we can conclusively allocate B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) where it almost certainly belonged: in the proem to *On Nature*.

1.5 The Guilty God and the Proem to *On Nature*

We are gradually bringing this chapter to a conclusion by unravelling the knotty problem concerning the provenance of B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) from Empedocles' *On Nature*. All that now remains is to return to the Strasbourg papyrus, showing that decisive evidence for the attribution of this fragment to *On Nature* comes from it. In the following, I shall show that in the papyrus verses we can read an internal echo, indeed a literary allusion, to the story of the guilty god narrated in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), which necessitates that this story be prefaced in the physical poem.

In one of the largest ensembles of the Strasbourg papyrus, namely *ens*. d–f (= EMP D 76 Laks-Most), we can read some remarkable verses:

[ἄν]διχ᾽ ἀπ᾽ ἀλλήλω[ν] π̣εσέ̣[ει]ν̣ καὶ π̣[ότ]μ̣ον ἐπισπε̣ῖν
[πό]λλ᾽ ἀεκαζομέν[ο]ισιν ἀ[να]γκα[ίης ὕ]π̣ο λυγρῆς
[ση]πο[μ]έ̣νοις· Φιλίην δ᾽ ἐ̣[ρατ]ὴν̣ [ἡμῖ]ν̣ νυν ἔχουσιν
[Ἅρ]π̣υιαι θανάτοιο πάλοις [ἤδη παρέσ]ονται.
ιΟΐ⊔ μ̣οι ὅτ(ι) οὐ πρόσθεν με δι̣ ιώλεσε νη⊔ λεὲς ἦμαρ,
ιπρὶν⊔ χηλαῖς̣ ισχέ⊔ τ̣λι᾽ ἔργα βορ̣ ιᾶς πέρι μητ⊔ ἰσ̣α̣ ισθαι·⊔
[νῦν δ]ὲ μάτη[ν ἐν] τῶιδε νό̣τ̣[ωι κατέδ]ε̣υσα παρειάς·
[ἐξικ]ν̣ούμε[θα γὰ]ρ πολυβενθ̣[έα χῶρον], ὀΐ̈ω,
[μυρία τ(ε) οὐκ] ἐθέ̣λουσι παρέσσε[ται ἄλγ]ε̣α θυμῶι
[ἀνθρώποις·

To fall apart from one another and to encounter their lot
putrefying most unwillingly, under dire necessity.
As for us, who now possess desirable Love,
the Harpies will soon be present with the destinies of death.
Alas, that the pitiless day did not destroy me earlier,
before I contrived terrible deeds about feeding with my claws!
But as it is, in vain have I wetted my cheeks in this squall (?) [scil. of tears];
for we are arriving at the region of enormous depth, I suppose,
and myriads of pains will be present to the heart of unwilling
humans.][91]

[91] The reconstruction of these lines follows Mansfeld-Primavesi (2021), precisely F 87 at p. 484 which I accept in my text except for line 8, where I fill the last lacuna with the word χῶρον, following a proposal by Balaudé (accepted by Rashed [2011: 36 with n.3]). In contrast, Martin-Primavesi (1999) and Mansfeld-Primavesi (2021) have Δῖνον (also accepted in the text by Laks-Most [2016: see EMP D 76.8 at p. 428]). Primavesi justifies his conjecture by assuming that the word Δῖνον was a technical term in Empedocles' physical system, indeed a proper noun that designates the vortex of four homogeneous elements at the end of Strife's dominance. Primavesi assumes that Empedocles coined

Throughout these lines, Empedocles observes, and suffers for, the alternating vicissitudes that mortal beings must undergo. The fragment opens with an image of death: something 'falls apart' and dies. The phrase ἄνδιχ' ἀπ' ἀλλήλων and the image of death evoke the separating power of Strife. The second line strengthens the notion of dying by adding putrefaction and dire necessity. The Harpies, an allusion to Strife,[92] are said to be approaching, 'with the destinies of death'. At lines 5–6 Empedocles curses 'the pitiless day' when he stains his hands – but the text has the word 'claws' (χηλαῖς) – with 'terrible deeds about feeding'. The detail of Empedocles' claws in connection to his 'deeds about feeding' have invited the reading that he was referring to a previous life, when he was reborn as a beast.[93] Alternatively, the reference to Empedocles' claws could suggest a close connection to the mythical characters of the Harpies, evoked at the outset of the fragment. On this reading, Empedocles seems to suggest that Strife is working upon him as it works upon the Harpies, by rendering him a monstrous being, overwhelmed by its power and therefore capable of horrifying deeds. For this reason, Empedocles would have preferred his own annihilation[94] to the awful life, in the hands of Strife, he is now compelled to live.

What do 'the pitiless day' and 'the terrible deeds about feeding' represent? Arguably, these verses can be better comprehended in conjunction with the story of Empedocles' fault and exile depicted in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most). Specifically, the reference to 'terrible deeds about feeding' in the papyrus can be related to the crime of slaughter (φόνος) mentioned in B 115.3 (= EMP D 10.3 Laks-Most) and most likely equated with the killing of the sacrificial victim, for which he deserved to be punished through exile and rebirths.[95] In this respect, it is worth noting that the mention of the Harpies in the papyrus lines (l. 4) that approach with destinies of death can be compared to the reference to Strife in B 115.14 (= EMP D 10.14 Laks-Most) as the ultimate cause of Empedocles' exile and rebirths; that is, of his

this neologism as a linguistic calque of the analogous Sphairos (simply put, Δῖνον> δίνη like Σφαῖρος> σφαῖρα) in order to indicate the opposite phase in the cosmic cycle: see Martin-Primavesi (1999: 305–6). However, in the whole corpus of Empedoclean fragments as well as in the doxographical tradition there is no reference to a *Dinon* opposed to the *Sphairos*. Primavesi's conjecture is, therefore, purely speculative.

[92] Martin-Primavesi (1999: 287–88) show that here the Harpies' role blends into that of Ἔριδες (and therefore of Strife) in PStrasb. c 4 (= EMP D 73.305 Laks-Most: ιἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε κακῆισι διατμηθέντ' ἐρίδεσσινι).

[93] See Inwood (2007: 238) and Tor (2017: 332 and 336).

[94] The verb διώλεσε suggests a complete destruction, rather than a *simple* death (which, according to Empedocles, is not the final end): see Trépanier (2014: 202).

[95] Empedocles describes ritual sacrifice as a φόνος comparable to murder and cannibalism: see B 136 (= EMP D 28 Laks-Most) and B 137 (= EMP D 29 Laks-Most) with my discussion in Chapter 2.6.

mortality. Analogously, πολυβενθ[έα χῶρον in PStrab. d–f 8 (= EMP D 76.8 Laks-Most) could be taken as a reference to the ἀσυνήθεα χῶρον of B 118 (= EMP D 14 Laks-Most) that, as I will argue in the next chapter, is related to B 115 and is a hint at the first leg of Empedocles' journey of exile. In light of these parallelisms between the papyrus verses quoted above and B 115, it is not difficult to equate 'the pitiless day' Empedocles curses in PStrasb. d–f 5 (= EMP D 76.5) with the day he lost his divine abode and condition to become an exile and wanderer because of his trust in Strife (B 115.13–14 [= EMP D 10.13–14 Laks-Most]).[96]

The nature of the parallelisms between B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) and the papyrus passage, moreover, suggests the conclusion that in the latter Empedocles constructs a literary allusion to his story of fault and punishment narrated in the former. In fact, the key to understanding the rather obscure image in the papyrus lines is to read it through the verses of B 115. Therefore, in order for this literary allusion to be effected, the verses of B 115 must precede those of the papyrus in the poetic narrative. In other words, to grasp the literary function of this allusion in the poetic interplay, the audience must have already learned about the story of the guilty gods and above all about Empedocles' claim to be one of them. Against this background, it can finally be concluded that B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) is to be allocated within *On Nature*.

1.6 Conclusions

This chapter has chiefly concerned itself with the location of a fundamental Empedoclean fragment, B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most), within *On Nature*. My argument has started from the analysis of some new pieces of evidence, brought to light by the publication of the Strasbourg papyrus, which have proven crucial for my reconstruction. In particular, a papyrus fragment, labelled as *ens.* d–f (= EMP D 76 Laks-Most), constitutes important evidence for placing B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) within

[96] It is worth noting that Trépanier (2017a: 158–65) proposes a reconstruction of PStrasb. d–f 7 (= EMP D 76.7 Laks-Most) which adds force to my hypothesis of Empedocles' literary allusion to B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most). Specifically, whereas Martin-Primavesi's reconstruction, which is generally accepted by the editors of Empedocles (see, e.g., EMP D 76.7 Laks-Most) reads as follows, νῦν δ]ὲ μάτη[ν ἐν] τῶιδε νό̣τ̣[ωι κατέδ]ε̣υσα παρειάς, Trépanier proposes, [νῦν δ]ὲ μάτη[ν ἐπὶ] τῶιδε νό[μωι κατέδ]ε̣υσα παρειάς. According to Trépanier, the notion of νόμος that can be reconstructed within the papyrus line is a reference to the oracle of Necessity; that is, to the exile of the guilty gods in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most). As Trépanier concludes, PStrasb. d–f 7 (= EMP D 76.7 Laks-Most) according to his reconstruction 'either directly refers back to B 115 or, at a minimum, presupposes it. Either way B 115 should henceforth be attributed to the proem of the *On Nature*.'

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009392600.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the physical poem. There we find Empedocles deploring 'the pitiless day' and his 'terrible deeds about feeding', which would remain without clear reference if one were not to be reminded of the story of the guilty gods narrated in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most). Indeed, the close parallels between B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) and the papyrus verses strongly indicate that Empedocles constructs in the papyrus lines a literary allusion to the story of guilt and divine punishment narrated in B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most). This must therefore precede the papyrus passage for the latter to be understood in its entirety. In light of this and following Plutarch's remark that B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) is a prelude to the doctrine proper, the inference is that it belongs to the proem to *On Nature*, which, just like the *Purifications*, opens with Empedocles' presentation as a god. This conclusion invites the reading that he intended to introduce both poems with a similar claim to his divine nature. In the next chapter, we will see that the reason behind these kinds of introductions is to claim poetical authority on matters beyond ordinary human knowledge.

In conclusion, having established that B 115 (= EMP D 10 Laks-Most) opens *On Nature*, I have built a sound basis for a new reconstruction of the text of Empedocles' physical proem. By following up on this conclusion, in the next chapter I will argue that this is reconstructed out of a synergy between what are generally considered as religious themes and more strictly physical principles. Because of its complex nature, the proem to *On Nature* then prompts us to rethink the interrelation and interaction among myth, religion and natural philosophy in Empedocles' physical system and poem.