

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

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Divine Evolution: Empedocles' Anthropology

Purpose. Reconstruction of Empedocles' doctrine from the point of view of philosophical anthropology. **Theoretical basis.** Methodological basis of the article is the anthropological comprehending of Empedocles' text fragments presented in the historical-philosophical context. **Originality.** Cognition of nature in Ancient Greece was far from the ideal of the objective knowledge formed in modern times, cognition of the world as it exists before man and independently of him. Whatever the ancient philosophers talked about, man was always in the center of their attention. I proposed an anthropological version of the interpretation of the doctrine of Empedocles, within the framework of which various elements of his concept fit into a consistent model. **Conclusions.** Empedocles' anthropology is based on the recognition of several fundamental things. First of all, there is no death. Second, there is no fundamental difference between human and celestial. This line is conventional and under certain conditions one can overcome it. Cod can become a human (for example, for a deed unworthy of a deity), and a human can become God. Teaching of evolution is also double. Not only physical shell evolves, keeping only the most adapted species, but the soul too. The latter can both ascend to the gods and go down to the bushes and fish. Purification of the soul and mastering the magic of the elements gives an impetus for a correct direction of evolution. Empedocles is an anthropologist-practitioner, who shows by his example that a human can cope with all the elements and reach divinity. He chose (or convinced himself that he chose) the elemental ingredients for penetrating the Fortunate Isles, leaving the instructions on how to become God.

Keywords: Empedocles; immortality; soul; divinity; anthropology; metempsychosis; evolution; elements; memory

For from living forms it was making dead ones, changing them.
Empedocles

Introduction

A Viking who miraculously reached old age could challenge a young and strong warrior in the hope that the Valkyrias would perceive his death as death in the battle and take him to Valhalla. This ingenuous life hack (even more likely a death hack) cannot be compared with those models that the ancient Greeks developed, for the gods of Olympus are much more sophisticated than the inhabitants of Asgard.

The Greek gods are quite friendly; do not hold aloof from the company of mortals, and this communication sometimes continued in bed, resulting in the birth of demigod heroes. These heroes had different fates, but with a good fortune, they either went to heaven themselves or led a carefree life on the Fortunate Isles. As for an ordinary Greek, even if there were gods in his family could not count on a positive end to his earthly career.

Not everyone accepted at face value the tales of the poets about the gods; and these tales were different. Nevertheless, the Olympic religion assumed the acceptance of a bright life on earth and

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a gloomy one – in Hades, and the punishment for the actions committed (and who is without sin?) was very cruel (according to Pindar (2007), "a punishment too dreadful to behold" (p. 9)).

For people who tend to see in Greek myths only amusing fairy tales, and consider Greek philosophers as people who know how to pose non-standard questions and resolve them in an unusual way, Plato's words about philosophy as a preparation for death (*Phaedo* 67e) seem strange or exaggerated. However, Plato did not exaggerate. From time immemorial people started to indulge in musings about death and possible posthumous existence, but only in Ancient Greece these musings resulted in the appearance of philosophy.

Is it possible to overcome death? Is immortality attainable for a human? And if a human overcomes death, will he become God? I would like to discuss these issues with the help of Empedocles, one of the most mysterious and colorful thinkers of Ancient Greece.

Almost in all studies devoted to Empedocles the authors note the duality of his image. Bertrand Russell (1947), for example, called him a mixture of a philosopher, prophet, scientist and charlatan (p. 72). Nietzsche (2006) noted that Empedocles "... hovers between poet and rhetorician, between god and man, between scientific man and artist, between statesman and priest, and between Pythagoras and Democritus" (p. 119). At the same time, Russell, a mathematician and logician, sought in the philosophy of Antiquity the sources of subsequent scientific concepts. He praised Empedocles for natural-scientific statements, some of which were much ahead of their time (for example, the idea of the finiteness of the speed of light, evolution, etc.), and spoke about his religious views with a mockery. The English lord saw in them a set of superstitions and narcissism ... Nietzsche was indifferent to the natural philosophy of Empedocles; he valued his position and artistry for his pride and arrogance. A person who declared himself God could count on sympathy from the German philosopher.

The figure of Empedocles was perceived as eclectic in antiquity, and in our time, little has changed (Kenny, 2006, p. 15). Even his legendary suicide (anticipating death, he threw himself into the mouth of Etna Mount), attracting people of art (for example, Friedrich Hölderlin (2008) and Matthew Arnold (1890)), only ruined the philosophical reputation of Empedocles (Kenny, 2008).

How such different sides could be united in one person and whether they are complementary elements of a holistic doctrine that is not very clear to us? This will be discussed in this article.

Purpose

Empedocles' doctrine about the Sphere, in which Love and Strife abide, his natural scientific views, which included absolutely ingenious speculations, have repeatedly become the subject of research. The mystical doctrine of Empedocles has also been considered more than once. But I would like to look at the doctrine of Empedocles from the point of view of philosophical anthropology and focus various aspects of his work on it. Thus, the purpose of the article is to reconstruct the anthropological component of the doctrine of Empedocles.

Statement of basic materials

Imagine the world inhabited by intelligent representatives of two races – immortal rulers and mortal subjects. The former are powerful, the latter – ambitious. The rulers' residency is located in the fortress with numerous safety systems. They have something coveted by their subjects – the source of eternal life, but they do not intend to share it.

We know that the rulers did not create this world, but only captured it. We also know that for some mortals the rulers made exceptions, allowing them into their residency and granting them

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immortality. In addition, there were technology leaks from the fortress (Promethean fire), and according to unconfirmed, but trustworthy information, at least one person (Orpheus) found the opportunity to visit there and return alive.

Assume that some subjects got the idea to try to get a forbidden source. Comprehending the conditions of the problem, our hypothetical conspirators come to the conclusion that the venture they have conceived, although very difficult, is not fundamentally impossible. It is only needed to handle the safety system of the fortress and create armor that protects against heavenly fire, which is likely they will have to face.

The task is divided into two mutually assuming components: 1) deciphering the code of being; 2) preparing one's soul to meet the unknown. Two poems of Empedocles (about 490 BC – 430 BC) "On Nature" and "Purification" are aimed at solving this problem. The problem is divided into two mutually supposing components: 1) decoding the code being; 2) preparing your soul to meet the unknown. Two poems of Empedocles (c. 490 BC – c. 430 BC), "On Nature" and "Purification", are aimed at solving this problem.

Everyone knows that human is mortal, but the Greek thinker had another opinion about it (hereinafter, the text of Empedocles is quoted from the publication of Richard McKirahan (2010)):

I will tell you another thing. There is coming to be of not a
single one of all
mortal things, nor is there any end of destructive death,
but only mixture, and separation of what is mixed,
and nature (*phusis*) is the name given to them by humans.
(McKirahan, 2010, DK 31B8)

It would seem that if there is no death, but only misunderstanding, then the problem of immortality is solved automatically. However, the absence of death does not mean eternal life. For example, if after the death of a person the elements of which his/her body consisted will be a part of other bodies, this will not make him/her better, because even if the elements are immortal, his/her personality dies along with the death of the body. But there is another variant. With the death and decay of the body, his/her soul (spirit) does not perish, but it will not have memory, which means that here eternity will also be purely nominal, for the personality of a person, his/her "I" will not be preserved. And there is nothing to talk about any victory over death without discussing these issues, and the context for discussing the conspiracy plan was the ancient Greek religion.

Each Greek polis had its own religious traditions and cult activities, therefore, it is possible to speak of "ancient Greek religion" rather conditionally (Bremmer, 1994, p. 1; Burkert, 1985, p. 8; Parker, 2005, p. 66; Price, 1999, p. 3; Sissa & Detienne, 2000, p. 155; Versnel, 2011, p. 240). Nevertheless, in relation to the topic of the afterlife, we can talk about three main variants.

According to the classical Olympic religion (to which with certain reservations the Eleusinian mysteries can also be attributed), after death, the soul of a person goes to Hades, where it completely loses its memory, while death is a one-way ticket. Orphic and Pythagorean societies had alternative variants for posthumous existence. There was some ideological connection between these orders, but the Orphic used the classic version of death, only hoping to preserve the memory in Hades, becoming almost gods; numerous gold tablets provided detailed instructions (Bernabé & Jiménez San Cristóbal, 2008; Graf & Johnston, 2007). The Pythagoreans, on the other hand, adhered to the doctrine of metempsychosis, which opens up the possibility of living many lives and allows spiritual evolution.

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It was the concept of metempsychosis that Empedocles shared, believing that the soul can live in different bodies, while assuming that corporeality is something alien to the soul: "Wrapping <it> in an alien garb of flesh" (McKirahan, 2010, DK 31B126).

This is a rather unusual statement for a medical practitioner. However, if we consider Love as a unifying principle (Coughlin, 2021), then the unity of body and soul becomes necessary for the time until its power gives way to Strife. By the way, in view of the generally accepted word usage, here and below I use the concept of "soul" as the opposite of "body", but, according to Constantine Vamvacas,

Empedocles does not use the word 'soul' but, instead, the word daemon.

'Soul' denoted for Empedocles and his contemporaries the condition of the *living* body, which gives up its last warm breath in death, expelled into the air. In contrast, the daemon (spirit) is the holy portion of the body, the indissoluble 'ego', detachable from the body, that undergoes and experiences all the successive reincarnations so as finally to unite with the divine. (Vamvacas, 2009, p. 180)

Probably, Empedocles meant that each human soul is celestial. The philosopher understands its essence and can consciously develop and use it in himself. An ordinary person is like a savage into whose hands a complex and high-tech mechanism has fallen, the purpose and methods of using which elude his/her consciousness.

Ava Chitwood (2004) writes that "divinity is, of course, the logical philosophical outcome of metempsychosis, rebirth into a higher form" (p. 26). In my opinion it is not quite obvious. If the soul is immortal, but at the same time it is memoryless, then it is something that is extremely close to nothing. When a person talks about *his/her* soul, he/she understands that it is identical to his/her personality, or inextricably linked with it. If my soul has already been on earth and has been connected with certain personalities about whom I now have no idea, then these personalities disappeared from existence, and the immortality of the essence, which for some time came into contact with their personality, does not matter to them. If these personalities are preserved in the soul, how could they be actualized?

Empedocles says about himself:

For I have already been born as a boy and a girl
and a bush and a bird and a <mute> fish <from the sea>.
(McKirahan, 2010, DK 31B117)

It is difficult to say whether these were memories or poetic fantasies-associations, but what did Empedocles mean by demonstrating such an unusual experience? One can assume that under certain conditions a person recalls his/her previous lives, introducing the past "I" into existence. If that were the case, the concept of metempsychosis would indeed have a soteriological meaning. But then it is not very clear whether a person will feel like one "I" in different images or

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whether he/she should have something like exacerbated schizophrenia, when his/her personality splits into many unrelated "I". If Empedocles remembered himself as a boy and a girl, a bush, a bird and a fish, whether his identities come into conflict with each other?

On the other hand, in our time, a person easily tries on several identities during the day (for example, playing different roles and having different avatars in chats, on Internet forums, online games, etc.). In most cases, his/her psyche handles such experiences easily. Obviously, this is due to the fact that a person can consciously change his/her identities and the experience he/she has gained (for example, the progress of experience during the playthrough of different games) remains "inside" these identities. Perhaps divinity consists in the ability to "switch" at will?

If this assumption is correct, then the unblocking of the function of divinity achieved by *purification* is not a bet on future eternity, but an opportunity to feel eternity while still alive. M. R. Wright wrote:

The god-like *daimones* are born as mortals, and in turn 'many-times dying men' become immortal gods. But in the *Katharmoi* (*Purification*. – A. H.) the alternation of the states 'mortal' and 'immortal' takes on a vividly personal tone. Notions of wrongdoing, banishment and return to happiness give individual histories to gods and mortals, which at first sight appears incompatible with a theory that explains particular forms of life as a temporary arrangement of elemental parts. (Wright, 1997, p. 186)

Let us assume that each person carries an immortal daimon in him/herself, access to which is blocked for his/her own good. Then being in the physical body makes it impossible to remember and only liberation from it at the time of death "revives" the past "I". Probably, the memory unblocks after the death until the next incarnation, and probably no. In the latter case, the former personalities are actually dead, even if they are potentially recorded "somewhere". Purification prepares the soul to accept its former images. It becomes immortal and divine. Thus, a problem is also solved, which any theology or mythology solves with great difficulty: what to do for all eternity?

Alex Long argues that Empedocles abode by an unorthodox version of immortality. In his opinion, for Empedocles, immortality does not mean and does not imply infinite duration, and the immortality of God is his continuity as one and the same organism over a long, but finite period (Long, 2017). "And immediately things grew to be mortal that formerly had learned to be immortal" (McKirahan, 2010, DK 31B35.14). This is a very unusual concept.

For a monotheist, God is the guarantor and basis of the existence of the world, therefore his "death" is possible only in a figurative sense, as in Nietzsche. For the Greeks, the gods are only top managers who have nothing to do with the origin of the world and its laws. If we take the change of Love and Strife in the Sphere as a cosmic cycle, it will be possible to assume that in the new cycle, not Zeus, but someone else will lead the heavens (after all, the Olympians are the

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third generation of gods). Having ceased to be God, Zeus will cease to be immortal, although this will not mean that he will die. But he will not die, not because once he was immortal God, but because there is no death for anyone. Gods and people differ not in that the former are immortals, and the latter are not, but in that the former know about their immortality and can control their fate. At the same time, Empedocles views the Cosmos as a structure similar to democracy, in which a cyclical exchange of power takes place (Coates, 2018).

It is within the framework of cosmic cycles that the concept of "immortal gods" makes sense. They are immortal, but not eternal. The concept of "Cosmos" as a harmonious world order is attributed to Pythagoras. According to Phillip Sidney Horky (2019), later figures designated Pythagoras as the first to call the universal world order "Cosmos", since Empedocles was considered a Pythagorean natural scientist whose emphasis on cosmology and ethics was considered an example of a Pythagorean approach to philosophy. Incidentally, Empedocles knew that the moon was spherical (Jones, 2017, p. 123). The identification of the Cosmos with the sphere could be a consequence of the analogy.

Thus, the next game can be with promotion, and can be with degradation. Knowing the patterns of the process, one can influence it. The attainment of perfection in knowledge means divine incarnation. Since the human soul already has a divine (demonic) origin, this is quite natural and obvious. Therefore, Empedocles called fools those, who took death seriously.

But where did the soul (daimon) come from? In his opinion, something cannot arise from non-existence:

Fools. For their thoughts are not far-reaching –
those who expect that there comes to be what previously was not,
or that anything perishes and is completely destroyed.
For it is impossible to come to be from what in no way is,
and it is not to be accomplished and is unheard of that what is perishes
absolutely.
For it will always be where a person thrusts it each time.
(McKirahan, 2010, DK 31B11, B12)

Evolution that Empedocles thinks about (in forms that now seem fantastic), concerns only bodies, and the origin of souls remains a mystery. He denies the possibility for the soul to arise from nowhere, thus, interpreting the principle of conservation put forward by the Milesians. Does this mean that souls have always been (that they are eternal) or there was once their one-time emergence (creation), after which new souls no longer arise, but only pass from body to body? It is difficult to say what Empedocles himself thought about this, but with the initial appearance of the soul, it is indestructible, at least within the framework of our existence.

Taking into account that Empedocles has an original version of the evolutionary theory, the concept of metempsychosis acquires another dimension. Whether the gods are a more perfect version of man and did Empedocles predict an evolutionary leap? Probably, the gods are representatives of the human population, who evolved earlier than everyone else. Subsequently, evolutionary changes should affect other *people* as well. Then the image that I painted at the beginning, about the gods-rulers who locked themselves in the castle and defend their privileges from the encroachments of their mortal subjects, does not correspond to reality, at least, to reality in the mind of Empedocles. The gods do not have any special nature, for trees, fish, birds, men, women and gods are all created from the same elements (McKirahan, 2010, DK 31B23).

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Therefore, the soul is of divine origin, and the mortal body only restrains it. There is no death, but a series of rebirths. But if one does not want to be a fish next time, one needs to take some action. He/she was already God, which means he/she needs to return *home*.

His welcoming speech to friends, where he calls himself the immortal God (McKirahan, 2010, DK 31B112), and in which they saw either megalomania or insanity, was, in essence, not boast, but a statement. He shared his discovery with friends: he *became* God! If he can, so can others. You just need to make an effort.

Taking the doctrine of Pythagoras (theology and cleansing procedures) as a basis, Empedocles combined it with the teachings (technologies) of the Ionians. The four elements as a compromise and as the end of the cycle. In other words, our hero goes to storm Olympus, armed with cleansing magic and enchanting technology. His predecessors relied on one of the elements, and he decided to use the power of all four. And he used them not only in words.

He tamed the air (receiving the nickname wind-stayer (Diogenes Laertius, 1925, p. 375), water (his irrigation work saved many lives of the inhabitants of Selinus (Diogenes Laertius, 1925)) and earth (reviving a woman who was without breath and a heartbeat for thirty days, taking her from the earth (Diogenes Laertius, 1925, p. 377, p. 383)). He purified his soul with a diet and improved his "karma" with numerous benefits. Fire remained to solve the problem. The jump to Etna was the last point of his mission, the fire of Prometheus and Heraclitus (Halapsis, 2020) was to finally cleanse him of his human essence. This was a leap into immortality.

Originality

Magic is at the origins of science. And this is not only industrial magic (agriculture and craft), the religious meaning of which does not need any explanation, but also cleansing and enchanting magic. Cognition of nature in Ancient Greece was far from the ideal of objective knowledge formed in modern times, knowledge of the world as it exists before man and independently of him. Whatever the ancient philosophers talked about, man was always in the center of their attention (and not just before the so-called anthropological turn). Empedocles succeeded in adding new and unusual elements to this discourse.

Conclusions

Any modern university would be glad to see "Professor Thales" at the physics department. However, a student with knowledge of Thales would be expelled from the exam in disgrace. Ancient wisdom has been dissected and digested, "grains of truth" are reliably separated from "delusions", and in general, no one expects any surprises from the ancients. All textbooks, when considering by pre-Socratics, assert that the main theme of their activity was the search for the origin of the world (arche). Water, air, fire, apeiron, numbers, atoms revolve in our consciousness, and we see in this the themes that became the foundations of subsequent scientific concepts. The historian of philosophy finds ideas among the ancients, stepping over the "naivety" of which, he points to them as a stone laid in the building of science. In the gratitude that is declared, there is a share of hypocrisy with which a person *with knowledge* pampers his/her vanity with an indulgent superiority in relation to the ancients, *allowing* them to take part in the banquet of truth. The knowledge of the ancients is compared with the data of modern science, which is considered as a standard. Finding in the statements of the thinkers of the past something similar to our theories, we are ready to accept this as "the first approaches to the problem".

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The ideas of the Greek philosophers really had a grain of modern knowledge, but one should be aware that they were not "professors" in our understanding, and serving to abstract science was not their priority. We tend to see this as purely intellectual interest, imagining the Greek philosophers to be like the armchair scientists of the modern era, whose service to Truth had (at least in the eyes of others) the disinterestedness of a eunuch, contemplating beauty without any intention of possessing (and mastering) it. The ancient Greeks (whose high culture is admired, but that does not prevent us from considering them talkers and dreamers) had a completely *practical* interest in raising the question of the beginning. And this question had not so much physical as anthropological meaning. What is called the "anthropological turn in philosophy" that took place in the middle of the 5th century BC, I would call the "epistemological turn in philosophical anthropology", because the question arose not so much about a human as about the status of his/her thinking.

There are hardly many natures as integral as Empedocles in world history. For this man, there was no gap between theory and practice. Moreover, his practice *followed directly* from the theory. Empedocles, engaged in healing, cleansing cities from the harmful vapors of rivers, protecting gardens from the winds, expelling tyrants (while not requiring power for himself and even refusing it) – this is morality from the heart, and not from benefit or need, not out of politeness and prudence, but because of the awareness of the divinity of his mission.

The anthropology of Empedocles is based on the recognition of several fundamental things. First, there is no death. Second, there is no fundamental difference between the human and the divine. The boundary is conditional and under certain conditions it can be overcome. God can become a man (for example, by doing an act unworthy of a deity), and a man can become God.

The doctrine of evolution is also dual. Both the bodily shell and the soul evolve, keeping only the most adapted species. The soul can both rise to the gods and descend to the bushes and fish. Purification of the soul and mastering the magic of the elements gives a good impetus for the correct direction of evolution. Strictly speaking, he did not directly assert that everyone who repeats his path will certainly become God or godlike, but he/she will pump the necessary qualities. Perhaps the beans, the use of which was categorically forbidden by Pythagoras, give a strong debuff.

Empedocles is an anthropologist-practitioner who, by his example, shows that a person can master all the elements and achieve divinity. He chose (or convinced himself that he chose) the elemental ingredients for penetrating the Fortunate Isles, leaving the instructions on how to become God.

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Божественна еволюція: антропологія Емпедокла

Мета. Реконструкція вчення Емпедокла з позицій філософської антропології. **Теоретичний базис.** Методологічною основою статті є антропологічне осмислення фрагментів текстів Емпедокла, представлене в історико-філософському контексті. **Наукова новизна.** Пізнання природи в Стародавній Греції було далеким від сформованого в Новий час ідеалу об'єктивного знання, пізнання світу таким, яким він існує до людини і незалежно від неї. Про що б не говорили філософи того часу, в центрі їх уваги завжди була людина. Я запропонував антропологічний варіант інтерпретації вчення Емпедокла, в рамках якого різні елементи його концепції укладаються в несуперечливу модель. **Висновки.** Антропологія Емпедокла заснована на визнанні декількох принципових речей. По-перше, смерті не існує. По-друге, немає принципової різниці між людським і божественним. Дана грань умовна і за певних умов її можна подолати. Бог може стати людиною (наприклад, зробивши негідний божества вчинок), а людина може стати Богом. Вчення про еволюцію також двоїсте. Еволюціонує як тілесна оболонка, зберігаючи лише найбільш пристосовані види, так і душа. Остання може як підніматися до богів, так і сходити до кущів і риб. Очищення душі та оволодіння магією стихій дає хороший поштовх для правильного напрямку еволюції. Емпедокл – антрополог-практик, який на своєму прикладі показує, що людина може оволодіти всіма стихіями і досягти божественності. Він підібрав (або переконав себе в тому, що підібрав) інгредієнти-стихії для проникнення на Острови блаженних, залишивши нам інструкцію про те, як стати Богом.

Ключові слова: Емпедокл; безсмертя; душа; божественність; антропологія; метемпсихоз; еволюція; стихії; пам'ять

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