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## SIMPLICIUS ON EMPEDOCLES: A NOTE ON HIS COMMENTARY IN *Phys.* 157.25–161.20

**Аннотация.** В настоящем исследовании предпринята попытка показать, какое влияние может оказывать комментарий на формирование представлений о предшествующей философской традиции. Примером здесь выступает комментарий Симпликия на «Физику» Аристотеля и на фрагменты поэмы Эмпедокла. Выбранный отрывок хоть и мал по размеру, но весьма примечателен в отношении содержания и того, как с ним работает Симпликий. В плане содержания мы имеем здесь дело с одним из фундаментальных проблематичных сюжетов философии Эмпедокла о поочередном правлении Любви и Вражды. Но Симпликий добавляет к этому свое представление о философии Эмпедокла, продиктованное его желанием гармонизировать мнения всех языческих философов и поместить их в одну непротиворечивую схему. Симпликий хотел противопоставить что-нибудь набирающему силу христианству и показать, что вся греческая философия развивалась по определенному пути и не содержит внутренних разногласий. С одной стороны, Симпликий сохранил для нас очень ценный материал — довольно длинные разделы текста поэмы Эмпедокла. С другой — желая осуществить свою программу, Симпликий выбирал те фрагменты поэмы, которые хорошо в нее вписывались. Поэтому встает вопрос, должны ли мы учитывать контекст, в котором процитированы фрагменты, или просто вычленивать из общего тела комментария нужные нам фрагменты поэмы Эмпедокла и рассматривать их независимо.

**Ключевые слова:** Симпликий, Эмпедокл, комментаторская традиция, любовь, вражда, неоплатонизм

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## SIMPLICIUS ON EMPEDOCLES: A NOTE ON HIS COMMENTARY IN *PHYS.* 157.25–161.20

**Abstract.** The present study attempts to show what influence a commentary can have on the formation of ideas about a preceding philosophical tradition. A case in point is Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's "Physics" and on fragments of Empedocles' poem. The selected passage, though small in size, is quite remarkable in terms of content and the way Simplicius deals with it. With regard to content, we are dealing here with one of the fundamental problematic plots of Empedocles' philosophy about the alternate rule of Love and Strife. But Simplicius adds to this his own view of Empedocles' philosophy, dictated by his desire to harmonize the views of all the pagan philosophers and place them within a single consistent scheme. Simplicius wanted to counterpose something to Christianity, which was gaining in strength, and to show that all Greek philosophy developed along a certain path and contains no internal disagreements. On the one hand, Simplicius has preserved for us very valuable material — fairly lengthy sections of the text of Empedocles' poem. On the other hand, wishing to implement his program, Simplicius chose those fragments of the poem that fit well into it. Therefore, the question arises whether we should take into account the context in which the fragments are quoted, or simply extract from the general body of the commentary those fragments of Empedocles' poem that we need and consider them independently?

**Keywords:** Simplicius, Empedocles, commentary, love, strife, Neoplatonism

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Compared to many early Greek philosophers, Empedocles was very fortunate. Thanks to doxographers and commentators we are quite well acquainted with his views. About 450 lines of his poem have come down to us, of which Simplicius has preserved 150. Simplicius is most interested in Empedocles' cosmology, and we might say that he is a major witness on the subject. Furthermore, he not only preserved many fragments, but also indicated from which books they originate. H. Diels and W. Kranz [1960] regarded Simplicius as a trustworthy author, and therefore reproduced in their collection of fragments the order (with slight modifications) in which lines from the poem are quoted by him.

Simplicius' interest in Empedocles can be explained by the fact that his primary authority, Aristotle, apparently regarded Empedocles as the most successful of the pre-Socratics.<sup>1</sup> But there is another reason. Simplicius set himself the global task of fitting all the teachings of the ancient philosophers into one consistent system, which from his point of view was Platonism, brought to perfection by Aristotle (in *Phys.* 7.27–8.15). In order to carry out this task it was necessary to support his words with original quotations. The fragments themselves had to be clarified and interpreted in an appropriate way, which led in turn to a commentary not only on Aristotle's writings, but also on parts of Empedocles' poem. Thanks to these two factors, we have a rather large collection of his fragments.

The aforementioned peculiarities of Simplicius' approach raise a number of questions for us. Who exactly is Simplicius commenting on — Aristotle, Plato or Empedocles? If it is a commentary on lines from a poem by Empedocles, what influence could it have had on the perception of his ideas? What task did Simplicius set himself in putting Empedocles into the intellectual context of Neoplatonism? To answer these questions and to understand exactly how Simplicius' program was carried out, let us examine in detail a small section of the "Commentary on the Physics," which presents the sequence of fragments B 17, B 21, B 23, B 26, B 22 (according to Diels — Kranz).

To begin with, let us try to describe Empedocles' cosmological ideas in a somewhat generalized way. From the surviving passages of his poem we know that he postulated four fundamental principles, which he called "roots" (fire, water, earth and air), and two forces — Love and Strife. The four primordials are described in different ways — sometimes as gods, sometimes as elements, or as tiny particles from which Aphrodite, acting as demiurge, prepares various mixtures to create all living beings. We note at once that the word "element," which has become customary to describe these primordials after Aristotle, is too restrictive of Empedocles' thought and does not reflect the existing nuances and peculiarities.<sup>2</sup> Love and Strife can be understood as two equal acting forces, one uniting, the other dividing. However, there is more to this than meets the eye. Strife also unites, for during its reign the world is inhabited by different living be-

<sup>1</sup> O'Brien [1969: 72–76] makes a rather convincing point by comparing Aristotle's attitude towards Empedocles with that of the other early Greek philosophers.

<sup>2</sup> For more on what constitutes "roots" see [Fedorova 2005; Afonasina, Kovalchuk 2022].

ings, but their mixture and appearance are somewhat different from those living in the reign of Love.<sup>3</sup> But let's leave that behind, as well as the question of the ethical characteristics of Love and Strife. Love and Strife act alternately, guided by a kind of ancient oath.

It is the interplay of Love and Strife that Simplicius pays close attention to in sections 157.25 to 161.20 of his "Commentary on Physics". As noted above, his account has the specific aim of harmonizing the views of the ancient philosophers.<sup>4</sup> The principle of this harmonization is the search for the intelligible and sensible worlds of all the ancient thinkers. Simplicius considers that such a division can be found in Xenophanes, Parmenides, Melissus (in *Phys.* 28.32), Empedocles (in *Phys.* 31.18–34.8), and Anaxagoras (in *Phys.* 34.18). The same is not contradicted by the teachings of Leucippus with Democritus and the Pythagorean Timaeus (in *Phys.* 35.22). With monists like Thales, Anaximander, and Heraclitus things are a little more complicated, but even with them we find the idea of some active principle which manifests itself in the physical world (in *Phys.* 36.8). Of course we can see, says Simplicius (in *Phys.* 36.20–25), that they posit different things, but still not opposite. Here he refers to Aristotle, who points out directly that the principles of the ancients "are in one sense the same, in another different; different certainly, as indeed most people think, but the same inasmuch as they are analogous; for all are taken from the same table of columns, some of the pairs being wider, others narrower in extent. In this way then their theories are both the same and different..." (*Physics* 188b36–189a4, trans. by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye [Barns 1984]).

In his search for the origins of the project of harmonizing the views of all the ancient philosophers Simplicius returns to Plato. In confirmation he quotes from the "Sophist" 242d–243a, where Heraclitus and Empedocles are compared: "Then some Ionian and later some Sicilian Muses reflected that it was safest to combine the two tales and to say that being is many and one, and is (or are) held together by enmity and friendship. For the more strenuous Muses say it is always simultaneously coming together and separating; but the gentler ones relaxed the strictness of the doctrine of perpetual strife; they say that the all is sometimes one and friendly, under the influence of Aphrodite, and sometimes many and at variance with itself by reason of some sort of strife" (trans. by Harold N. Fowler [1921]). Plato, according to Simplicius (in *Phys.* 50, 13), revealed a commonality in their views, which is that they both point to a harmonious mixing of the opposites of the becoming world. Plato and Aristotle act as a powerful support for Simplicius, an important confirmation of the fact that even in antiquity the fathers of philosophy had a sense of some hidden agreement of all thinkers with

<sup>3</sup> The remarkable characteristics of these acting forces, the changing periods of their rule and other features of the cosmic cycle are described in detail in O'Brien's seminal work [O'Brien 1969].

<sup>4</sup> In the preface to the translation of the first book of the "Commentary on the Physics", Michael Griffin and Richard Sorabji [Griffin, Sorabji 2022: 5–23] give a brief outline of the main ideas of Simplicius, which will enable the reader to get a rather quick and effective general impression of his program for harmonizing the teachings of the ancient authors.

each other. Of course, there were also those views of the ancient authors with which Plato and Aristotle strongly disagreed, but this was because they were too absurd and badly expressed (in *Phys.* 36.30). Well, those people, continues Simplicius, who see in such a great variety of opinions of the ancient philosophers their inconsistency, themselves understand nothing of philosophy and are mired in mutual accusations (σχίσμασιν)<sup>5</sup> (in *Phys.* 29.2).<sup>6</sup>

It is now time to turn to the text itself. I will quote and analyse the relevant lines from the “Commentary on the Physics”, and when necessary, lines from Empedocles’ poem, in the order in which they appear in Simplicius.

157.25–27: “Empedocles transmits the doctrines of the one, of limited multiplicity, of periodic restoration, and of generation and corruption by assembly and division in the first book of his Physics”.<sup>7</sup>

In support of these words, Simplicius quotes 34 lines from Empedocles’ poem (fr. B 17 DK). This length should not surprise us, for he wanted to be extremely honest before his readers, and not only to comment on Aristotle, but also to preserve for future generations the legacy of earlier thinkers (“I am compelled to draw these things out (μηκύνειν) on account of the current widespread ignorance of ancient writings,” says Simplicius, in *Phys.* 39.20–21, trans. by S. Menn [Griffin, Sorabji 2022]). Thanks to this approach, we are the fortunate possessors of priceless treasures of the wisdom of the ancients.

Simplicius seems to have understood that clarification was necessary for the modern reader.<sup>8</sup> The language of late antiquity was already quite different from that of the Sicilian thinker, who also deliberately archaized his expressions. On the other hand, the very veiling of Empedocles’ thought may have been beneficial to Simplicius, as it allowed him to interpret what Empedocles had written in the way he wanted. Further Simplicius explains a long fragment (B 17 DK):

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<sup>5</sup> It seems that Simplicius did not choose this word by chance, pointing to his opponents among Christians. It should be noted that the pagan philosophical environment in which Simplicius was brought up in the fifth to sixth centuries A. D. was still quite representative [Vedeshkin 2018: 277; Afonasin 2022]. In general, in many cities of Asia Minor and Syria, as we now know, pagan opposition not only found a stronghold, but also constituted a force capable of fighting to preserve its own religious rights [Watts 2005]. On the other hand, we know that pagan philosophers in the empire in the sixth century had to be discreet, and, as A. Cameron puts it, ‘playing their cards very carefully, provoking no one, and waiting for the dust to settle; leavening their heady diet of Plato and the Chaldaean Oracles with a wholesome shot of Epictetus’ [Cameron 1969: 21]. In this respect, the work of Simplicius in systematizing and unifying the views of the pagan philosophers must be seen as a last attempt to counter Christianity with something and to prevent the destruction of what had been accumulated over a thousand years of intellectual history.

<sup>6</sup> One cannot but cite as a basis for harmonizing the views of the philosophers the position of Numenius, who was the first Neoplatonist to claim that Brahmins, Jews, and magicians were in perfect harmony with Plato (fr. 1a des Places (9a Leemans)).

<sup>7</sup> Here and hereafter the commentary of Simplicius and the fragments of Empedocles are given in A. Laks and G. Most’s translation [Laks, Most 2016], unless otherwise specified.

<sup>8</sup> Simplicius notes (in *Phys.* 36.31) that the ancients used to express their thoughts in riddles (αἰνιγματωδῶς εἰωθότων τῶν παλαιῶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν ἀποφαίνεσθαι γνώμας).

159.5–6: In these lines, he calls ‘one’ what comes from the plurality of the four elements, and he indicates that this occurs sometimes when Love dominates and sometimes when Strife does.<sup>9</sup>

There are two noteworthy points in this sentence. First, following Aristotle, Simplicius uses the word στοιχεῖον, though we know that Empedocles himself called the primordials either “roots” (ρίζώματα) or source (πηγή), or simply gave them the names of the gods (Ζεὺς, Ἥρη, Αἰδωνεύς, Νῆστις), or described them with special characteristics (ἡέλιον μὲν λευκὸν ὄραν καὶ θερμὸν; ὄμβρον δ’ ἐν πᾶσι δνοφόνετ’ αὖτε ῥιγαλέον; ἐκ δ’ αἴης προρέουσι θελεμνά τε καὶ στερεωπά), and of course called them natural elements (πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ ἤερος). From this it follows that the idea of roots-principles cannot be reduced only to the natural elements — στοιχεῖα. Perhaps because of this uncertainty, the ancient authors decided to simplify their lives by inventing a new word for Empedocles’ incomprehensible primordial roots. It is true that in this way they greatly simplified his language, reduced it to some unambiguity, which, as one can easily see in the poem itself, Empedocles did not have.

Secondly, we must conclude from the words of Simplicius that universal unification happens twice. But is it really so? From Empedocles’ poem we know that the highest result of Love’s reign is Sphairos. It is described as absolute indistinguishability, the total triumph of Love and Harmony. Also, Sphairos is a god who revels in his own solitude, rejoicing in the fact that there is nothing beyond him.<sup>10</sup> But we learn nothing from the available fragments about the unification during the reign of Strife. It is very likely that Simplicius worked with the full text of Empedocles’ poem.<sup>11</sup> It may then be assumed that the extant parts say something about a second unification during the reign of Strife. However, this assumption is worth rejecting for two reasons. The idea of a second unification is not developed anywhere else in Simplicius’ treatises and other sources are silent about it. Secondly, based on Empedocles’ logic, it contradicts the very function of Strife, namely that it divides all things to the state of the four primordials and prevents their unification. In the fragments we also find the notion that in the reign of Strife the primordials do not have the skill to fuse, the formation of their mixture occurs as if forcibly, and the mixture itself turns out not so strong as in the reign of Love. Let us take a few fragments as an example: “sometimes coming together,

<sup>9</sup> ἐν δὲ τούτοις ἐν μὲν τὸ ἐκ πλειόνων φησὶ τῶν τεττάρων στοιχείων, καὶ ποτὲ μὲν τῆς φιλίας δηλοῖ ἐπικρατοῦσης, ποτὲ δὲ τοῦ νείκους. This expression is translated somewhat differently by P. Huby and C. C. W. Taylor: “In this passage he says that the one is what comes from the plurality of the four elements, and shows Love as in control at one time and Strife at another” [Huby, Taylor 2011: 67].

<sup>10</sup> The question of how the late ancient authors interpreted Empedocles’ image of Sphairos is dealt with in [Hladký 2014].

<sup>11</sup> That Simplicius had access to the full text of Empedocles’ poem is agreed upon by most modern scholars. H. Baltussen writes: “What makes Simplicius special, even if not above reproach, is his exceptional effort to use actual quotations, which illustrates unusual source access and exemplary reportage. This suggests that he, unlike many doxographical sources, had direct access to the Presocratics and Theophrastus, and implies that he has a remarkable methodology in quoting, selecting and using his sources” [Baltussen 2008: 56].



159.6–8: For the fact that neither of these two completely disappears is indicated by the facts that “all are equal and identical in age” and that “nothing is added nor is lacking”.

159.8–12: “Multiple” is the plurality from which the One comes; for it is not Love that is the One, but Strife too leads to the One.<sup>12</sup> Then, after he has said many other things, he adds the character proper to each of the things that he has mentioned, calling the fire ‘sun,’ the air ‘gleam’ and ‘sky,’ and the water ‘rain’ and ‘sea.’ He speaks as follows: [B 21 DK].

But come, consider further witnesses to those earlier statements,  
If anything in what came earlier was defective in form:  
The sun, warm to see and shining everywhere,  
All the immortal things [i. e. probably: clouds] moistened with  
heat and a bright gleam,  
And rain for all, dark and icy;  
And out of the ground flow forth foundations (?) and solid things.  
Under Hatred, all things are divided in form and are separated,  
While under Love they come together and desire each other.  
For it is out of these that all things come that were, all that are  
and that will be,  
Trees have grown [scil. from these], men and women,  
Wild beasts and birds, water-nourished fish,  
And long-lived gods, the greatest in honors.  
For these are themselves, but, running the ones through the others,  
They become different in appearance: so much exchange does  
the mixture produce.

<sup>12</sup> οὐ γὰρ ἡ φιλία τὸ ἔν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ νεῖκος εἰς τὸ ἔν τελεῖ. P. Huby and C. C. W. Taylor interpret this plot in this way: “It is not quite clear what Simplicius means. The supremacy of Strife is at its maximum when the elements are totally separated from one another in four distinct world masses (Ar. *Metaph.* 985a24–7; DK 31A37). Perhaps Simplicius’ point is the same as Aristotle’s in that passage, that in separating out the elements from one another Strife thereby unifies each into a single mass. Or perhaps the point is that the four separate world masses are contained within a single (spherical) whole” [Huby, Taylor 2011: 105–106, n. 51].

by Empedocles in support of his words. Let us note this sentence of Simplicius: “calling the fire ‘sun,’ the air ‘gleam’ and ‘sky,’ and the water ‘rain’ and ‘sea’”. But what do we see in the fragment of Empedocles following the words of Simplicius? Air and sky are not mentioned, but the earth is definitely present, which is not mentioned by Simplicius. One gets the impression that Simplicius, not having read much into what is written, or having encountered difficulty in understanding Empedocles, rather freely conveys the content of his lines, relying most likely on another place in the poem, known to us as fr. B 22 DK (in *Phys.* 160.29). In support of Simplicius we must say that this fragment does raise many questions even among modern translators.<sup>13</sup> We are referring in particular to the line B 21.4 DK — “All the immortal things moistened with heat and a bright gleam”.<sup>14</sup> J. C. Picot, after a careful analysis of the words of this line and especially of the word ἄμβροτα, comparing them with ancient literary texts, is inclined to think that Empedocles thus denoted clouds [Picot 2014: 359–363]. This is not at all obvious at first glance and required the author of the article to delve deeply into epic literature. As a result, Picot concludes that the word ἄμβροτα remains incomprehensible to Simplicius [Picot 2014: 373], and so he simplifies the narrative somewhat in his retelling.<sup>15</sup> R. Wright [1981: 177] believes that the expression ‘immortal [things]’ encodes a reference to celestial bodies, which are composed of air and fire, such as stars and planets, traditionally represented as immortal gods. One way or another, we can see in such a complex allegorical description a reference to one of the primary elements — air.

This whole section looks as if Simplicius is preparing the reader for the complex discourse to come.

159.27–160.11: And he has supplied a clear illustration of the fact that different things come from the same ones: [B 23 follows]:

As when painters color many-hued sacrificial offerings,  
Both men, by reason of their skill, very expert in their art,  
They grasp many-colored pigments in their hands,  
Then, having mixed them in harmony, the ones more,  
the others less,  
Out of these they compose forms similar to all things,  
Creating trees, men, and women,  
Wild beasts and birds, water-nourished fish,  
And long-lived gods, the greatest in honors:  
In this way may your mind not succumb to the error that  
it is from elsewhere  
That comes the source of all the innumerable mortal  
things whose existence is evident,  
But know this exactly, once you have heard the word of a god.

<sup>13</sup> A large set of opinions are given in an article by J. C. Picot [2014: 345–346], and W. Guthrie explicitly says that “its exact text and meaning are uncertain” [Guthrie 1980: 159].

<sup>14</sup> ἄμβροτα δ' ὄσσ' εἶδει τε καὶ ἀργεῖ δευέτα ἀνυγῇ Kranz, Primavesi: ἄμβροτα δ' ὄσσ' ἴδει τε Diels; ἄμβροτα δ' ὄσσα ἐδεῖτο Simpl. 159.

<sup>15</sup> The article is a brilliant analysis of the whole fragment.



Simplicius goes on to discuss multiplicity, and since the last fragment ended on the subject of diversity and mixing, the best example of where the differences come from was the fragment on painters. This arrangement of fragments seems to be a very good one. We do not know exactly whether fragments B 21 DK and B 23 DK were inextricably linked in the original text of the poem, or whether there was something else between them (e. g., fr. B 22 DK, which Simplicius cites below in section 160.28–161.7). Sometimes Simplicius indicates from which book he quotes, and even in more detail from which part of the book (beginning or end), or notes that the quotations he cites are not far apart in the text. In this case there is no indication. But the course of Simplicius' reasoning is quite logical.

Empedocles often refers to specific things to clarify his thoughts. These are the clepsydra (fr. B 100 DK) and the lamp (fr. B 84 DK), on the basis of which he demonstrates how breathing and vision are arranged. In the fragment under consideration, the idea of mixing is revealed in the form of painters combining colors in the right proportions and using them to depict any object. Behind the figure of the artist, as we know from the other fragments, we need to see the demiurgical work of Aphrodite, and the colors are the first principles, the only things that exist forever, a certain material basis of existence. And only from them and not from anything else, Empedocles warns us, are all things in the world composed. It is possible that this conception formed the core of Plato's teaching from the "Timaeus". If this is the case, then Simplicius is quite right to build his program on the basis that every ancient philosophy spells out the same truths, but in different words. Furthermore, the familiar Platonic concept of the original and the copy is quite evident in this fragment. In the context of Platonism we would have to regard the painters with their designs as the ideal, and the image itself as a realized copy of the design, that is, as sensually perceived. However, it follows from Empedocles' fragment that the original is the finished thing and the copy is its image in the painting. Given how freely Simplicius interprets Empedocles' ideas, we should not be confused by his attempt to see in this fragment a prototype of the Platonic division into the ideal and the sensual, and thus the fragment itself becomes a good aid for the realization of Simplicius' program. From it we conveniently move on to the narrative of the mental and sensually perceptible worlds.

160.12–17: And the fact that he considers this multiplicity in the generated world, and not only Strife but Love too, is clear from the fact that he says that trees, men, women, and animals are born from these things. And the fact that they are transformed into each other, he indicates by saying, [B 26]:

And by turns they [i. e. the roots] dominate while the circle revolves,  
And they decrease and increase into one another as it is their turn by destiny.

The fact that here we are talking specifically about first principles, and not about the change in the reigns of Love and Strife, is evident from the rest of the fragment, which Simplicius does not cite in this place. However, it is worth

noting that the fragmentary nature of the text of the poem sometimes prevents scholars from unequivocally deciding in which place Empedocles, using the verb in the plural, is referring to the primary foundations, and in which to Love and Strife.

So, Simplicius considers multiplicity in the generated world, placing in it not only first principles, but also Love and Strife.

160.18–21: And the fact that the things that come to be and perish possess eternity by virtue of their succession, he has made clear by saying, [B 17, 12–13 DK = B 26, 11–12 DK]:

But insofar as they incessantly exchange their places continually,  
To that extent they always are, immobile in a circle.

A. Laks and G. Most [2016: 413, n. 1] draw attention to the masculine plural ending in ἀκίνητοι, and this, in their view, indicates that it refers to the first principles in their divine hypostasis. It is true that in the preceding fragment B 26 DK we saw the expression φθίνει εἰς ἄλληλα, where ἄλληλα is a neuter adjective, and from the fragment itself it follows that it is about the first principles. Whether this suggests that Empedocles did not care which gender to define for the first principles, or whether it was a mistake of the scribes, remains unclear.

160.22–161.7: And the fact that he too [scil. like Anaxagoras] is referring allegorically to a double organization of the world, the one intelligible and the other perceptible, the one divine and the other mortal, of which the one possesses these things [i. e. the elements] in the mode of a paradigm, the other in the mode of an image, he has made this clear by saying that not only the things that come to be and perish come from these things, but also the gods — unless one interprets this in terms of Empedocles' usage. And one could think that he is referring allegorically to a double organization of the world on the basis of the following lines [fr. B 22 DK]:

For these are all joined in their own parts,  
The shining one [i. e. the sun], the earth, the sky, and the sea,  
Which all by nature<sup>16</sup> wander far from them among mortal things.  
In the same way, all the things that are, rather, receptive of mixture  
Love one another, made similar by Aphrodite.  
Enemies <are those that> keep most distant from one another  
In birth, mixture, and molded forms,  
In every way strangers to unification and terribly sad,  
Because for them, who were born from Strife...

<sup>16</sup> This sentence (ὅσσα φιν ἐν θνητοῖσιν ἀποπλαχθέντα πέφυκεν) would seem to imply that wandering in mortal things is some natural property of the first principles. Or, if πέφυκεν refers to the first part of the sentence, it means that being joined together is the natural state of the first principles. In the translations by A. V. Lebedev [1989: 362], R. Wright [1981: 192], J. Bollack [1969: 88] this word is omitted.

The fragment seems confusing, but we can still understand what Empedocles was trying to say. Rather, what is described here is a period of increasing power of Strife, when the primordials begin to separate from the mixture into pure separate beginnings. However, since the change of rule does not take place instantly, but is a gradual process of increasing and decreasing, Love is still active. Mortal things are the last evidences of Love's influence in the period when Strife is gaining strength. Thus we see that the action of Love can manifest itself in two ways. One type of unification occurs in the formation of *Sphairos*, the other type is observed in the presence of mortal things, because without Love the primordials can only exist in their pure unmixed form.

This distinction between the pure elements and some detached parts mixed in mortal things probably led Simplicius to think of a dual world order. That is, when Simplicius speaks of a paradigmatic world he relies on the second line of the fragment, which enumerates all four primary elements in their undivided state, and thus as a paradigm. The parts mentioned further, which are either united by Aphrodite into a mixture or are separated by Strife and unsuitable for mixing, are seen by him as an indication of another world — an imaginary one, acting as an imitation of the first, because in it many forms and images appear. However, a slightly different explanation follows from the further reasoning of Simplicius:

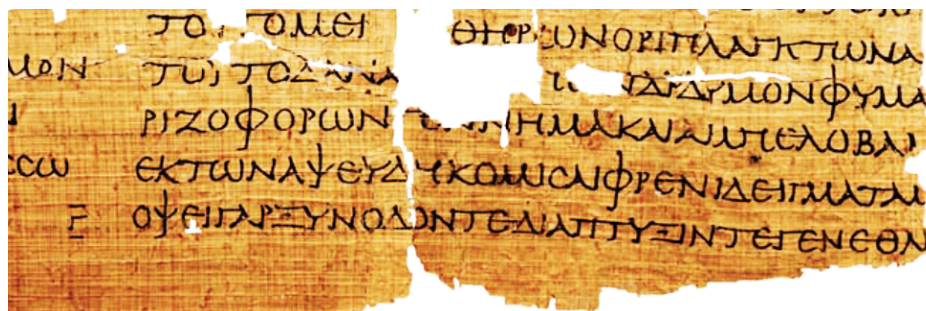
161.8–161.13: For the fact that these things are fitted together in mortal things too, he has made clear, but that among intelligible ones they are more unified and “love one another, made similar by Aphrodite” (B 22, 5 DK); and that even if they are everywhere, the intelligibles are made similar by Love, while the perceptibles, which have been dominated by Strife and are torn apart more in their birth, by virtue of the mixture, in “molded forms” [see B 22, 7 DK] and in the mode of images, serve as basis for the things born from Strife, which are not accustomed to mutual unification.

From these words follows that the division into the mental and the sensually perceptible lies at the level of Love and Strife. The mental conceivable is the unification of everything by the power of Love into a single whole, while the sensually perceptible is the many different things which appear in some forced way under the dominion of Strife. It seems that Simplicius deliberately conceals the concept of the periodic alternation of the reigns of Love and Strife, emphasizing the parallel existence of the two worlds. As such, this doctrine approaches the Platonic and moves away from the Empedoclean. The only thing on which Simplicius may have relied in proposing such an interpretation is, as it seems, the difference in the description of the stages of the origin of living beings. A number of fragments (B 73 DK, B 75 DK, B 76 DK, B 82 DK, B 83 DK, B 96 DK, B 98 DK) speak of the care and calculation with which Aphrodite creates individual tissues and organs. Others (B 57 DK, B 58 DK, B 59 DK, B 60 DK, B 61 DK) say that individual body parts during the reign of Love are put together randomly, resulting in the birth of various ugly and not very viable creatures. The interference of chance in the demiurgic process can be explained by the still acting energy of Strife, because the change of reigns, as mentioned above, happens gradually,

through the increase of one power and the decrease of the other. However, is it legitimate to attribute the creation of tissues and organs in accordance with a strict proportion of primordial principles to the world of the mind, and the random connection of different parts of the body and organs and the origin of bovine human-faced creatures from them to the sensually perceptible? O'Brian [1969: 93–96] draws attention to the similarity of the process of the emergence of ugly beings to the myth from Plato's "Statesman", which speaks of how gray-haired men were born from the earth (273e–274a). In both Empedocles and Plato we see a disruption of the normal course of things. This abnormality in the first case may be explained by the influence of Strife, in the second by some ancient dissonance ("Statesman" 273c). Even if this resemblance may seem too far-fetched to some, what is clear is that it too may have fueled Simplicius' passion for unification.

Approaching the end of the section Simplicius simply recounts loosely a few fragments of Empedocles, saying that he postulated becoming as union and separation and as "coming together and unfolding of birth according to destiny" (σύνοδον διάπτυσιν τε γενέσθαι αἴσης, in *Phys.* 161.20). The quoted phrase must be noticed.

This line<sup>17</sup> contains the words of Empedocles, which some time ago had not yet been recognized as a separate fragment. With the discovery of the Strasbourg papyrus it became clear that it was part of a poem by Empedocles. In the surviving papyrus passage it is also the last. This confirms that Simplicius had access to a more complete text than we do. The Strasbourg papyrus has filled this gap somewhat. Below we see a picture of the part of the papyrus where the last line clearly reads these words.



*P. Strasb. gr. 1665/6, a(ii) 26–30 = Physika I.296–300 [Primavesi 2008]*

So, Simplicius refers to Aristotle's "Physics" 187a21, and calls his chapter "A study of Anaxagoras' and Empedocles' conceptions of the one and the many". If we believe that the task of commentator is to clarify certain statements or individual words and concepts of the author in question, the section of Simplicius'

<sup>17</sup> Simplicius quoted it slightly differently than in the papyrus. In the papyrus this line is as follows: (Pap. Strasb. a(ii)30): ὁψει γὰρ ξύνοδόν τε διάπτυσιν τε γενέθλη[ς].

treatise does not appear to be an appropriate commentary. Simplicius does not specifically comment on Aristotle's view, but rather offers his broad perception of a wide panorama of philosophical views and approaches, of which the Peripatetic tradition is just a part, albeit a very important one. H. Baltussen observes that Simplicius goes well beyond the Aristotelian text, adding a lot of material and adapting the ideas of the early Greek philosophers to the Neoplatonist world-view, which to some extent gives away his disagreement with Aristotle [Baltussen 2008: 85]. The harmonization of the views of the pagan philosophers seemed to Simplicius a very important task. According to H. Baltussen [2008: 62], this came about because of the growing pressure from Christians, who claimed superiority of doctrine which they saw as based on unanimity, while the Greek philosophers were divided, and from this they lost their high position in the intellectual arena. Simplicius wanted to prove the compatibility not only of Aristotle's and Plato's positions, but also to show that all Greek philosophy contained one common idea, which was often presented in a veiled form (in *Phys.* 7.3 — αἰνιγματώδη τὴν ἑαυτῶν φιλοσοφίαν παραδεδώκασιν; see also in *Phys.* 36.30). In fact, Simplicius regards Empedocles' cosmic cycle (or cycles) as a metaphorical representation of the emanations of the One [Baltussen 2008: 75]. In general, if one relies only on the fragments that Simplicius cites and does not see others, the reader may well come to fully agree with this — Neoplatonic — view of Empedocles' philosophy. While Simplicius has done us a great service by preserving a large number of authentic fragments of Empedocles' poem, one must remain extremely careful and cautious when referring to the context in which they are transmitted.

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