

СТАТЬИ / ARTICLES

APHRODITE Ζείδωρος: THE SUBVERSION OF THE MYTH OF PROMETHEUS AND PANDORA IN EMPEDOCLES

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ABSTRACT. This article examines the relationship between Hesiod and Empedocles through a comparative analysis of the Prometheus and Pandora myth and the Queen Cypris narrative. The author sustains that correspondences between the works of Hesiod and Empedocles can be interpreted through the framework of overlapping narrative structures, which would help to establish the order of the fragments. The relationship between Empedocles and Hesiod is polemic due to the fact that they belong to rival schools of wisdom. In the case of Empedocles, that school emanated from the Sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi.

KEYWORDS: Apollo, Delphi, Hesiod, narrative structures, sacrifices.

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Introduction

The exact nature of the relationship between Empedocles and Hesiod has been the subject of eternal debate among scholars. Through detailed study, Empedoclean scholarship has amassed an extensive repertoire of correspondences between the work of both authors; however, from the research of pioneers such as E. Bignone, to more recent studies, such as that of J.-C. Picot,¹ no scholar has been able to avoid the highly Empedoclean question of whether that relationship was

¹ Bignone (1916), Picot (2017/2018).

based on love or hate. In his solitary 1970 work, J. P. Hershbell opted to follow the middle path: “Empedocles was no doubt critical of Hesiod, especially of the latter’s views of the gods, and would have agreed with Xenophanes’ polemic; but it is tempting to see him also as a defender of Hesiod”.² This conclusion, however, is unpersuasive and too reminiscent of the *ad hoc* solution adopted by J. Burnet (later followed by F. M. Cornford and many others) in which Parmenides is converted into a Pythagorean “dissident”, which is a highly expeditious way of trying to paint a philosopher in a light that does not suit him at all.³

For my part, in this article I will propose that Empedocles did in fact venture into Hesiod’s domain, not in friendship, but rather armed to the teeth, with the resolute purpose of driving off anyone carrying a Boeotian shepherd’s bag. This intention can be seen clearly in various moments, but most definitively in the episode of Queen Cypris and her bloodless sacrifices. It is obvious that when Empedocles attacks the institution of bloody sacrifices he is turning Hesiod’s world upside down. What is less obvious is that the narrative through which this attack is consummated is designed to subvert the Prometheus and Pandora myth.⁴ It is not a semantic transformation, but rather a transformation of the grammar of the narrative, of the logic accounting for the actions. We have a large catalogue of formal correspondences and conceptual or thematic affinities between the work of Empedocles and Hesiod.⁵ Sometimes they are simple formulas, such as “σὺ δὲ”

² Hershbell (1970) 161.

³ Burnet (1908) 211, Cornford (1939) 28. For an opposing perspective on Parmenides as a Pythagorean, cf. Couloubaritsis (2008) 162-165. The Pythagorean pedigree of Empedocles has been debated since Antiquity and defended by many modern authors, such as Guthrie (1965) 190, Solmsen (1980) 224-225 and Kingsley (1995). In contrast, Gallavotti saw it as an “equivoco esegetico” (1975, XIV) and Casertano referred to it as a “anacronismo cronologico” (2009, 124). A current discussion on this subject can be found in Cardullo (2011).

⁴ Wersinger (2004) and Picot (2012) clearly see that Empedocles’ criticism of bloody sacrifices was aimed at subverting Hesiod’s narrative. Cf., for example, Picot “Empédocle subvertit la tradition religieuse au moyen de la substitution” (2012) 351. Most scholars relate the story of Queen Cypris with the five ages myth, cf. Bignone (1916) 218 n. 3 and 498-499, Jaeger (1947) 150-151, Kirk and Raven (1957) 349, Guthrie (1965) 248, Zuntz (1971) 259, Primavesi (2011) 431, Picot (2012), Most (2012) 285, Van Noorden (2014) 151-152. Other authors point to the relationship of the stages of zoogony or the creation of man with the Pandora myth, cf. Sedley (2007) 47, Kingsley (1995) 78.

⁵ Cf. Hershbell (1970). Many scholars have dedicated partial attention to this issue. In addition to those already mentioned, among others, cf. Gemelli (1990) 61-79 and (2005) 381-383, and Picot and Berg (2015).

from fragment 1 (“but”), which Hesiod uses profusely in the *Works and Days*.⁶ In other cases they are important concepts, such as “roots” (“ρίζωματα”), which in Empedocles preserves the meaning of the “spring” (“πηγή”) of all things, which we can already find in Hesiod.⁷ Or, finally, they are themes, such as the catalogues of divinities in fragments 122 and 123, which are very similar to the catalogues of Nereids and Oceanids in the *Theogony*,⁸ or the celebrated episode of the Oracle of Necessity, whose parallelism with the Great Oath of Gods to the river Styx has been comprehensively examined by scholars.⁹ From all this repertoire it is easy to deduce the reason why the word “influence” is so often repeated in this debate.

However, by focusing on Empedocles’ relationship with Hesiod from this perspective (even if to establish limits) we are turning our backs on the most important aspect of the issue, which is that Empedocles does not consider Hesiod a source of inspiration, but rather views his work as a territory that can be occupied with the logic of his own narrative. The real question is not the influence, but rather the controversy, and its underlying political, social and cultural implications. J.-C. Picot and W. Berg choose precisely fragment 128 (which describes the reign of Cypris) to argue that Empedocles “attacks the Zeus of tradition”.¹⁰ However, I think it is important to delve deeper to avoid turning Empedocles into a rebel without a cause. He was not attacking all tradition, just one specific tradition, and it is unlikely he would do so without having his feet firmly planted in some rival school of wisdom.

My primary interest here is, on the one hand, to prove my claim that Empedocles sought to clear the landscape of the divine in the logic of Hesiod’s narrative, and, on the other, to present the methodological consequences of that claim. If Empedocles’ purpose was not semantic transformation, but rather this transformation is a consequence of the transformation of the logic of the narrative, then it is highly probable that these semantic *overlaps* indicate the outline of an argument that Empedocles established following the structure of Hesiod’s narrative. Empedocles did not, evidently, produce a replica. But, in general terms, it should

⁶ Hes. *Op.* 27, 213, 248, 274, etc.; Emp. 31 B 1 DK (I will cite Empedocles’ fragments following DK numbering. From here on I will omit the chapter and section). Cf. Hershbell (1970) 147.

⁷ Hes. *Th.* 809-813; Emp. 6.1, 23.9-10. Cf. Hershbell (1970) 153-154.

⁸ Hes. *Th.* 240-264, 337-370; Emp. 122 and 123. Cf. Hershbell (1970) 151, Picot (2017/2018) 400-401.

⁹ Hes. *Th.* 793-806; Emp. 115. Cf. Bignone (1916) 488, Kirk and Raven (1957) 352, Guthrie (1965) 252, Hershbell (1970) 150, Wright (1981) 273, Picot (2008) 33, Most (2012) 288. A new approach to the subject in Picot (2017/2018).

¹⁰ Picot and Berg (2018) 389-390.

be possible to establish a structural correspondence between the order of the sequences. That is, fragment 115, in which Empedocles gives an account of the Oracle of Necessity, should go after the catalogues of divinities in fragments 122 and 123, just as in the *Theogony*, the oath to the river Styx goes after the catalogues of the Nereids and Oceanids. According to this interpretation, Empedocles would have approached the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* as consecutive parts of the same narrative; in reality, a great hymn to nature dedicated to Zeus. And this seems consistent with, on Empedocles' side, the single poem theory maintained by C. Osborne, B. Inwood, and S. Trépanier. In this case it would be, in the words of Menander, a great ὕμνος φυσιολογικός dedicated to Apollo.¹¹

The myth of Prometheus and Pandora

J.-P. Vernant imparted one of the best lessons on the potential of the structuralist approach in a study dedicated to laying out the grammar of the Prometheus and Pandora narrative in Hesiod.¹² Today structuralism has fallen out of favour, but Vernant's analysis continues to be as sharp as ever, and is particularly appropriate if our objective is to reveal the internal logic of the narrative. In what follows, I will extract some of his ideas and conclusions and compare them with the logic of the Cypris the Queen narrative found in fragment 128.¹³

Although J.-P. Vernant meticulously analyses both versions of the myth provided by Hesiod in the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, he makes it clear from the start that we are dealing with two complementary versions that should be approached as a whole. The analysis of the narrative is carried out at three levels: the grammar, the semantic content and the sociocultural context. For our purposes, we will focus on the elements that shape the narrative structure. On one side, we have the main protagonists, Zeus and Prometheus, who are locked in a battle of wits (μῆτις). On the other, we have the plot, a series of episodes in which our two protagonists pit their skills for deception (ἀπάτη) and fraud (δόλος) against each other to decide the fate of man. And finally, the logic that drives the entire narrative, which is always dominated by the opposition between giving (an evil) and withholding (a good), although the action, in the background, is always the same: hiding, disguising, stealing without being seen (καλύπτω, κρύπτω, κλέπτω). Thus, in the first sequence Prometheus (hiding) arranges how sacrificial

¹¹ Men. Rh. 337 Spengel (= 31 A 23). Cf. Osborne (1987) 24-29, Inwood (2001) 8-21, Trépanier (2004) 6-7. Cf. Mackenzie (2016).

¹² Vernant (1974).

¹³ This section summarizes Vernant (1974). To avoid the proliferation of references, I will only refer to Hesiod's text.

practice is carried out. He divides the parts of the ox, offering Zeus a tantalizing part, but reserving the edible parts for men. The narrative begins, therefore, with a deception, a deception which will set in motion many more. In each of them, the same logic is repeated: in their relationship with man, for the gods to give or not give is the same as to hide. Zeus, in retribution for Prometheus' deceit, hides fire from men, which causes them to have to struggle to find sustenance (βίος is hidden in the bowels of the earth). But, once again, it was Prometheus' turn. This is the episode of the theft of fire, which the titan then gives to men hidden within a hollow fennel stalk. However, nobody is more cunning than the god of thunder, and Zeus, in punishment for receiving the gift of fire, offers men a beautiful evil that will truly delight them, according to Hesiod, while they affectionately caress the source of all their torments. The gift from the gods turns out to be the source of all evil: Pandora. She has the mind of a dog and the nature of a thief ("κύνεόν τε νόον καὶ ἐπικλοπον ἦθος"). Yet none can perceive it because, at the bidding of Zeus, Aphrodite covers Pandora with irresistible grace and sensuality. Epimetheus, the dim brother of Prometheus, accepts this poisoned gift from the gods. And Pandora promptly opens the great lid of the jar of evils. She is the first in the line of women, whose true gifts are fatigue, illness and all the evils that will never cease to torment men.¹⁴

The logic of the Pandora myth expresses the ambiguous nature of the human condition. Through concealment, good and evil, given and not given, are inextricably linked. The grammar of the narrative has a semantic value. For men, good is concealed in the evils and evils are sometimes concealed in the good. Human existence, through divine concealment, is placed under the sign of the mixture of good and evil, of ambiguity and duplicity. But there are also a series of correspondences. Pandora, for example, is like the fire of Prometheus. They both die if they are not fed. Fire needs a seed to be engendered, just as man needs to hide his seed in the womb of woman to engender more men. Fire burns and so does woman. She ignites fire within man, she sears him like a brand with fatigue and anxiety. In the prime of his life, she turns him into a shrivelled old man.

Pandora also corresponds with βίος. The womb of women is like the bowels of the earth. Just like the stolen seed inside the fennel stalk and the sacrificial meat hidden in the belly of the ox, Zeus hides the seed and conceals the reproduction

¹⁴ Μητις: Prometeo, Hes. *Th.* 511, 546, Hes. *Op.* 48; Zeus, *Th.* 520, *Op.* 51, 104 | ἀπάτη: Prometeo, *Th.* 537, 565, *Op.* 48 | δόλος: Prometeo, *Th.* 551, 562; de Zeus, *Th.* 589, *Op.* 83 | καλύπτω: Prometeo, *Th.* 539, 541 | κρύπτω: Prometeo, *Op.* 50; de Zeus, *Op.* 42, 47 | κλέπτω, Prometeo, *Th.* 566, 613, *Op.* 51, 55 | βίος: *Op.* 42. | Zeus offers an evil to men "in which they may all take pleasure in their spirit", *Op.* 57-58 | Pandora, mind of a dog, thieving nature, *Op.* 67.

of men in the womb of women. Matrimony is tilling, in which women are the furrow and men the tiller.

Thus, the myth of Prometheus and Pandora registers the institution of sacrifice in a sociocultural context that defines the human condition through labour, the institution of marriage and the relationship with the gods. The sacrificial banquet is marked by the sign of ambiguity. It is what puts us in contact with the gods, but also what separates us from them. The gods do not eat meat. And the animals, when they do, eat it uncooked. Only humans beings cook their food. Thus, the distancing from the gods also implies a distancing from the animals. Fire separates them. The community of men, animals and the gods are divided by an insuperable abyss.

The myth of Cypris the Queen

We can now examine fragment 128. Our principle source is Porphyry in *On Abstinence*.¹⁵

οὐδέ τις ἦν κείνοισιν Ἄρης θεὸς οὐδὲ Κυδοιμὸς
οὐδὲ Ζεὺς βασιλεὺς οὐδὲ Κρόνος οὐδὲ Ποσειδῶν,
ἀλλὰ Κύπρις βασίλεια...

...

τὴν οἱ γ' εὐσεβέεσσιν ἀγάλμασιν ἰλάσκοντο
γραπτοῖς τε ζῴοισι μύροισι τε δαιδαλεόσμοις
σμίρνης τ' ἀκρήτου θυσίαις λιβάνου τε θυώδους
ξανθῶν τε σπονδὰς μελιττῶν ῥιπτοῦντες ἐς οὐδᾶς,
ταύρων δ' ἀκρήτοισι φόνους οὐ δεύετο βωμός,
ἀλλὰ μύσος τοῦτ' ἔσκεν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστον,
θυμὸν ἀπορραΐσαντας ἐέδμεναι ἠέα γυῖα.

They had no god Ares or Battle-Din,
nor Zeus the King nor Kronos nor Poseidon;
but Kupris the queen [Aphrodite]

...

her they worshipped with pious images,
painted pictures and perfumes of varied odours,
and sacrifices of unmixed myrrh and fragrant frankincense,
dashing onto the ground libations of yellow honey
[her] altar was not wetted with the unmixed blood of bulls,
but this was the greatest abomination among men,
to tear out their life-breath and eat their goodly limbs [transl. B. Inwood,].

¹⁵ Porph. *Abst.* 2.20 (1-8), 2.27 (8-10) (=31 B 128 DK).

We conserve a second fragment through a scholium,¹⁶ 130 according to DK numbering, which is closely related to the first:

ἦσαν δὲ κτίλα πάντα καὶ ἀνθρώποισι προσηγῆ,
θῆρές τ' οἰωνοί τε, φιλοφροσύνη τε δεδήει.

All were tame and gentle to men,
both beasts and birds, and loving thoughts blazed on (transl. B. Inwood).

In addition, Empedocles' criticism of the institution of bloody sacrifice can be traced in other fragments. The best known and most explicit is 137, but I am confident that fragment 139 could be included in this group (and, probably, the alternative version in the Strasbourg Papyrus, d.5-6 MP), as well as fragments 135, 136, 138, 143 and 145. Our purpose, however, is to prove that Empedocles' intention was to superimpose the logic of the Cypris narrative over that of the Prometheus narrative, and to this end it is enough to examine primarily fragments 128 and 130.

First we will discuss the protagonists. On one side, there is no doubt that Aphrodite occupies the role of Zeus. Empedocles clearly says so in the initial verses of fragment 128: "They had no god (...) Zeus (...) but Kupris the queen". But who can we point to in the place of Prometheus? There does not seem to be a good candidate among the Olympians. However, it being Empedocles, we do not have to search hard to find an adversary for Queen Cypris. That adversary is Νεῖκος, Strife. It is the common thread among all the divinities cited by Empedocles in the first two verses of fragment 128: Ares, Battle-Din, Zeus, Cronos and Poseidon.¹⁷ And it is not a coincidence that Quarrel (Ἔρις), always accompanied by the desire for strife, is precisely the reason why Hesiod chooses to present the Prometheus narrative in the *Works and Days* (*Op.*, 11-41). In Empedocles' poem, *Neikos* and Cypris take the places of Prometheus and Zeus, but the first difference that should be pointed out is that this is not battle of wits, but rather a battle between opposing qualities (or *modes d'action*, if we use the categories proposed by Dumézil and Detienne¹⁸): ἔρις and φιλοφροσύνη, quarrel and friendliness.¹⁹ And this takes us to the second issue. In Hesiod, the confrontation between Prometheus and Zeus is a

¹⁶ Schol. in *Nie. Ther.* 453 (=31 B 130 DK).

¹⁷ Picot (2012) tries very hard to fit these deities within the narrative of the five ages, but perhaps Empedocles' intention was much simpler. He merely wanted to indicate that gods whose actions are based on strife have no place in the reign of Cypris.

¹⁸ Detienne (2000) 85-89.

¹⁹ Empedocles mentions the quarrels (in plural) in two fragments. They are the evil Quarrels that rend limbs (20.4) and the Quarrels from which comes the miserable lineage of mortals (124.2). But it is clear that Empedocles takes this opposition from Homer (*Il.* 9.256-257). Cf. Wright (1981) 284.

hand-to-hand fight. The fate of men is to bear the consequences of that struggle, particularly the transgressions of Prometheus. But it is an imposed fate in which men have no voice: nobody asked their opinion when Prometheus distributed the parts of the sacrifice, and nobody consulted them about the idea of stealing fire from Zeus either. It was not even men who fell for the trap of Pandora, but rather Epimetheus, the dull brother of Prometheus. In contrast, in Empedocles, the confrontation between *Neikos* and Aphrodite takes place in the heart (φρήν, fr. 17.14, 23.9, 106.1, 114.3, 133.3) and mind (νοῦς, fr. 2.8, 122.2, νοέω, fr. 3.7-8) of men. Here gods do not trick men, it is men who deceive themselves (fr. 2, 110). For Empedocles, the only μῆτις in this game is that of men (fr. 2.9, 23.2, 106.1). This places us in a completely different scenario than Hesiod. First of all, because the actions of *Neikos* and Aphrodite are not directed against each other. And, second, because their actions are not deceitful. Neither of them delivers an evil disguised as something good, nor something good disguised as an evil. Strife offers men the evil of strife. And the goddess of Love offers men the gift of love. That is why Empedocles says: “Do you not see / that you are devouring each other in the heedlessness of your understanding?” (fr. 136.1-2, transl. B. Inwood). Mortals are even more foolish than Epimetheus. The gods do not need to camouflage the evils that they send us in order for our hearts to delight upon receiving them and for us to tenderly caress our own misfortune. Let us examine ἔρις. We know that it only leads to crime, animosity and carnage, and yet even so, we erect alters and pay tribute to it with sacrifices. The entire message of Empedocles is to point out the folly of human behaviour. But what is important, and the fundamental difference with the context of the Prometheus narrative, is that we are not slaves to this way of being. We can choose another path. There is a “wealth of divine understanding” (fr. 132.1). A thorough discourse on the blessed gods (fr. 131.4), whose keystone can be found in this verse of Empedocles: “[we see] love by love and strife by baneful strife” (fr. 109.3, transl. B. Inwood). If we place these thoughts within ourselves and contemplate them with good intent and pure meditations, then all these things will accompany us throughout our life (fr. 110.1-3), and they will provide us protection from ills and old age (fr. 111.1).

The logic that governs the myth of Prometheus and Pandora is that of concealment. And what that logic expresses is the ambiguous nature of the human condition, that is, through concealment, good and evils, given or not given, are inextricably bound. However, the reigning logic in the Cypris narrative is that of unconcealedness, ἀλήθεια.²⁰ Aphrodite, unlike Zeus, does not hide any evil. Instead she discloses to men the good of φιλότης, of love, of affection. She makes life

²⁰ “O friends! I know that truth (ἀλήθεια) attends the words / which I will speak” (fr. 114.1-2) (transl. B Inwood).

flourish from the bowels of the earth. Moreover, in contrast to what Hesiod preached (at least in the Pandora narrative), she shows us that misery is not the inevitable fate of human beings. Wisdom can allow us to distinguish between good and evil.

The first sequence in the Prometheus narrative, the practice of sacrifice, is overlapped by fragment 128, where Empedocles describes bloodless sacrifices. But here the roles are reversed. Queen Cypris is not plotting to harm men, while the only desire of Strife, the reflection of Prometheus, is to bring about their ruin. Prometheus, in Hesiod's narrative, initiates the course of events with a deception, a deception that will destroy the community of men and gods, and at the same time, open an impassable abyss between men and animals. This abyss no longer exists in the narrative of Empedocles, where men do not wet altars with the abominable slaughter of bulls. Prometheus, who is the instigator of these slaughters, provokes the second sequence with his deceit, in which an enraged Zeus hides fire from men. An act that Empedocles replicates with another action: Cypris the Queen who responds to the offerings of men with the gift of friendliness. While the fire of Zeus is hidden, φιλοφροσύνη is manifested. It is a disclosure. And we should not overlook that Empedocles says of her that she burns like fire, ("φιλοφροσύνη τε δεδήει", the friendliness *blazed*, fr. 130.2), like the fire Athena inflames over the head of Diomedes (*Il.* 6.7), or the blaze in Hector's eyes when he charges into the Danaans (*Il.* 12.466). Love, in Empedocles, is not a fire, but it occupies the space of the fire of Zeus in the narrative of Cypris the Queen. And this leads us to the third sequence, the theft of fire, which the good son of Iapetus hides within a hollow fennel stalk to give to men. It is not the celestial fire, which Zeus retains, but a spark that lights the altars and allows the sacrificial meat to be cooked. However, for Empedocles, the gift of Prometheus only sparks strife. The third sequence in the Cypris narrative is the institution of blood sacrifice. With it, men renounce φιλότης and throw themselves into the arms of the κακῆσι ἐρίδεσσι, the evil quarrels. Through the commencement of slaughters, men dissolve the bonds of friendliness. Not only those binding them to the animals or the gods, but also the bonds between each other. This is an important aspect that should be highlighted. Empedocles was no *outsider*, and it is difficult to understand his popularity among the Greeks unless we view his criticism of the slaughter of animals against the backdrop of the slaughters the Greeks committed among themselves. If men wandered the fields of Ἄτη, the goddess of ruin, it was not merely because they had lost their fondness for animals, but rather this loss implied the rupture of all fondness, the institution of strife in the heart of men. The blood flowing on the altars is the same blood that flows on the fields of battle.

The fourth sequence in Hesiod's narrative is the myth of Pandora, and it is possible that Empedocles, continuing to pursue his objective of inverting the logic of the narrative, presented an episode in which Cypris, instead of forging woman as a poisoned gift, did so with the intention of returning the spark of love that Strife had taken from men. Woman, as in Hesiod's narrative, would have been shaped with Aphrodite's grace, but instead of being injected with an insatiable spirit, in her interior was the ἡθός of friendliness. Once again, the gifts of Queen Cypris do not conceal, they reveal. True abundance is not found in the butcher's knife, but in the affection that blooms in the heart of a hoplite under the sway of Aphrodite. Strife retreats when love advances. Strife lays waste to fields, and friendliness causes wheat to sprout from the earth. If there is protection against evil and a refuge for old age, it is love. Perhaps Aphrodite created woman because men had grown too foolish to remember that.

The myth of the five ages and the Justice of Zeus narrative

But this sequence of the narrative has left no trace. Moreover, it has a drawback. Empedocles endeavoured to put on the record that woman was not an independent creation, like in Hesiod, for whom men were created before women. In fragment 62, Empedocles explicitly mentions how men and women emerged from the earth,²¹ an idea that is repeated on at least three occasions, when he lists the creatures whose origins were in the four roots, Love and Strife (fr. 21.9-12, 23.6-8 and a[i].8-a[ii].12 MP).²² Where he could have said ἀνθρώπος (as he does in fragment 128 of the Cypris the Queen narrative), he goes out of his way to pronounce ἀνέρες and γυναίκες.²³ It is clear, however, that these descriptions form part of the zoogony. So either Empedocles decided to offer two versions of the same story or the Cypris the Queen narrative ended at the point we know, that is, the criticism of sacrifices and the admonition to men to abandon the path of Strife.

Either way, Empedocles would have made clear the purpose of his narrative. It is not true that the gods had condemned men to strife. The logic that presides our relationship with the divine is that of reciprocity. If we sow affection, we will reap affection. If we sow misery, we will reap misery. The gods do not trick men, neither are they responsible for the evils that torment them. It is men who trick themselves, blaming the gods for sending them misfortunes that they themselves have

²¹ “νῦν δ' ἄγ', ὅπως ἀνδρῶν τε πολυκλαύτων τε γυναικῶν.”

²² A fourth occasion in fr. a(ii).27 MP does not explicitly mention men and women, but does refer to man's double-descendance: “ἀ[νθρώ]πον δίδυμιον φύμα”. Cf. also fr. 63.

²³ Along these lines, cf. the testimony of Aetius on the generation of plants and animals in Empedocles (31 A 72 DK). For D. Sedley, the stages of zoogony are an allegorical reading of the Prometheus and Pandora narrative (2007) 47.

sown. Furthermore, we should keep in mind that all living beings are made from the same roots. This includes everything from trees to men, women, beasts, birds, water-nourished fish and the long-lived gods. Given that these roots are divine, there is nothing around us that is not divine. We are a community. Men, women and all the rest of living beings. If this is true, it is impossible to sustain the story of Pandora. The gods did not create women to punish men, and men obtained no good from Prometheus' fire. The smell of burnt meat on the altars is too reminiscent of the smell of funeral pyres. And we will not leave the fields of Ruin until we stop lighting the fire of strife and start feeding the fire of friendliness.

It is generally accepted that the narrative of Cypris the Queen corresponds with the narrative of the Five Ages or, at least, with the episode of the Golden Age. However, the problem of this relation is that the men of the Golden Age, just like those from the other ages that preceded ours, are not like us. Not for the simple fact that the gods smiled upon them, but rather because they belong to another γένος.²⁴ Whether it went better or worse for them, they had their destiny, and the destiny of one lineage is not transmitted to the next. Thus, it may be vexing to not have inherited the good life of the men of the Golden Age, but the advantage is that neither did we inherit the faults of the men of the Silver Age. On the contrary, when we come to Empedocles, the situation changes completely. Everything indicates that the men who lived during the reign of Cypris, as well as the unfortunates who lived in the world of Pandora, were made from the same mould as the men in the time of Empedocles, and this is a good reason for a wise man like Empedocles to lament their fall. Because, ultimately, this is what his narrative is about. Of how men started offering the gods myrrh and libations of honey and ended up becoming devourers of meat. Empedocles' narrative, just like that of Prometheus and Pandora, does not refer to a remote lineage of men from the past, but rather of how strife took up residence in our own γένος (a strife that for Empedocles we can purify, in contrast to Hesiod in his Pandora narrative). However, if we examine the zoogony, we can observe that the generations that Aetius tells us about owe as little to each other as the generations of men in Hesiod's narrative. In my opinion, it is here where we really have to search for traces of the Ages narrative.

It is true that the abundance that men living under the reign of Cypris seem to enjoy evokes the state of prosperity of the men in the Golden Age, but it is generally overlooked that in the sequence following the Hawk and the Nightingale fable, where Hesiod discusses the distribution of justice and punishment among men (and the absence of justice among animals), he refers to Zeus granting this

²⁴ Speaking about "races", in this sense, is problematic, as pointed out by Calame, who proposes speaking about "families", "clans", or even "human species", cf. (2009) 64.

type of abundance, or at least a very similar one, to men who live according to justice.²⁵ And in this case, these are men like ourselves, men whose fate we can share, just like Perses, Hesiod's wayward brother, if the men who govern us would cease to feed their ὕβρις. In my opinion, it is the abundance described in this sequence which resonates in the verses Empedocles dedicates to the reign of Cypris and not that which refers to the men of the Golden Age. In support of this position, we can read the verse, "beasts and birds and water-nourished fish" ("θήρες τ' οἰωνοί τε καὶ ὕδατοθρέμμονες ἰχθύς"), which Empedocles overlays (as J. P. Hershbell pointed out) on one of the verses with which Hesiod concludes with this passage: "fish and beasts and winged birds" ("ἰχθύσι μὲν καὶ θηροῖ καὶ οἰωνοῖς πεπετηνοῖς").²⁶ His intention is to counterpose Aphrodite's law with that of Zeus, which can clearly be seen if we examine fragment 130. Hesiod says:

This is the law that Cronus' son has established for human beings: that fish and beasts and winged birds eat one another, since Justice is not among them; but to human beings he has given Justice, which is the best by far (*Op.* 276-279, transl. G. W. Most).

And Empedocles:

All were tame and gentle to men,
both beasts and birds, and loving thoughts blazed on
(fr. 130, transl. B. Inwood).

Empedocles seems to be saying that in the reign of Cypris, δίκη overflows from human beings, because in contrast to Zeus the νόμος of the goddess is φιλοφροσύνη, and it extends to all creatures that form part of the community of living beings.²⁷

The context of the Empedocles' verse is important for another reason that has been identified by authors such as W. K. C. Guthrie, J. P. Hershbell, or more recently, S. Rangos.²⁸ That is, the relationship of created beings, which I mentioned earlier, and which Empedocles formulaically repeats on at least three different occasions. The list includes the trees; men and women; the beasts, birds and water-nourished fish; and the "long-lived gods first in their prerogatives". It is easy to see that Empedocles places these long-lived gods (θεοὶ δολιχαιῶνες) in the same outpouring of creation as the trees, men, women, beasts and the rest. Given that we know perfectly well that in his poem Empedocles presents the process by

²⁵ The Golden Age: Hes. *Op.* 109-126; the Fable of the Hawk and the Nightingale: Hes. *Op.* 202-212; the narrative of the distribution of Justice: Hes. *Op.* 213-285; the men who live according to the Justice of Zeus: Hes. *Op.* 225-237.

²⁶ Cf. Emp. fr. 21.11, 23.7 and a(ii).1 MP and Hes. *Op.* 277. Cf. Hershbell (1970) 151.

²⁷ Cf. fr. 135, Arist. *Rh.* 1376b 14-17.

²⁸ Guthrie (1965) 255, Hershbell (1970), Rangos (2012) 321.

which these beings were created, it immediately raises the suspicion that this process could have also included the creation of the long-lived gods. We have not been able to identify any fragment in which Empedocles speaks about the creation of this class of god.²⁹ But in his introduction to fragment 128, Porphyry expresses himself in terms that seem to confirm our suspicion: “[These facts are also attested to by] Empedocles, who in his discursive account of the theogony and sacrifices, says”.³⁰ This is extremely important evidence. First of all, because Porphyry’s reference to the existence of a theogony by Empedocles ties in perfectly with what we have been able to glean from the inclusion of the long-lived gods among the created beings; and second, because these words by Porphyry provide us with an invaluable clue on where to localise the narrative setting of the reign of Cypris. And this setting, once again, coincides with the structure of Hesiod’s narrative and reinforces the connection between the reign of Cypris narrative and that of Prometheus and Pandora. Indeed, if in place of the reign of Cypris, Porphyry would have been speaking about the time of Prometheus and Pandora, he would have surely used the same words, that is, he would have written that Hesiod broached this topic when discussing the theogony and sacrifices. Porphyry’s commentary on fragment 128, and the collection of fragments regarding the creation of the θεοὶ δολιχαίωνες, strongly suggest that Empedocles was tracing the path of Hesiod’s narrative structure. The sequences related to theogony, the institution of sacrifice and the Prometheus and Pandora myth correspond with the sequences of theogony, the institution of (bloodless) sacrifice and the narrative of the reign of Cypris.

Aphrodite Ζείδωρος

The final argument I will use to support this reading seeks to counter a suspicion that inevitably comes to mind when we hear anything that may seem like a vindication of women on the lips of a Greek man from 5th century B.C.E. In Plutarch’s dialogue the *Amatorius* we find an interpretation context of Empedocles that can help broaden our horizons on this issue. The main motivation of this dialogue is to provide a defence of conjugal love between men and women; but considering the highly patriarchal Roman society in which Plutarch lived, what is astonishing about this work is that he does so in terms that equalize the moral status of men

²⁹ Empedocles distinguishes between the long-lived gods and the roots, which are also divine. But the former, like all other created beings, would be the result of the mixture and separation of the latter. There are more divine categories in Empedocles. For further discussion, cf. Rangos (2012) and Santaniello (2012).

³⁰ “ἀλλὰ καὶ παρ’ Ἐμπεδοκλέους, ὃς περὶ τῆς θεογονίας διεξιῶν καὶ περὶ τῶν θυμάτων παρεμφαίνει λέγων”. Porph. *Abst.* 2.20 (=31 B 128 DK).

and women.³¹ Plutarch's thesis is that women are equally prepared as men to exercise virtue and to prove this he undertakes a long defence filled with examples of all the virtues in which women have proved their worth, which includes even courage, a virtue that the Greeks only knew how to express in the masculine form (ἀνδρεία, that is, manliness).³² At this point, and as a conclusion, Plutarch introduces the virtue Φιλία.³³ It would be quite strange, he writes, that having all the others, they would lack this one. Women, contrary to what is sustained by those who do not consider them appropriate for φιλία, are particularly well-endowed for it, because an affectionate disposition (τὸ στερκτικόν) is entirely part of their nature, and φιλία finds in affection fertile and welcoming ground.³⁴ It is noteworthy that Plutarch, an inveterate reader of Empedocles,³⁵ ends up using such Empedoclean language to support his opinion on the moral equality of women. To say that affection is linked to Love is not surprising, but it is an entirely different matter to find that Plutarch establishes that link through the concept of "fertile ground" (εὐφυῆς χώρα). This nurturing aspect, as we shall soon see, is part Aphrodite's nature and it is also Empedocles who tells us that Aphrodite makes mortal beings more akin to each other and more disposed to feel affection for each other (ἀλλήλοις ἔστερκται) (fr. 22.4-5). By suggesting that the nature of women is rich ground for φιλία, Plutarch is turning the Pandora myth on its head, and this is very much in line with everything we have been saying about Empedocles.

In another part of the dialogue, Plutarch makes use of two citations from Parmenides and Hesiod (which had already been referred to by Plato and Aristotle) to support his contention that Love (Eros) is one of the oldest and most respectable divinities.³⁶ What is interesting for our discussion is that Plutarch starts this line of reasoning with Empedocles, from whom he takes some verses that we also know through other sources, but to which he adds, at the conclusion of his argu-

³¹ This debate had already been introduced by the Stoics, but the influence on Plutarch is problematic. The Stoics understood the conjugal relationship to be *philia*, but *eros*, the loving feeling or passion, had no place in it. Plutarch radicalized this position: "valora el Amor en toda su dimensión y concede un significado moral a la unión sexual dentro del matrimonio" (Valverde Sánchez, 2003b, 23). For more on the discussion, cf. Russell (1973) 91 and Valverde Sánchez (2003a).

³² *Moralia* 769b-d. In addition, among others, daring (τὸ θαρραλέον) or magnanimity (τὸ μεγαλόψυχον).

³³ *Moralia* 769c.

³⁴ "καὶ τὸ στερκτικόν ὄλως ἐν αὐταῖς, ὥσπερ εὐφυῆς χώρα καὶ δεκτικὴ φιλίας". *Moralia* 769c.

³⁵ Hershbell (1971).

³⁶ Parm., fr. 28 B 13 DK; Hes. *Th.* 116-122; Pl., *Smp.* 178b; Arist., *Metaph.* 984b 23-30; Plu. *Moralia* 756e-f.

ment, another succinct, yet incredibly valuable statement that has preserved for us a genuine expression by Empedocles which has not been discovered in any other direct testimony. This is fragment 151. The other two verses belong to fragment 17 and Plutarch uses them to corroborate that although Love is an invisible deity it had already been believed in and venerated by in ancient times.³⁷ The following three verses from Euripides³⁸ come to mind:

τὴν δ' Ἀφροδίτην οὐχ ὄρας ὄση θεός;
ἤδ' ἐστὶν ἢ σπείρουσα καὶ διδοῦσ' ἔρον,
οὐδ' πάντες ἐσμὲν οἱ κατὰ χθόν' ἔκγονοι.

Do you not see how mighty is the goddess Aphrodite?
She sows and gives that love
from which all we upon this earth are born
(transl. E. L. Minar/F. H. Sandbach/W. C. Helmbold).

And then he introduces what DK lists as fragment 151:³⁹

“Ζείδωρον” γὰρ αὐτὴν Ἐμπεδοκλῆς “εὐκαρπον” δὲ Σοφοκλῆς ἐμμελῶς πάνυ καὶ πρεπόντως ὠνόμασαν.

Empedocles has called her “giver of life” and Sophocles “fruitful”; both epithets being perfectly just and apt (transl. E. L. Minar/F. H. Sandbach/W. C. Helmbold).

That Empedocles uses the word ζείδωρος (“life-giving”) to refer to Aphrodite, and that he did so in a context that Plutarch associates with the fruitfulness of nature, is a powerful argument in favour of the thesis I have presented on these pages. Not long ago, M. Garani suggested that this word had left the “Empedoclean fingerprint” on the adjective *alma* (nourishing) with which Lucretius describes Venus in his poem, *De rerum natura*, in a similar sense as to what we find in another expression used by Empedocles, φυτάλμια, which we only know through the Strasbourg Papyrus (“many fertile beings were born”).⁴⁰ Plutarch uses Euripides to say that Aphrodite “sows” Love and then adds expressions taken from Empedocles and Sophocles, “life-giving” and “fruitful”, which if we juxtapose with “alma Venus” in Lucretius, and the nurturing sense of the expression φυτάλμια, leads us to trace a very tight circle around this aspect of the goddess Aphrodite. In Homer, ζείδωρος always appears describing ἄρουρα (tilled or arable land), that is, ζείδωρος

³⁷ Plu. *Moralia* 756c-e. Cf. 31 B 17 20-21.

³⁸ Plu. *Moralia* 756d; E. fr. 763 Nauk-Snell; E. *Hipp.* 449-450.

³⁹ Plu. *Moralia* 756e (=31 B 151).

⁴⁰ “[ζῶι]α φυτάλμια τεκνώθ[η]σαν”, Emp., fr. d.13 MP; Lucr. 1.2; Cf. Garani (2007) 40. The expression “Empedoclean fingerprint” was proposed by Sedley (1998) 24-25.

ἄρουρα, fruitful earth.⁴¹ And the same formula is repeated three times in *Works and Days*. The first to evoke the fertility of the land in the Golden Age. The second, for the Isles of the Blessed. And the third, to describe the abundance that Zeus reserves for men whose rulers adhere to justice.⁴² The echo of a tradition that linked Pandora to the earth has come down to us through various sources,⁴³ but the closest to our discussion comes from a scholium to Aristophanes, who, after claiming that Pandora is the earth (γῆ), added: “Since everything is given for our life (ζῆν πάντα δωρεῖται). For the same reason ζείδωρος and ἀνησιδώρα (sending gifts)”.⁴⁴ In this tradition Pandora is not an empty womb, who devours the work of others like an idler.⁴⁵ She is the manifestation of the prototypical woman, or as J. Redfield points out, of a female deity associated with the Earth (“the Mother of Us All”).⁴⁶ Everything seems to indicate that Empedocles was following this tradition and that the resonance ζείδωρος has with Πανδώρα reflects a decision he made to subvert Hesiod’s Pandora and replace her with Aphrodite ζείδωρος, or with a Pandora that instead of opening the jar of Strife, was in charge of distributing the marvellous gift of life.

Conclusions

The results of this research allows various conclusions to be proposed. The first is that the narrative of Cypris the Queen is an inversion of the Prometheus and Pandora narrative. Empedocles not only subverts the grammar of Hesiod’s narrative, he also inverts the logic of the action. Where there was concealment, we find unveiling. Where there was divine wrath, shines friendliness. Where the gods played with the destiny of man, it is men who play with their own destiny. In this sense, it is difficult to consider Empedocles’ narrative a version of Hesiod’s, not even in structuralist terms. Empedocles does not stop at inverting the terms of the opposition, but rather his objective is to cancel out the logic of the narrative. For Hesiod, the struggle between Prometheus and Zeus can only be resolved with the liver of the insolent titan being devoured by the eagle sent by Zeus. Men suffer the wrath of the gods. And the animals, the voracity of men and the craving of the gods to smell the burning fat of sacrifices. The underlying logic of deceit is that of domination. There is no reciprocity between Zeus and Prometheus, just as there can be none between gods and men, or between men and animals. Howev-

⁴¹ *Il.* 2.548, 8.486, 20.226; *Od.* 3.3, 4.229, 5.463, etc.

⁴² *Hes. Op.* 117, 173, 237.

⁴³ Cf. Redfield (2012) 172. Among others, D. S. 3.57.2.

⁴⁴ *Schol. Aristoph.* Vögel 970, transl. J. Redfield.

⁴⁵ *Hes. Th.* 594-601.

⁴⁶ Redfield (2012) 172.

er, in the Cypris the Queen narrative, the battle is characterized by symmetry. The adversaries advance or retreat, but neither Love or Strife can aspire to a definitive victory. They do not want to rule over each other, but rather over the hearts and minds of men. Their actions are not motivated by domination, but rather by reciprocity. They only dispense what is asked of them, and they only take what they are given. Cypris does not punish. Strife does not reward. Neither of them deceive. With love we see love, and with strife, miserable strife. Whether Cypris reigns, or disastrous Strife, the debts are always paid with the same coin. *Neikos* institutes negative reciprocity. Cypris, positive reciprocity.

If Cypris the Queen is a *different* narrative, and not a version of the same narrative, it is because Empedocles inhabits a different place. In the world of Pandora, the actions of Prometheus unleash the wrath of Zeus and men can do nothing but bear the consequences. It is the logic of a world in which men are slaves to the will of the powerful, to whom the poet's hymn is directed: "And now I will tell a fable — says Hesiod — to kings who themselves too have understanding" (*Op.* 202, transl. Most). Even in the narrative regarding the distribution of Justice, where men can aspire to a level of prosperity similar to that of the Golden Age, Hesiod is careful to place that aspiration under the designs of the powerful. "Often even a whole city suffers because of an evil man" (*Op.* 240, transl. Most). They are the ones who decide with their actions if the oaks flower with acorns and succulent honeycombs, or if, on the contrary, the city is destroyed by calamities sent by implacable Zeus (*Op.* 232-233, 242-243). Empedocles speaks, however, for another world, a place where "the devourers of the present" have been expelled from the city. A rising tide of democracy has crashed against the walls of the *pol-eis* of Magna Graecia, and not even the aristocracies who avoid being swallowed by it can ignore the fact that the *place* of the people has shifted. The majority of men continue to live in the countryside, but the idea that everybody has a common place in the agora has become the city's leaven. In many cases, as in Poseidonia, Kroton or Akragas, popular assemblies were established. The circle of people who listen to the poet is no longer found at the banquets held by the best families, but rather composed of men without lineage, but who make the laws of the city. These men fear the gods, but they can no longer hide behind them. If it is true that only that only fools turn their backs on the sacred, then it is equally true that only idiots renounce taking care of themselves. The logic instituted by democracy is that of reciprocity: take care of others and others take care of you. And Empedocles wields this logic like a hammer against the narrative of Prometheus and Pandora.

My second conclusion is that there is sufficient evidence that the poems of Empedocles and Hesiod have overlapping narrative structures for this thesis to be

taken seriously by scholars. Given the substantial number of (thematic, stylistic and semantic) correspondences that have been found through erudition and good practice in Empedoclean studies, this thesis should come as no surprise. The narrative structure of Empedocles' work spreads like a mantle over the narrative structure of Hesiod's work. Just as in Hesiod's poem, Empedocles invokes the muses; a proem dedicated to a deity (Apollo, instead of Zeus); a cosmogony; a theogony; a narrative about the institution of sacrifices; a narrative about the generations, that could correspond to the ages of man narrative; a description of the distribution of Justice of Queen Cypris (friendliness) that presents a close correspondence with King Zeus' distribution of Justice; and a collection of fragments and testimonies that seem to indicate that Empedocles' poem also contains *practical* wisdom,⁴⁷ which would correspond with the following narrative sections of *Work and Days*. Furthermore, there are other specific episodes, such as the catalogues of deities in fragments 122 and 123, as well as the catalogues of Nereids and Oceanids, which could be inserted into a theogony; and, most especially, the episode of the Oracle of Necessity, whose context, just like that of the Oath to the River Styx, should be an exaltation of the works and deeds of the divinity to whom the poem is dedicated, that is, a parallel to the Titanomachy of Zeus. In Empedocles, this deity is Apollo.

My third and final conclusion is derived precisely from how Apollo's exploits overlap with the Titanomachy of Zeus. The fact that Apollo could play such a relevant role in Empedocles' work constitutes a powerful argument to search for the source of his knowledge in the wisdom literature on Apollo. Some authors, such as J. Bollack, have vehemently defended this affiliation. Others, such as J.-C. Picot, have put it in brackets.⁴⁸ Given the importance of Apollo to Pythagoreanism, and their doggedness in claiming Empedocles as one of their own, the multiple Apollonian traits that scholars have identified in the fragments have often been interpreted through a Pythagorean lens. However, much more than in the Orphic or Pythagorean sects, the most reasonable place for a sage like Empedocles to search for the wisdom of Apollo would be in the Sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi. The apogee of the Delphic religion was in the final third of the 6th century B.C.E. and all of Magna Graecia had been filled up with temples and sacred areas that acted as genuine *branch offices* of the god of the laurel branch.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, this ques-

⁴⁷ Cf., particularly, fr. 111. It is possible that this section contains all the aspects that could have most influenced the Italian-Sicilian medical schools.

⁴⁸ Bollack: "Presque tout chez Empédocle est 'apollinien' — sans Apollon" (2003) 105; Picot: "Empédocle critiquerait l'Apollon traditionnel de l'hymne (...) L'Apollon authentique serait le soleil, et rien d'autre" (2017/2018) 398.

⁴⁹ Mazzarino (1947) 181.

tion cannot be examined further here, so my third conclusion can only be provisional. Regardless, as I indicated at the beginning, this conclusion is derived by overlapping Apollo's deeds with the Titanomachy of Zeus and I believe that it is worthwhile to reinforce the existence of this overlapping by mentioning in conclusion two important contributions by O. Primavesi and J. P. Hershbell. First of all, this identifies Apollo as the protagonist of the events described in fragment 115. Although O. Primavesi channels this identification toward a Pythagorean interpretation, the arguments he uses to defend it are independent, and in the end refer to the extraordinary parallel between these events and the narrative of the exile of Apollo that we know about through various sources (one of them, Hesiod).⁵⁰ Therefore, the narrative of Empedocles that overlaps the Titanomachy would be the narrative of the crime, punishment (exile) and purification of Apollo. But, furthermore, if we now look at Hershbell's observation, we can see that these overlaps did not go unnoticed by at least two authors from Antiquity: Plutarch and Proclus. In both cases, we find an explicit relationship between strife (νεῖκος) in Empedocles and the struggle between Zeus and the Titans and Giants.⁵¹ And what does the *daimon* say when he bemoans the cause of his exile? "I too am now one of these, and exile from the gods and a wanderer / trusting in mad strife (νείχεϊ)" (115.13-14, transl. B. Inwood). The *daimon* is Apollo. Because the wisdom of the Delphic god is not derived from indifference or immunity, but rather from a painful intimacy with the consequences of strife that inevitably ends up being acquired by whomever allows themselves to be swayed by it. Even if it is a god.

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⁵⁰ Cf. Primavesi (2006) 53-57 y (2008) 261-262. A. *Supp.*, 214; Hes. *Fr.* 51-52 y 54 a-c Merkelbach-West.

⁵¹ Plu. *Moralia* 926e, Procl. *in Prm.* 849. Cf. Hershbell (1970) 157.

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