

Fragments

ΠΕΡΙ ΦΥΣΕΩΣ

Empedocles
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ΠΕΡΙ ΦΥΣΕΩΣ · On Nature

I will report a twofold truth. Now growsThe One from Many into being, nowITwofold the birth, twofold the death of things:LEor, now, the meeting of the Many bringsTo birth and death; and, now, whatever grewFrom out their sundering, flies apart and dies.; And this long interchange shall never end.Whiles into One do all through Love unite;Whiles too the same are rent through hate of Strife.And in so far as is the One still wontTo grow from Many, and the Many, againSpring from primeval scattering of the OneSo far have they a birth and mortal date;And in so far as the long interchangeEnds not, so far forever established godsAround the circle of the world they move.But come! but hear my words!For knowledgeMakes strong thy soul. For as before I spakeNaming the utter goal of these my wordsI will report a twofold truth. Now growsThe One from Many into being, nowEven from the One disparting come the Many, —Fire, Water, Earth and awful heights of Air;And shut from them apart, the deadly StrifeIn equipoise, and Love within their midstIn all her being in length and breadth the same.Behold her now with mind, and sit not thereAb es established in the limbs of men.Through her they cherish thoughts of love, throughPerfect the works of concord, calling herBy name Delight or Aphrodite clear.She speeds revolving in the elementsBut this no mortal man hath ever learned —Hear thou the undelusive course of proof:Behold those elements own equal strengthAnd equal origin; each rules its task;And unto each its primal mode; and eachPrevailing conquers with revolving time.And more than these there is no birth nor end;For were they wasted ever and evermoreThey were no longer, and the great All were thenHow to be plenished and from what far coast?And how, besides, might they to ruin comeSince nothing lives that empty is of them ?—No, these are all, and, as they course alongThrough one another, now

this, now that is born —And so forever down Eternity.

Love.

Love and Hate in the Organic World

The world-wide warfare of the eternal TwoWell in the mass of human limbs is shown:Whiles into one do they through Love uniteAnd mortal members take the body's formAnd life doth flower at the prime; and whilesAgain dissevered by the Hates perverseThey wander far and wide and up and downThe surf-swept beaches and drear shores of life.So too with thicket, tree, and gleaming fishHoused in the crystal walls of waters wide;And so with beasts that couch on mountain slopes.And water-fowls that skim the long blue sea.

From the Elements is All We See

But come, and to my words foresaid look wellIf their wide witness anywhere forgotAught that behooves the elemental forms:Behold the Sun, the warm, the bright-diffused;Behold the eternal Stars, forever steepedIn liquid heat and glowing radiance; seeAlso the Rain, obscure and cold and darkAnd how from Earth streams forth the Green andFirm.And all through Wrath are split to shapes diverse;And each through Love draws near and yearns foreach.For from these elements hath budded allThat was or is or evermore shall be —By varied mingling and enduring change.

For amber Sun and Earth and Heaven and Seas friendly with its every part that springsFar driven and scattered, in the mortal world;So too those things that are most apt to mixAre like, and love by Aphrodite's best.But hostile chiefly are those things which mostFrom one another differ, both in birth.And in their mixing and their molded forms—Unwont to mingle, miserable and lone.After the counsels of their father, Hate.

An Analogy

Through wits of cunning — paint with streak andBright
temple-tablets, and will seize in handThe oozy poisons pied
and red and goldFrom which they fashion forms
innumerableAnd like to all things, peopling a fresh worldEven
so the spring of mortal things, leastwiseOf all the host born
visible to man.O guard this knowledge well, for thou hast
heardIn this my song the Goddess and her tale.

The Speculative Thinker

To join together diverse peaks of thoughtAnd not complete
one road that has no turn.

An Aphorism

What must be said, may well be said twice o'er.

The Law of the Elements

In turn they conquer as the cycles rollAnd wane the one to
other still, and waxThe one to other in turn by olden Fate;For
these are all, and, as they course alongThrough one another,
they become both menAnd multitudinous tribes of hairy
beasts;Whiles in fair order through Love united allWhiles rent
asunder by the hate of StrifeTill they, when grown into the
One and AllOnce more, once more go under and succumb.And
in so far as is the One still wontTo grow from the Many, and
the Many, againSpring from primeval scattering of the OneSo
far have they a birth and mortal date.And in so far as this long
interchangeEnds not, so far forever established godsAround
the circle of the world they move.

The Sphere

There views one not the swift limbs of the SunNor there the
strength of shaggy Earth, nor Sea;But in the strong recess of
HarmonyExultant in surrounding solitude.Nor faction nor
fight unseemly in its limbs.The Sphere on every side the
boundless sameExultant in surrounding solitude.

For from its back there swing no branching arms. It hath no
feet nor knees alert, nor form of life-producing member, — on
all sides A sphere it was, and like unto itself.

Yet after mighty Strife had waxen great Within the members
of the Sphere, and rose To her own honors, as the times
arrived Which unto each in turn, to Strife, to Love Should come
by amplest oath and old. decree... For one by one did quake
the limbs of God. The joint binds two.

But as when rennet of the fig-tree juice Curdles the white milk,
and will bind it fast... Cementing meal with water

But hurrying back, I now will make return To paths of festal
song, laid down before Draining each flowing thought from
flowing thought. When down the Vortex to the last abyss Had
foundered Hate, and Lovingness had reached The eddying
center of the Mass, behold Around her into Oneness gathered
all. Yet not a-sudden, but only as willingly Each from its several
region joined with each; And from their mingling thence are
poured abroad The multitudinous tribes of mortal things. Yet
much unmixed among the mixed reigned As much as Hate
still held in scales, aloft. For not all blameless did Hate yield
and stand Out yonder on the circle's utmost bounds; But
partwise yet within he stayed, partwise Was he already from
the members gone. And ever the more skulked away and
fled Then ever the more, and nearer, inward pressed The
gentle minded, the divine Desire Of blameless
Lovingness. Thence grew apace Those mortal Things, erstwhile
long wont to be Immortal, and the erstwhile pure and
sheer Were mixed, exchanging highways of new life. And from
their mingling thence are poured abroad The multitudinous
tribes of mortal things

And as they came together. Hate began To take his stand far
on the outer verge. And Earth through Earth her figure
magnifies And Air through Air.

The World as It Now Is

Come ! I will name the like-primeval Four
Whence rose to sight all things we now behold—Earth, many-billowed Sea,
and the moist AirAnd Aether, the Titan, who binds the globe
about.

Earth and Air not Illimitable

Were the white Ether, as forsooth some tongues
Have idly prated in the babbling mouthsOf those who little of the All
have seen...

Sun and Moon

Keen-darting Helios and Selenemild.Attendant round the
mighty space of heaven

The moon, in passing under, covers o'er.And darkens a bleak
tract of earth as largeAs is the breadth of her, the
silver-eyed.As sunbeam striking on the moon's broad
disk.Toward Olympos back he darts his beamsWith fearless
face.of alien light.nave, which roundEven as revolves a
chariot'sThe outmost...For toward the sacred circleof her
lordShe gazes face to face.But earth makes night for beams of
sinking sun.

The Darkling Night

Of night, the lonely, with her sightless eyes.Iris from sea
brings windor mighty rain.

Fire

And fire sprang upward witha rending speed.

The Volcano

And many a fire there burnsbeneath the ground.For
sometimes so uponits course it metAnd oftentimes otherwise.

Things Passing Strange

In Earth sank Ether with deep-stretching roots. Earth's sweat,
the sea. The salt grew solid, smit by beams of sun.

Strange Creatures of Olden Times

There budded many a head without a neck. And arms were
roaming, shoulderless and bare. In isolation wandered
everywhere. Hither and thither seeing union meet. But now as God
with God was mingled more. These members fell together
where they met. And many a birth besides was then begot. In a
long line of ever varied life.

Many were born with twofold brow and breast. Some with the
face of man on bovine stock. Some with man's form beneath a
bovine head. Mixed shapes of being with shadowed secret
parts. Sometimes like men, and sometimes woman-growths.

But come! now hear how 'twas the sundered Fire. Led into life
the germs, erst whelmed in night. Of men and women, the
pitied and bewailed; For 'tis a tale that sees and knows its
mark. First rose mere lumps of earth with rude impress. That
had their shares of Water and of Warm. Albeit not yet had they
revealed a form. Of lovely limbs, nor yet a human cry. Nor secret
member, common to the male.

The Process of Human Generation To-day

But separate is the birth of human limbs; For 'tis in part in
man's...

Into clean wombs the seeds are poured, and when. Therein
they meet with Cold, the birth is girls; And boys, when
contrariwise they meet with Warm.

Into the cloven meads of Aphrodite. For bellies with the
warmer wombs become. Mothers of boys, and therefore men
are dark. More stalwart and more shaggy.

On the tenth day, in month the eighth, the blood. Becomes
white pus.

Twice bearing. Sheepskin.

On Animals and Plants

And if belief lack pith, and thou still doubt
How from the mingling of the elements.
So many forms and hues of mortal things
Could thus have being, as have come to be
Each framed and knit by Aphrodite's power...

As the tall trees and fish in briny floods.
As Kypris, after watering Earth with Rain
Zealous to heat her, then did give Earth o'er
To speed of Fire that then she might grow firm.
Leading the songless shoals of spawning fish.
Of beasts, inside compact with outsides loose.
Which, in the palms of Aphrodite shaped
Got this their sponginess.

'Tis thus with conchs upon the heavy chines
Of ocean-dwellers, aye, of shell-fish wreathed
The earthen crust outside the softer parts.
Trees bore perennial fruit, perennial fronds.
Laden with fruit the whole revolving year.
Since fed forever by a fruitful air.
Thus first tall olives lay their yellow eggs.

Wherefore pomegranates slow in ripening be
And apples grow so plentiful in juice.

Wine is but water fermented in the wood
And issues from the rind.

From the same stuff on sturdy limbs grow hair
Leaves, scales of fish, and bird's thick-feathered

Our Eyes

As when a man, about to sally forth.
Prepares a light and kindles him a blaze
Of flaming fire against the wintry night.
In horny lantern shielding from all winds;
Though it protect from breath of blowing winds
Its beam darts outward, as more fine and thin
And with untiring rays lights up the sky:
Just so the Fire primeval once lay hid
In the round pupil of the eye,

enclosedIn films and gauzy veils, which through and
throughWere pierced with pores divinely fashioned.And thus
kept off the watery deeps aroundWhilst Fire burst outward, as
more fine and thin.The gentle flame of eye did chance to
getOnly a little of the earthen part.

From which by Aphrodite, the divine.The untiring eyes were
formed.

Thus Aphrodite wrought with bolts of love.One vision of two
eyes is born.

Knowing that all things have their emanations.

Thus Sweet seized Sweet, Bitter on Bitter flewSour sprung for
Sour, and upon Hot rode Hot.

Water to wine more nearly is alliedBut will not mix with oil.As
when one mixes with the copper tin.With flax is mixed the
silvery elder's seed.

The Black River Bottoms

And the black color of the river's deepsComes all from shade;
and one may see the sameIn hollow caves.As, in the palms of
Kypriis shaped, they firstBegan to grow together.Kind Earth
for her broad-breasted melting-potsGot twoeight parts four.Of
theThence came white bones.Divinely joined by glue of
Harmony.

Blood and Flesh

And after Earth within the perfect portsAlmost in equal parts
Hephaestos redAnd Rain and Ether, the all-splendorousThere
came our blood and all the shaples of flesh.

The Rushing Blood and the Clepsydra

And thus does all breathe in and out.In allOver the body's
surface, bloodless tubesOf flesh are stretched, and, at their
outlets, riftsFor air, however, is cut a passage free.And when

from here the thin blood backwardThe air comes rushing in
with roaring swell;But when again it forward leaps, the airIn
turn breathes out; as when a little girlPlays with a water-clock
of gleaming bronze:As long as ever the opening of the pipeIs
by her pretty fingers stopped and closed.And thuswise
plunged within the yielding massOf silvery water, can the Wet
no moreGet in the vessel; but the air's own weightThat falls
inside against the countless holesKeeps it in check, until the
child at lastWhen of a truth the water's destined bulkGets in,
as air gives way.Even so it isWhen in the belly of the brazen
clockThe water lies, and the girl's finger tipShuts pipe and
tube: the air, that from withoutComes pressing inward, holds
the water backAbout the gateways of the gurgling neckAs the
child keeps possession of the top.Until her hand will loosen,
when amain —Quite contrariwise to way and wise before
—Pours out and under the water's destined bulkAs air drops
down and in. Even so it isWith the thin blood that through our
membersWhen hurrying back it streams to inward, thenAmain
a flow of air comes rushing on;But when again it forward
leaps, the airIn turn breathes out along the selfsame way.

Scent

Left by their feet along the tender grass....

And thus got all things share of breath and smells.

On the Psychic Life

And in so far the lightest at their fallDo strike together....

In the blood-streams, back-leaping unto itThe heart is
nourished, where prevails the powerThat men call thought;
for lo the blood that stirsAbout the heart is man's controlling
thought.

For unto men their thrift of reason growsAccording to the
body's thrift and state.For as of these commingled all things
are.Even so through these men think, rejoice, or grieve.As far

as mortals change by day, so far
By night their thinking
changes...

For 'tis through Earth that Earth we do behold
Through Ether, divine Ether luminous
Through Water, Water, through Fire,
devouring

Fire

And Love through Love, and Hate through doleful Hate.
For if reliant on a spirit firm
With inclination and endeavor pure
Thou wilt behold them, all these things shall be
Forever thine, for service, and besides
Thereof full many another shalt thou
gain; For of themselves into that core they grow
Of each man's nature, where his essence lies.
But if for others thou wilt look
and reach — Such empty treasures, myriad and vile
As men be after, which forevermore
Blunt soul and keen desire — O then
shall these Most swiftly leave thee as the seasons roll;
For all their yearning is a quick return
Unto their own primeval stock.
For know: All things have fixed intent and share of thought.

Dominion

And thou shalt master every drug that e'er
Was made defense 'gainst sickness and old age —
For thee alone all this I will fulfil —
And thou shalt calm the might of tireless winds
That burst on earth and ruin seedlands; aye.
And if thou wilt, shalt thou arouse the blasts
And watch them take their vengeance,
wild and shrill
For that before thou cowedst them.
Thou shalt change Black rain to drought, at seasons good for
men
And the long drought of summer shalt thou change
To torrents, nourishing the mountain trees.
As down they stream from ether. And thou shalt
From Hades beckon the might of
perished men.

The Healer and Prophet

KAΘAPMOI • The Purifications

Ye friends, who in the mighty city dwell
Along the yellow
Acragas hard by
The Acropolis, ye stewards of good works
The stranger's refuge venerable and kind.
All hail, O friends! But
unto ye I walk
As god immortal now, no more as man,
On all sides honored fittingly and well
Crowned both with fillets and
with flowering
When with my throngs of men and women I
come
To thriving cities, I am sought by prayers
And thousands follow me that they may ask
The path to weal and vantage,
craving some
For oracles, whilst others seek to hear
A healing word 'gainst many a foul disease
That all too long hath pierced
with grievous pains.
Yet why urge more, as if forsooth I
wrought
Some big affair — do I not far excel

O friends, I know indeed in these the words
Which I will speak
that very truth abides;
But greatly troublous unto men
always
Hath been the emulous struggle of Belief
To reach their bosoms.

Expiation and Metempsychosis

There is a word of Fate, an old decree
And everlasting of the gods, made fast
Far spirits, with their lot of age-long life
Do foul their limbs with slaughter in offense.
Or swear forsworn,
as failing of their pledge.
Shall wander thrice ten thousand
weary years
Far from the Blessed, and be born through time
In various shapes of mortal kind, which change
Ever and ever troublous paths of life:
For now Air hunts them onward to the Sea;
Now the wild Sea disgorges them on Land;
Now Earth will spue toward beams of radiant Sun;
Whence he will toss them back to whirling Air —
Each gets from other what they all abhor.
And in that brood I too am numbered now

For I was once already boy and girl
Thicket and bird, and mute fish in the waves.

This Earth of Ours

I wept and wailed, beholding the strange place.

From what large honor and what height of bliss
Am I here fallen to move with mortal kind!

This Sky-Roofed World

And then we came unto a roofed cave.

This Vale of Tears

A joyless land
Where Slaughter and Grudge, and troops of
Doomsbesides
Do wander down the dismal meads of Bane.

There was Earth-mother
There the far-peering Virgin of the
Sun
And bloody Quarrel and grave-eyed Harmony
And there was Fair and Foul and Speed and Late
Black-haired Confusion
and sweet maiden Sure.

Growth
And Filth, and Silence and prevailng Vo

O mortal kind! O ye poor sons of grief!
From such contentions
and such sighings sprung!
For from the living he the dead did
make

In unfamiliar tunics of the flesh.

The worthiest dwellings for the SDiila_of men.
Are taway-lions,
those great beasts that sleep
Couched on the black earth up
the mountain side;
But, when in forms of beautiful plumed
trees

The Golden Age

Nor unto them
Was any Ares god, nor Kydoimos
Nor Zeus, the
king of gods, nor Kronos, nor
Poseidon then, but only Kypris
queen...Whom they with holy gifts were wont to appease.
With
painted images of living things.
With costly unguents of rich
fragrancy.
With gentle sacrifice of taintless myrrh
With
redolent fumes of frankincense, of old
Pouring libations out
upon the ground
Of yellow honey; not then with unmixed
blood
Of many bulls was ever an altar stained;
But among men
'twas sacrilege most vile
To reave of life and eat the goodly

limbs.

The Sage

Was one among them there, a supreme man
Of vastest knowledge, gainer of large wealth
Of understanding, and chief master wise
Of diverse works of skill and wisdom all;
For whensoever he sought with scope and reach
Of understanding, then 'twas his to view
Readily each and every thing that e'er
In ten or twenty human ages throve.

Those Days

All things were tame, and gentle toward men.

The Divine

For since, O Muse undying, thou couldst deign
To give for these our paltry human cares
A gateway to thy soul, O now much more
Kalliope of the beautiful dear voice
Be near me now beseeching! — whilst I speak

O well with him who hath secured his wealth
Of thoughts divine, O wretch! he whose care
Is shadowy speculation on the gods!
We may not bring It near us with our eyes
We may not grasp It with our human hands
With neither hands nor eyes, those highways twain
Whereby Belief drops into minds of men.
For 'tis adorned with never a manlike head.
For from Its back there swing no branching arms.
It hath no feet nor knees alert, nor form
Of tufted secret member; but It lives
And with swift thoughts darts through the universe.
But the wide law of all extends throughout
Broad-ruling ether and the vast white sky.

Will ye not cease from this great din of slaughter?
Will ye not see, unthinking as ye are
How ye rend one another unbeknown?
The father lifteth for the stroke of death
His own dear son within a changed form.
And slits his throat for sacrifice with prayers
— A blinded fool! But the poor victims

pressImploring their destroyers. Yet not oneBut still is deaf to
piteous moan and wail.Each slits the throat and in his halls
preparesA horrible repast. Thus too the sonSeizes the father,
children the mother seize.And reave of life and eath their own
dear flesh.

Drawing the soul as water with the bronze.Ah woe is me ! that
never a pitiless dayDestroyed me long ago, ere yet my lipsDid
meditate this feeding's monstrous crime!

Withhold your hands from leaves of Phoebus' tree !

Ye wretched, O ye altogether wretchedYour hands from beans
withhold!

Scooping from fountains five with lasting bronze.O fast from
evil-doing.Since wildered by your evil-doings hugeNe'er shall
ye free your life from heavy pains.

The Progression of Rebirth

And seers at last, and singers of high hymnsShall they
become, whence germinate the gods.The excellent in
honors.At hearth

Last Echoes of a Song Half Lost

The blood-full liver

Evening, the day's old age.The belly.In seven times seven
days.