

## Summary

EMPEDOCLES' SPHERE IN THE PERSPECTIVES  
OF ANCIENT INTERPRETERS

This article attempts to shed more light on a problem we addressed in a previous work, namely the nature of Empedocles' *Sphere*, which we take for a structured whole and not – as it seems to be usually interpreted – as an amorphous mixture. This time we did not concentrate on the fragments of Empedocles himself, but we studied the further reception of the *Sphere* by ancient Greek writers.

First, we attempted to show that the interpretation prevalent today is actually due to Aristotle's equation of the *Sphere* with his concept of first matter conceived as an undetermined substratum. The only ancient author who seems to hold the interpretation of the *Sphere* as an amorphous mixture is, however, John Philoponus and, moreover, in some of his commentaries to Aristotle only. Then we have gone through the Neoplatonist explanation of the *Sphere* in which it is regularly equated with the intelligible world of the Forms. Although its transcendence is clearly at odds with the original intentions of Empedocles, in this interpretative approach it must be, however, structured as the Forms are. Finally, if we concentrate on Plato himself, we can find Empedoclean traces especially in the *Timaeus* and *Politicus*. In both cases the *Sphere* is equated with the sensible world which is, again, a structured whole. We have then extended our research from the *Politicus* to *Symposium* on the basis of which we would like to claim that mysterious "whole-natured forms (ὅλοφυεῖς τύποι)" from Empedocles' zoogony are the same as Plato's androgynes.

If we are then to conclude by the reconstruction of the whole cosmic as well as the life cycle according to the testimonies of later authors, we suggest that the both processes are closely interconnected. Under the influence of the Love more and more complex forms of life appear by composing together primarily created individual limbs. This evolutive process goes on until it reaches the "whole-natured forms" which – similarly to everything else – form a part of the *Sphere*. When the perfect unity of elements is broken under the renewed influence of the Strife, the perfect "whole-natured" organisms are destroyed by division into the men and women we know today. Then, together with the overall destruction of the cosmos, organisms will be decomposed into the primary limbs that will finally cease to exist, too.