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**A new reconstruction of the Strasbourg Empedocles**

In 1992 Alain Martin recognized 52 small fragments of hexameters in the collection of papyri at Strasbourg as a book-roll of Empedocles. With Oliver Primavesi, he succeeded in assembling them into eleven 'ensembles', and showed that the first column of Ensemble **a** overlaps with fr. 17 Diels. The result of their joint *editio princeps* is that over 70 lines of text, lines 233-300 of Book I of Empedocles' *Physics*, can now be read in a fairly complete state.

The editors assigned the other large Ensemble, **d**, to Book II, on grounds of content. It appeared to discuss the punishment of the soul in the underworld for the crime of eating meat. The fact that the pieces appear to come from different Books seems to have reduced their impact on scholarship, since they are substantial pieces but overlap with those which we already had and do not allow us to form much of an impression of the larger organization of the whole.

However, the appearance of all the papyrus fragments is the same, and there is no solid evidence that they came from different Books or different rolls. Accordingly, in a new effort at reconstruction, I explored the hypothesis that all the pieces come from the shortest possible stretch of papyrus-roll. As a result of forcing all the pieces together into the fewest possible columns, it proved possible to propose a new join between Ensembles **a** and **c** (fr. 76 Diels), according to which this passage describes coming together and dissolution in our own world, as Jean Bollack proposed, rather than one of O'Brien's zoogonic cycles, as the editors thought. Further new joins between Ensembles **d**, **f**, **b** and **e** show that Ensemble **d** does not describe the gruesome punishment of the carnivore's soul in Hades, as the editors thought, but the creation of birds and animals from mixtures of the different elements. Ensemble **e** is part of a simile comparing this process to the making of bronze. Also, Ensemble **g** can be joined to three line-ends in Ensemble **a** column ii. Digital images of the papyrus will be projected to demonstrate that the papyrus-fibres, and the staining and darkening of the surfaces of the different ensembles match each other in most of the proposed joins (but not that between ensembles **a** and **c**, where the distance between is too great).

This combination results in a passage of about 130 lines in length, Book I lines 233-364, and of remarkable interest. Empedocles' style of argument turns out to be very like that of Lucretius, as David Sedley had suggested, as it is cumulative and recursive, with a lengthy digression on dissolution, promises and appeals and promises to the addressee, and a return to the main argument. It is also superb poetry.