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Reconstructing Plutarch's *Eis Empedoklea*

The *Lamprias Catalogue* lists item number 43 under the title *Eis Empedoklea* and indicates that the work consisted of ten books: *Eis Empedoklea biblia iota* [see Treu (1873) 42-54 and Russell (1973) 18-19]. This is the largest work recorded in the catalogue. Given that Empedocles' entire body of work, at an upwards limit, may have been no more than 5500 verses, and may have been less than half of that, it seems remarkable that Plutarch's lost work was so large. The size of the work is confirmed, however, by the only other explicit reference to the *Eis Empedoklea*. Hippolytus, an early Church Father (ca. A.D. 170-ca. 236), in his *Refutatio* (5.20.6) makes reference to a work *Pros Empedoklea* in ten books (*deka biblios*) which he ascribes to Plutarch. There are obvious difficulties in attempting to reconstruct a lost work on the basis of a catalogue entry and single ancient citation. This is perhaps why, despite apparently being the largest work that Plutarch wrote, the *Eis Empedoklea* is rarely mentioned by Plutarchean scholars.

In this paper I will argue that despite the limited evidence that is available it is possible to put forward some conjectures as to the nature and content of Plutarch's lost *Eis Empedoklea*. Following Joyal (1993) I will discuss what information can be gleaned about lost Plutarchean works by examining their place in the *Lamprias Catalogue*. I believe the place of the *Eis Empedoklea* in the catalogue provides some evidence as to the structure of the work. The *Lamprias Catalogue*, however, provides no information regarding the content of the work – for that I will turn to Hippolytus' *Refutatio*.

It has often been mooted in the past that the *Eis Empedoklea* may have Hippolytus' source for his references to Empedocles at both 5.20.6, where he explicitly refers to the work, and the abundant references in book 7 [see Diels (1898) 399; O'Brien (1969) 32-33; and Osborne (1987) 92-94]. In this paper, however, I will focus on the Empedoclean quotation DK 16 cited at 6.25.1-4 which appears to be the same passage, drawn from the same work, as found at 7.29.8-12 [see Marcovich (1986) 23, 25, 37]. The context in which DK 16 is cited at 6.25.1-4 strongly reflects Plutarch's interests. Plato's *Timaeus* is associated with Pythagoras (6.21.1-22.2); Pythagoras' system of numbers is discussed (6.23.1-5) as is his duality of substances and categories (6.24.1-7); Pythagoras' cosmogony is compared to that of Empedocles; a list of Pythagorean expressions is given (6.27.1-5); and Pythagoras' astronomic system is also discussed (6.28.1-4). With the exception of the comparison of Pythagoras' cosmogony to that of Empedocles and the list of Pythagorean expressions, all of the above topics are discussed in Plutarch's *On the Generation of the Soul in Timaeus*. The introduction to that work makes it clear that this is not the first time that Plutarch has discussed these topics.

My argument is not that Plutarch's *Eis Empedoklea* was Hippolytus' source for these passages, but rather that these passages, which clearly reflect Plutarch's interests, can tell us something about why Plutarch wrote a work in ten books on Empedocles, and what may have been contained therein. I believe that the answer lies in the tradition of

philosophical succession which places Empedocles as the crucial link between Pythagoras and Plato [see Mansfeld (1992) 245].