

# Ancient Philosophy

Empedocles

# Empedocles

- **Empedocles (c. 495-c. 435 BCE)**
- em-PEH-dough-klees
- Bio: Born in Acragas, what is now Agrigento, Sicily. Came from a famous family. His grandfather Empedocles had won an Olympic competition in horse racing. He was very active in civic affairs and was once asked to be king but he refused. He later went into exile and died in the Peloponnese.

# Empedocles

- Lots of neat legends about him. The most famous one is about his death. He reportedly leaped into Mt. Etna in order to be thought of eternally as a god. One account debunks this by noting that Empedocles' shoe was found at the scene suggesting that the "death" was staged.

# Empedocles

- He has *archai*: - more than one *archê*
- The four elements - earth, air, fire, and water
- The two forces - Love (harmony) and Strife (hate)

# Empedocles

- **The Elements**
- Cosmogony
- Empedocles calls his four elements "roots" or *rizmata* (riz-MA-ta). Aristotle tends to refer to them as "elements" or *stoicheia* (stoy-KAY-ah). Everything is just an aggregation of the four elements.

# Empedocles

- All change is the result of
  - Combination
  - Separation
  - Regrouping

# Empedocles

- **Cosmogony**
- The elements mix together in certain proportions to create base compounds or mixtures of things, e.g., such as blood and bone. At this point Love joins the elements together with Strife later separating them.

# Empedocles

- **Cosmogony**
- This Sphere is eventually surrounded and penetrated by Strife. This serves to separate or shatter the Sphere which then becomes the *cosmos*. At this point the elements are formed into bodies of earth, water, air, and fire. This cycle is repeated.

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- **Cosmogony**
- But in between the first and second cycle there is a complete separation of the elements and disintegration of our universe.
- Another view has it that human history and our world is what come in between the two cycles.

# Empedocles

Just remember  
the Captain and Tennille!

LOVE WILL KEEP US  
TOGETHER!

Relive those  
70's memories!



# Empedocles

- Empedocles accepts Parmenides' notion of reincarnation.

# Empedocles

- He seems to have had a view of something akin to "original sin". Life is viewed as a punishment for which there must be redemption.
- Redemption is obtained by leading a holy and philosophical life. The soul's exile and return are similar to the cosmic cycles of separation and coming together.