

‘Thinking Structure’

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I take the problem of structure (as I call it) to cover both of these questions:

- (1) How is it that the cosmos is an organized system of diverse entities?
- (2) Why does this system maintain regularity over long periods of time?

This paper is about structure: how is it that Love and Strife, acting on the roots, produce so much organization and repetition? We often focus on the developmental period: there is of course fascination in the neckless heads and “the bare arms deprived of shoulders” (B57), the man-faced ox and the ox-headed man (B61), and so on (see A72). Yet, when we consider our own period (at whatever point in the cycles it occurs), there are two things that stand out about the the natural world: its diversity and its regularity. How do we account for the regularities – no less myriad than the kinds of mortal things, and, as Empedocles suggests in B35.16 no less wondrous? Even though, according to Empedocles, there have been and will be changes in the structure of the cosmos and the living things in it as the cycles progress, there is still the problem of long-term regularities to be explained. I suggest (and will gesture toward some arguments for the claim) that while the powers of Love and Strife are clearly part of the story, another is the general notion of an intelligible cosmos, whose workings out are to be explained by an appeal to the internal rational/intelligent natures of the six entities at work in it.