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## Broken Ritualization and the Dynamics of In-betweenness in Matthew Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna"

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**Abstract:** Matthew Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna" displays paradoxical relations between human ritualization, myth making, and poetic creation by way of employing Empedocles, a poet-philosopher of historical origins, which Arnold turns into mythic proportions for his own poetic purposes. Regardless of Arnold's original intent, Empedocles becomes the embodiment of an overwhelming sense of in-betweenness; unable to relate to his own surroundings, he is caught within an interior questioning of the inner-workings of his own thought, which in turn signifies the perpetual in-betweenness of human experience as the paradoxical seedbed of poetic creation, myth, and ritual. Empedocles, by living through his in-between and alienated state also probes the dynamics of in-betweenness, as his own broken sense of ritualization, or identification with a mythical world-order represented and countered by Callicles, gives way to a critical inquiry of the in-betweenness of human experience in general regarding the problematic function of in-betweenness for the sustenance, but more so for the investigation of human meaning-making mechanisms, such as poetry, myth, and ritual.

**Keywords:** Matthew Arnold, In-betweenness, Liminality, Ritualization, Poetry

### Parçalanmış bir Rituel ve Sonuçları: Matthew Arnold'un "Empedocles on Etna" Şiirinde Aradalık Duygusunun İçsel Açılımları

**Öz:** Matthew Arnold'un "Empedocles on Etna" adlı eseri insan, ritüel, söylence, ve şiirsel yaratı bağlamlarında ritüel ve aradalık kavramları arasındaki çelişkisel ilişkileri tarihi bir kişilik olarak da bilinen şair-filozof Empedokles üzerinden sorgulamaktadır. Arnold Empedokles'i kendi şiirsel yaratısı için kullanırken efsanevi tarafını öne çıkarmaktadır. Arnold'un şiirsel amacından bağımsız olarak Empedokles şiirde oldukça ağır basan bir arada kalmışlık durumunu hem yaşamakta hem de dolaylı yoldan sorgulamaktadır. Bir zamanlar dünya ve çevresiyle kurduğu ritüel benzeri bağları artık kendi kendine sorgulamaya başlaması ile öne çıkan kırılan ve çelişkisel ilişki Callicles adlı şiir kişinin dünya ile şiir ve söylence yoluyla kurduğu bağa tezat oluşturmaktadır. Bu tezat durum genel bir insanlık durumu olarak aradalık olgusuna derinlemesine bir tartışma zemini hazırlamaktadır, zira bu aradalık durumu insan yaratıları olarak şiir, söylence, ve ritüel gibi çeşitli anlam oluşturma mekanizmalarının hem oluşmasını hem de sorgulanmasını sağlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Matthew Arnold, Aradalık, Liminal durum, Ritüel, Şiir


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#### I. Introduction

Matthew Arnold's poetry has been the source of considerable interest for the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, especially gaining momentum in the decades following the Second World War, and establishing Arnold as "one of the three

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pinnacles of Victorian verse [...] frequently ranked alongside Browning and Tennyson” (Collini 2). As Caufield states, “with the slow waning of the high theoretical age” pushing towards a more pluralized twenty-first century (“Poetry is the Reality” 259), a renewed interest and a diversity of scholarly responses to Arnold’s poetry became prominent in demonstrating the relevance and importance of his poetry for the contemporary interdisciplinary experience. The majority of combined approaches have been acknowledging a feeling of incompleteness, detachment, or loss as the fundamental veins running through Arnold’s poetry.<sup>1</sup> However, on closer inspection Arnold’s poetry also reveals a network of representations that focus on a sense of broken ritualization due to an overwhelming feeling of in-betweenness running strong within Arnold’s poetics, where a failed sense of ritualistic identification with the world as participation leads to a self-questioning of the whole culture-existence paradigm.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, “Empedocles on Etna” emerges as a significant example in Arnold’s poetic oeuvre with its contemplative ex-poet-philosopher Empedocles committing a very problematic, seemingly stoic, yet ultimately dramatic and questionable suicide at the end, jumping into the volcanic void personified as Etna.

Arnold’s Empedocles as the self-rejecting poet-philosopher not only indulges in reflections upon human in-betweenness regarding the dynamics of human experience (mythical-textual-imagined levels vs. the actual, sensual, and the experiential), but also engages in a broken kind of ritualization, both with the textual / actual worlds of human experience and the beyond-ness or the privation represented as Etna. Being unable to identify neither with the mythic-poetic nor with the experiential, Empedocles becomes

<sup>1</sup> Arnold’s poetry has been frequently identified in terms of a division inside the mind that cannot reconcile feelings of loss, as in loss of origins, with acts of reflection, like memory, poetry, and representation. As a consequence, a deep sense of failure, paradox, and secondariness can be seen to pervade Arnold’s poetry, expressed through atmospheres of insecurity, in-betweenness, and inertia. Many of Arnold’s critics have noted this point in various ways. For John D. Rosenberg, “[Arnold’s] most moving poetry is, paradoxically, about failure – the failure of poetry to sustain itself in a post-Romantic world [where] [t]he keynote [...] is its vulnerability” (149). Madden argues that Arnold’s “poems of nostalgia give voice to a poetry of memory; looking back to a time of prelapsarian innocence and order, they are haunted by the pathos of innocence and order lost” (50). David G. Riede observes a characteristic “Victorian Hamletism” in Arnold, where “[an] intensifi[ed] melancholy divid[es] the mind more emphatically against itself”, presenting a characteristic “Victorian melancholy of melancholy” (*Allegories* 2, 16). Hence, “[t]he dialogue of the mind with itself, as melancholy, [becomes] the site of [...] artistic production” (*Allegories* 19). Collini notes that “the dominant note of Arnold’s best poetry is reflection [...] because his poems nearly always are, even if not explicitly, second-order reflections on the nature or meaning of certain kinds of experience, rather than expressions or records of that experience itself” (27). Collini’s observation is the most sustaining for the present study, as Arnold’s Empedocles neatly fits into what Collini calls ‘second-order reflections’.

<sup>2</sup> For a broader study of Arnold’s related poetry within the context of ritual, poetic creation, and in-betweenness, see Küçükboyacı, Uğur Ergin. *In-betweenness in Matthew Arnold’s Poetry*. 2019. Hacettepe University, PhD dissertation. <http://www.openaccess.hacettepe.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11655/6086>.

the ultimate figure of poetic, philosophical, and actual alienation, where the perpetuity of human in-betweenness is signified in perpetual terms. Empedocles, despite his seemingly decisive action, becomes the poetic mouthpiece, and symbol of an inquisitive and intellectual in-betweenness, rather than a representative of stoic calm or acceptance. Arnold's choice, here, opens up a space between thought and action, where Empedocles's final suicide allows for the questioning of the mythical and ritualistic dimensions of human existence along with the poetic and the practical. Arnold, by way of employing not just any human figure but the self-questioning and mythical poet-philosopher Empedocles, personifies poetry, myth, and philosophy by galvanizing all three into the intentionally flawed stoic figure of Empedocles, who can no longer ritualize his own existence to that of the world around him. In doing so, Arnold situates Empedocles between thinking about the world and acting upon it, where Empedocles disappears into Etna instead of being actively involved with the world, preferring suicide as a final attempt at renouncing what he considers to be the illusions of the world. However, by making use of Empedocles as a critical tool for intellectual observation regarding the dynamics of in-betweenness, myth, and human ritual, Arnold also turns Empedocles into a dramatic symbol underlying the problematic nature of all poetic endeavour, showing its contesting illusions regarding practical (ritualistic) or narrative (mythic) ends. If human beings are moved and shaped by poetic experiences—that is, by way of songs, legends, or myths, what shapes the poetic experience? Does man make the myth, or myth the man—and to what end? Where does ritual stand? This seems to be the central paradox haunting Arnold's "Empedocles" as the problem is carried all the way up to the summit of Etna without being resolved. Showing the way towards the paradoxical interaction between human ritualization as the ultimate meaning-making mechanism, and human existence as its internally dependent counterpart, Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna" lays bare the meta-philosophy of an overwhelming sense of in-betweenness and broken ritualization, which leads Empedocles to question both worlds, the mythic-poetic and the real-experiential. Viewed in this manner, Empedocles' inquisitive approach to his own in-between and alienated stance can be seen to share a common thread with that of the study of ritual and in-betweenness in its multidisciplinary theoretical forms.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Having its origins in the late nineteenth-century advances on comparative philology, religion, anthropology, and the study of myth, the study of in-betweenness in ritualization has been gaining a wider interest since the last decades of the twentieth-century, as Catherine Bell duly observes:

In the last twenty years a number of diverse fields have found ritual to be an important focus for new forms of cultural analysis. Besides anthropologists, sociologists, and historians of religion, there are socio-biologists, philosophers, and intellectual historians who have turned to ritual as a "window" on the cultural dynamics by which people make and remake their worlds. The result has been a relatively broad and interdisciplinary conversation known as "ritual studies" (*Ritual Theory Ritual Practice* 3).

## II. Broken Ritualization: Arnold's Use of the Dynamics of In-betweenness in "Empedocles on Etna"

In-betweenness in ritual has often been seen as the source-structure for meaning-making mechanisms, such as poetic creation and human ritualization. Furthermore, it has been identified by its numerous commentators, for instance by Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner, as an inherent part of the cultural systematics of human ritual, which provides a positive and constructive mechanism for the creation and survival of human cultures throughout history. Taken as a theoretical concept, in-betweenness has often been identified as a key element in ritual, as it forms the basic transformative structure of human societies, operating within and further depending on a kind of crisis human ritual brings forward through rites of "status elevation", or "status reversal" (Turner, *The Ritual Process* 166-167). Ritualization brings forward an awareness of a crisis of the in-between, which operates on a loss of belonging, and in doing so, attempts to resolve it by integrating or re-integrating its agents into a ritual structure, where these ritualized agents identify with their surroundings and feel that they belong in the order of their worlds. Thus, ritualized agents maintain a sense of security, purpose, and belonging within their own environment. However, when ritualized agents do not familiarize or identify themselves within the ritual structure, they tend to get defamiliarized through an incomplete, refused, or questioned process of ritualization, which makes the inner operations of in-betweenness and human ritualization more observable and self-consciously perceivable.<sup>4</sup> Empedocles falls under the second category, where his divided self and existential crisis allows for the questioning of inner mechanisms regarding in-betweenness and ritualization.

In-betweenness, by creating and being part of a crisis, brings processes of changing roles, or the change (and changelessness) in status into closer observation, where a broken sense of ritualization leads to a disturbing and alienating sense of the in-between, thereby leading ritual participants to a questioning of the dynamics surrounding their own existence along with the ritual structure. To this end, Victor Turner's assessment of

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<sup>4</sup> In-betweenness, in this context, emerges as a state of crisis between how to know and how to emotionally and physically get involved with the world. Ritualization, as a process of integration for human meaning-making mechanisms such as poetic and cultural production, helps to overcome this crisis by making use of in-betweenness by bringing together two problematic but inherently related modes—the narrative versus the experiential. Ritualization uses narratives to enable human agents to identify with their own surroundings. As Roy Rappaport explains, metaphor, narratives, and poetic statements act as the keystones of human ritualization, constituting a "middle-order meaning", and forming a bridge extending towards a "high-order meaning, [which] is grounded in identity and unity", resulting in "the radical identification or unification of self with other" (71). It is through the use of metaphor towards "participation [with] high-order meaning" in ritual that "meaning stops being referential, [and] becomes a state of being" (73). For Rappaport, this is the process by which ritualization "establishes, guards, and bridges boundaries between public systems and private processes", making ritualization "the basic social act" for the construction of meaning, thus enabling cultural human survival (138).

in-betweenness can be taken as demonstrative of the inner paradox of the in-between, both as a structuring and reconciliatory mechanism for the creation and maintenance of human cultural systems, and also for the demolition, restructuring, and re-organization of such systems, which, in the process, pushes these systems into a self-questioning of their own dynamics by their ritualized and non-ritualized participants. Having developed his theories on Arnold Van Gennep's theory of the "limen" (margin or threshold) regarding the liminal phase of transition / initiation rites, such as "social puberty", or "betrothal and marriage" (Van Gennep 65, 116), Victor Turner classifies in-betweenness in terms of ritual as a mechanism that encompasses both "structure and anti-structure" (*Ritual Process* 94-96). Turner argues for the centrality of Van Gennep's theory for the study of in-betweenness within human ritualization and human culture, because it encompasses participation and detachment as inherent in the tripartite *structure / anti-structure / and structure* (once more) model, where "transition [is] marked by three phases: separation, margin (or *limen*), and aggregation" (*Ritual Process* 94). In this respect, in-betweenness in human ritualization as embodying and further enabling the maintenance of a belief system, becomes both the structure and the paradoxically structuring *anti-structure*:

The separation phase comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or the group from an earlier fixed point in the social structure [.]. During the intervening *liminal* period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the *passenger*) are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (re-aggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated. The ritual subject [re-enters] a relatively stable state [with] rights and obligations [...] of a clearly defined *structural* type (*Ritual Process* 94-95).

In-betweenness in successful human rituals, as Turner considers it, perpetuates continuity and participation in a social and sanctified order by reintegrating "threshold people", or the "liminal *personae*" into the continuous phase of "cultural space" (*Ritual Process* 95). However, in-betweenness can also induce an inquisitive state of mind for the ritual participant, especially when left incomplete, which allows a questioning of structural, emotional, or narrative bonds with the past and the present. In Turner's view, such a state causes anxiety, division or separation to be used as an analytical tool, where these "entities" of the margin are made to question the structure of the social and temporal matrix they are in, since they "are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between" incomplete social and personal states of being, which are commonly symbolized by transition metaphors around the world: "Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon" (*Ritual Process* 95). According to Turner, the symbolism of culturally constructed human rituals as rites of passage utilizes the concept of in-betweenness or liminality as tools for the analysis of the same cultural structure which produced them in the first place. Turner states that, "[w]e are presented,

in such rites, with a *moment in and out of time*, and in and out of secular and social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not in language) of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties” (*Ritual Process* 96). What Turner calls multiplicity and fragmentation are intrinsic to human ritualization as they emerge out of the in-between structure of the continuous, structuring, but briefly discontinued and suspended acts of passage from one social and/or personal state to the other.

Turner reveals this continuity further in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, pointing towards the liminal period in rites of passage, where “the passengers and crew are free, under ritual exigency, to contemplate for a while the mysteries that confront all men, [like] their personal problems, and the ways in which their own wisest predecessors have sought order”, and these initiates are free to “explain away”, or deeply question their relations to the past and the present, only to return from it and be part of the community structure once again as successful ritualization demands (242). For Turner, this is, and has been very crucial for the development of critical approaches to the human sciences, because “[i]n liminality resides the germ not only of religious *askesis*, discipline, and mysticism, but also of philosophy and pure science”, as was the case with “such Greek philosophers as Plato and Pythagoras” and their relation to “the mystery cults” (*Dramas* 242). In Turner’s evaluation, a broken or dissected sense of ritualization is as crucial for humanity as a complete and integrative sense of a fulfilled ritualization, because a broken sense of ritual employing in-betweenness as a mechanism of self-questioning would often lead to further discovery and progress by setting in motion an unsettled and inquisitive perspective. In this respect, a broken sense of ritualization highlights in-betweenness as a necessary space for self-questioning and self-reflexivity. Arnold’s “Empedocles” utilizes this inquisitive space through a similarly structured in-between setting, mood, and Empedocles’ critical musings regarding his own broken relationship with the world—one which he does not try to mend.

In tune with Turner, Catherine Bell, in her extensive study, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, argues that human ritualization enables the use of in-betweenness as a tool for cultural analysis, where the observance of an essential dichotomy between “thought and action”, as in detachment and identification, defines human ritualization as “a type of functional or structural mechanism, [which] reintegrate[s] the thought-action dichotomy” into a unified social (cultural-narrative) and private (emotional-experiential) sphere of human experience by way of enabling a social, coherent, and continuous cultural existence for humanity (20). Be that as it may, the questioning divide implicit between the narrative and experiential modes ritualization contains implies an inner crisis, and also opens up the ritual structure itself to question, where in-betweenness once again motivates the kind of structural analysis Turner points out above. Especially when observed by others than the ritual participants, who are required to complete their integration as opposed to the observers who are obligated to remain detached and in-between to better make sense of the cultural dynamics of the ritual structure itself, the crisis relocates between those who participate and those who observe from a distance. Arnold’s Empedocles is employed within a similar relationship between participation

and detachment, making use of his own in-betweenness to further question in-betweenness itself from a distanced perspective represented by a crisis within the mind, which constantly isolates Empedocles, and keeps him from full involvement with the world.

According to Bell, a crisis between participation, detachment, and observation is inherent to the concept of in-betweenness as employed by ritualization as a structure, because successful ritualization welds together the broken parts of the very mechanism of ritual discourse itself, where crisis, opposition, and division is necessary. Without a crisis of the in-between, there would be no human ritualization possible, where "[e]xamples include the ritual integration of belief and behaviour, tradition and change, order and chaos, the individual and the group, subjectivity and objectivity, nature and culture, the real and the imaginative ideal" (*Ritual Theory* 16). As Ronald R. Grimes underlines, a parallel paradoxical structure of opposition and reintegration within in-betweenness shows itself in how religion, and thus, participation in ritualization comes to be structured and questioned, observable in the dichotomy of "[e]xperiential-personal processes (e.g., experiencing feeling, encountering, praying, being healed, being possessed, undergoing a revelation) [as opposed to] [m]ythic-historical, or narrative-temporal, processes (e.g., telling stories, reciting, naming, remembering, recording, transmitting)" (197). If the process of poetic creation surrounding, including, and further shaping ritualization as a consequence of the in-between is concerned within this frame, two modes of being in the world emerge. The first shows an ontological concern, where being in the world is acquired through emotional encounters as in feeling and experience. The second mode is the epistemological, surrounding the very phenomena of being in the world by transmitting, coding and encoding ways of acting in the World by way of story-telling, or poetic creation. In all such opposing pairs, epistemologically constructed mythic-narrative modes clash with ontologically and personally perceived temporal-experiential modes, and Arnold's Empedocles exemplifies this clash, interiorizing and problematizing the relations between experiential and narrative modes of being in the world. In-betweenness, in this sense, becomes a concealed tool of analysis for Arnold within "Empedocles on Etna", where structural relations between ritualization and in-betweenness are tested upon the mythic narrative presence evoked as Empedocles.

Grimes makes a key distinction between thought and action where ritual is concerned, as "[r]itual is not only in the mind or the imagination, even though it can be both mindful and imaginative. If an action is purely mental, it is not ritual even though mental processes clearly underlie ritual action" (195). The crucial question to ask here is not whether ritual is kept distinct from mental activity or not, but what gives ritual and mental activity their stories. In Grimes' model, a sense of in-betweenness arises out of the very structure of ritualization, where thinking about the world and being involved with the world are merged into ritual action, giving a sense of security and participation, and helping ritual agents overcome their overwhelming sense of in-betweenness. But without a narrative, or story mode, this does not seem possible. Therefore, when integration does not take place—that is, the story or stories surrounding the ritual are questioned, a doubtful, doubling, secondary, and inquisitive consciousness emerges. This can further

lead to the questioning of relations between the origins of ritualization and the relations it implies with mental processes such as the creation of stories and how the narrative mode operates within the world, allowing for a more self-reflexive consciousness directed towards the in-betweenness of human experience. Similarly, Empedocles considers the contesting dynamics of ritual action versus ritualized thinking as he enters into the Arnoldian trademark of ‘the dialogue of the mind with itself’.<sup>5</sup>

When Empedocles’ name comes up in Arnold’s poetry, the human condition materializes into the kind of broken, interiorized, displaced, but disturbingly self-conscious darkened nostalgia Empedocles displays throughout “Empedocles on Etna”, and it does so with the kind of altered stoicism and inner division Madden has associated with Arnold’s characteristic nostalgia of detachment, where “occasionally two different moods appear side by side” (50). The simulation of nostalgic and stoic moods concerning Empedocles, in this respect, are materialized and further multiplied by the dramatic structure of the poem, which presents Callicles and Pausanias as voicing, or rather acting as the embodiments of counter perspectives to that of Empedocles’ intellectual disillusionment with the essential and overwhelming in-betweenness of human experience. Simultaneously thinking about the world and living in it by a constant questioning of the references human experience pertains to results in the kind of broken ritualization, in-betweenness, and displacement Empedocles feels throughout his own existence. In Empedocles’ plain statement, the very definition of this dichotomy between thought and action is the human condition, which “[...] we feel, day and night, / The burden of ourselves— / Well, then, the wiser wight / In his own bosom delves, / And asks what ails him so, and gets what cure he can” (I. ii. 128-132). This is Empedocles’ diagnosis of the situation, where humanity is burdened, not only with its own being, but

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<sup>5</sup> Looking at the blind rush of the Victorian involvement with the world leading towards a more interiorized and divided consciousness, Arnold had famously diagnosed the situation in the 1853 Preface to the poems, where he observes a retreating and restless conception of the self in crisis, because “the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared: the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust” (i). John P. Farrell refers to Arnold’s phrase as a “ready-made term for the critical analysis of [Arnold’s] own poetry, [since the] passage points in two different directions: inwardly, to a heart of darkness where thought moves in a wearying, dispiriting dialectic; and, outwardly, to an audience of witnesses who understand and recognize-‘hear’ the dialogue of the mind with itself” (“Breaking the Dialogue” 1). Empedocles is one such immortally fictional ‘witness’ amongst many, who continue to define and shape the human condition, as Ruth ApRoberts observes:

Arnold’s nineteenth-century crisis has become our norm; his “wandering between two worlds” seems less a diagnosis of the Victorian malaise than a statement of the human condition. His great symbols—the two worlds, the Sea of Faith, the ignorant armies’ clash by night—are so successful that they have become almost too overriding as keys to “the Victorian Age” and to our own as well. They tyrannize over our minds, as it were, so that we see ourselves in their terms (2).



more so with what to think about the situation of its own being, and its own consciousness of *being*, which is surrounded, not by a definite teleology, but by randomness and constant story-making. The only cure possible in Empedocles' grim outlook lies in the process of first taking notice of the situation, not by stepping out of one's self and participating with the world as in joyful ecstasy, but by stepping further into one's self without self-delusion, fear, or exaltation, which, in its broken form, creates the ultimate alienation of the poet-philosopher.

Empedocles by stepping out of the world and stepping into his own mind perceives the paradox of existence to its fully fragmentary nature, as he will be seen to clearly state in Act II, because once knowledge is achieved at the cost of emotion and experience, there would be no going back to the world of pristine innocence, of blissful ignorance and youth; the journey is always one way, and one way only. Once self-consciousness is achieved, the individual is forever fragmented, and such fragmented anxiety troubling Empedocles is foreshadowed in the exchange between Pausanias and Callicles in the first act, as Pausanias unsuspectingly relates to Callicles, that Empedocles now "[...] lives a lonely man in triple gloom," (I. i.124), even giving up on his powers of legendary resurrection through song. Having once resurrected Pantheia by the sheer power of his poetry, now "[...] he has laid the use of music by" (I. i. 83), and embarked on his self-inflicted exile towards the summit of Etna.

Callicles chides Pausanias because of his misplaced superstition, since this Pantheia was not really dead, but had suffered a fit, a "trance" (I. i. 136), and being unconcerned with the opinions of society, Empedocles would allow all to believe in his falsely perceived supernatural powers, letting the people "Gape, and cry *wizard* at him, if they list" (I. i. 139). It is better understood later, that Pausanias, although being a close friend to Empedocles and being concerned with his dark mood, is also following him around in order to learn the magical secret of this legendary resurrection. As Callicles' dialogue further reveals, Pausanias is indeed in pursuit of this knowledge, but Callicles, although being much younger than Pausanias, is more perceptive of Empedocles' true source of suffering, since he suspects that "'Tis not the times, 'tis not the sophists vex him; / There is some root of suffering in himself, / [...]. Which makes the time look black and sad to him" (I. i. 150-153). Callicles further cautions Pausanias to stop with the miracle nonsense, and avoid further annoying Empedocles, lest he becomes enraged and gets totally out of hand, urging Pausanias to lead him by the pleasant views of the mountain to "[...] keep his mind on praying on itself, / And talk to him of things at hand and common," (I. i. 156-158). Having been startled by Callicles' insightful and thorough attitude, Pausanias scorns the young poet in return, since he is just "[...] a boy whose tongue outruns his knowledge" (I. i. 161), and bids Callicles to do his part to always stay out of sight behind Empedocles, and as Pausanias had instructed Callicles before, to sing for Empedocles, hoping that Callicles' myth-infused, romantic-heroic songs would calm Empedocles and move him to return to civilization. Exchanges between Callicles and Pausanias also inform the reader that Empedocles knew and adored the talent of young Callicles from days of old. Callicles gladly agrees, because following Empedocles was also his own original intent, hoping to help Empedocles overcome his misery, and

perhaps, as he confesses to Pausanias, to discover the reasons why Empedocles had such a mysterious grip on him: “[Empedocles] knew me well, and would oft notice me; / And still, I know not how, he draws me to him, / [...] But I would serve him, soothe him, if I could,” (I. i. 57-75).

The brief opening frame of “Empedocles” given above, where Callicles and Pausanias indirectly introduce at once the plight and flight of Empedocles reveals more regarding the poem’s own plight and its functional dramatic structure, as Callicles and Pausanias immediately display two contesting attitudes to that of Empedocles. Directed towards life *as is*, and towards life in song, myth, supernatural legend, or poetry, Pausanias’ approach reflects practical concerns of an unintellectual pursuit, whereas Callicles can be seen to idolize Empedocles in the romantic fashion befitting the poet of nature, believing in and further seeking to identify with the sublime-mythic connections poetry establishes with the world. For Callicles Empedocles is a mystery worth pursuing for its own sake. As Paul Zietlow also suggests, “Pausanias reflects the vain human longing felt in every age for secret, supernatural knowledge [and] Callicles’ songs express the classicism of the Greek golden age [,] withdraw[ing] in the end into the Hesiodic past” (255). Since Callicles is unaware of Empedocles’ suicide, he keeps on singing, believing that he can still maintain a connection, both with the mythic world of the past and the world Empedocles has been inhabiting all this time. In Collini’s view, Pausanias, although a little Machiavellian, is “a more robust, active figure”, and being a physician “who lives in the world of action”, forms a contrast with that of Callicles, whose songs are about “living entirely in the realm of the aesthetic, a position Empedocles moodily regards as incompatible with increasing maturity” (35-38). Callicles is especially noteworthy, as Arnold portrays him as the aspiring young poet following in the footsteps of Empedocles who is the legendary older poet and polymath—once Apollo’s darling “votary” (II. 220). Callicles seems to be a younger, enthusiastic version of what Empedocles once was, and as Stacy Johnson notes, Callicles not only plays the part of the poet in nature, but also stands in a similar existence to one other Arnoldian exile, the Strayed Reveller, because Callicles has also “strayed [...] from the feast below”, but this time endowed with a mission (107). In Arnold’s seemingly simplistic dramatic structure, both Pausanias and Callicles are accorded their own parts to play regarding the accomplishment of their mission to persuade Empedocles to end his self-imposed exile. However, Callicles seems to be the more ironic, as his leaving the feast and going in search of Empedocles presents two kinds of seekers in contrast to each other. Compared with Empedocles, Callicles is the seeker of connections and ritual, of continuity, myth and belonging (with the ironic possibility of turning into Empedocles one day), whereas Empedocles is the seeker of an anti-ritual, or rather an ur-ritual, an ultimate beginning and an ultimate end both of which have become unavailable to him since he was able to comprehend that these are absurdities in themselves.

The feast was held by Peisianax, where Callicles received many praises, “Almost as much as the new dancing-girl” (I. i. 35). But Empedocles, to follow the same analogy, has been dancing for some time with the idea of ritual, poetry (myth), and in-betweenness within his own mind, only to find that they are incompatible to his own existence in a

world of continuously shifting reference. The forest glen, later on the serene mountainside, and finally the summit of Etna where Callicles and Empedocles both disappear into are the settings of this contrasting dance, which are themselves portrayed in motion and in flux. Callicles perceives his physical surroundings as being true to the songs he continuously sings in praise of Olympus and its well-known associated myths. Empedocles, however, can no longer associate himself with such connected surroundings, as his lines tend to focus on the broken qualities of the human mind itself rather than nature. Thus, it is only through "the eyes of Callicles [that] there is always an ultimate relationship between the landscape, the gods, and men; for him, even when it is frightening, the landscape is particular, not allegorical [.] The contrast between philosopher and poet is revealed in this way [as] two modes of seeing and feeling about man's surroundings" are encountered by the reader (Johnson 111). As there is no actual interaction between Empedocles and Callicles, their dialogue is established through the playing of the harp, and by the contrast their songs display against each other. This emphasizes a rather removed and distanced relationship between Callicles the poet, and Empedocles the self-exiled poet-philosopher. Without ever getting a last chance to speak to his admired poet face to face, Callicles is unable to meet Empedocles in person one final time, since he is persuaded by Pausanias the physician to hide in the shadows, and perform his poetry from a distance for Empedocles' own well-being. There is no indication at the end of the poem that Callicles ever finds out about the death of Empedocles, since Empedocles disappears into the crater, leaving no dead body behind. He simply vanishes, which is in itself a powerful ironic statement towards the ambiguity of the in-between final setting of the poem.

"Empedocles on Etna" ends in a vague dramatic irony; what would Pausanias or Callicles think about Empedocles' disappearance, since the poet is definitively dead only to the reader. Furthermore, various possible scenarios plague the ending, which deepen the implications of the narrative choice regarding Empedocles' fatal disappearance. For instance, if Callicles were to be allowed within the presence of Empedocles, would things have gone a different way? Would Callicles have succeeded in persuading, or perhaps preventing Empedocles from his lethal jump into Etna's crater? This is an important point to consider, as it stresses, and further throws in contrast the vital connection between human beings and communication, as the human enigma is structurally comprised of, and dependant on, both the narrative mode as in time-defying poetry or songs (orientation with the past), and personal experiences as in time-bound physical interaction (orientation within the present). Both modes require the sharing of the same temporality and spatial dimensions, as well as sharing similar interpretations and insight regarding the poetic and linguistic dimensions of the past through acknowledged stories. References to a combination of past narratives with the exchange of personally oriented first-hand experiences are ultimately necessary for the human mind to find a credible location in the there-and-then-ness and the here-and-now-ness of human experience. In this regard, Callicles can be seen to represent the present-ness of human experience, where his efforts in trying to locate Empedocles can be taken as a struggle to establish a connection with the ever-fleeting past. Empedocles, on the other hand, is already in

possession of the knowledge that trying to possess the past is a hoax, however necessary and inescapable.

Arnold denies Callicles and Empedocles their own choices in a contrasting manner, which further stresses the pervading sense of in-betweenness within the poem. Empedocles, although stern and committed to the end, is denied the personal interaction of a younger poet-friend, who might have persuaded him through his poetic words combined with personal care and admiring action. Callicles is also denied this chance, since, perhaps Empedocles would have found it positive and worthwhile to educate young Callicles further, providing a living model for Callicles to learn from, instead of the romantic models of the distant and idealized myths Callicles is bound to favour. There is, however, a positive outcome of events culminating in Empedocles unnoticed suicide, since Callicles is allowed to keep his hope, and perhaps in time, discover and judge for himself the agonies and suffering which self-consciousness brings to the poet. And again, maybe Callicles, just by *not* becoming influenced by Empedocles or his suicide, will be able to stay happy and content on his own path of romantic idealization, never having to face the curse of self-reflection, or any kind of distanced or fragmented reflection whatsoever. Even in the poem's ending Arnold seems to present a multi-layered and contrasting paradox of the in-between, which both Callicles and Empedocles could not, or would not have done without. Callicles is situated in-between his hopeful search for Empedocles and his accustomed way of connecting with human nature and its traditional myths. Empedocles is placed in-between Callicles' pleasing songs and the recognition of his own helpless and fragmented situation within the in-between, where he realizes that his own existence is bound to become a myth of its own once he leaves this world. Through such a portrayal, Arnold seems to have understood in-betweenness as the essential quality of the human condition, whether taken in positive or negative terms.

In this respect, the seemingly simple yet complex construction of the dramatic structure, which thus allows for different possibilities to be considered, can be observed to bring a life oriented depth, and not just intellectual and self-reflective layers to the poem. The characters of Pausanias and Callicles serve, at first to establish, and then to strengthen the inner argument, or rather the inner dichotomy of Empedocles, which is again, the dichotomy between thought and action resulting in the broken ritualization Empedocles undergoes. Since Empedocles can no longer properly ritualize his own existence—whether through poetry, through social bonds, or by reintegrating himself into the commitment he has once shown towards Apollo, he takes the only path available. Arnold's focus seems to be more on the intellectual side, pointing towards the inherently inescapable paradox of ritual and the in-between, which recognizes the human mind as the prisoner of other minds, having produced ritual structures throughout history which continually use myths to survive in one way or the other. If rituals need myth, and myths need ritual to be actualized in experience, and if myths and rituals are fictions which humanity cannot do without although they constantly tend to drift away, they are also utilized as actual meaning-making mechanisms which complement each other within a constant play of the in-between regarding real life experiences. As James Longenbach observes, "Arnold understands the difference between myths and fictions" (845), and

this is most readily observable in the portrayal of Empedocles as "a persona trapped in the troubled space between culture and consciousness, [where] Empedocles realizes that the dilemma is his own even as he blames the age; he understands that his claim of historical ultimacy is undermined by a long history of similar claims" (848). Empedocles is so self-conscious, knowing that he is bound to situate his own being with reference to a past reference point, which was itself a past reference to yet another past reference within the in-between.

Empedocles knows himself to be neither myth, nor fiction, but something in-between. Comparing himself with the cosmos and the stars, Empedocles declares that "I alone / Am dead to life and joy, therefore I read / In all things my own deadness" (II. 320-322). Earlier, Empedocles, upon hearing Callicles' song making a literal reference to the entrapment of Typhon beneath Etna (Typho in the poem) has also shown that he understands Callicles, too, but unlike Callicles, Empedocles further realizes the difference between myth and fiction, although knowing that he is helpless against it, and wearily announcing that "He fables, yet speaks truth. / The brave impetuous heart yields everywhere / To the subtle, contriving head; / [...] These rumblings are not Typho's groans, I know!" (II. 89-95). Again, this self-knowledge does not guarantee being, as Empedocles is quite aware of. Near the end of his final disappearance into Etna's crater, his introspection deepens: "Slave of sense / I have in no wise been; but slave of thought?— / And who can say:— I have been always free, / Lived ever in the light of my own soul?— / I cannot! [...] But I have not grown easy in these bonds— / But I have not denied what bonds these were!" (II. 391-398). Is it possible to free one's self from reflection, or from the curse of contemplating on reflection itself with inseparable bonds to a vague past, both in its actual worldly form and also in its metaphorical poetic dimension filling in for sensual observation? The mirror of life is inherently fragmented into reading and doing, discerning and applying, reflecting upon and acting, just as Empedocles had sung in reply to Callicles in the first act, "A cord the Gods first slung, / And then the soul of man / There, like a mirror, hung, / [...] Hither and thither spins / [...] A thousand glimpses wins, / And never sees a whole;" (I. ii. 80-86). In Longenbach's view, Empedocles is also "conscious that he has created the gods himself", just like many mortals before him, therefore concluding that Arnold's portrayal of Empedocles as "a self-conscious fiction is as potent a killer as is a reified myth" (851).

Victor Turner's previously cited approach to the liminal phase within human ritualization needs to be expanded here, as it will be illustrative of Empedocles' lines given above regarding 'a thousand glimpses' (and never the whole gaze) directed at the dynamics and inner workings of ritualization, myth, in-betweenness, and human culture in general. Turner makes a distinction between the "liminal" and the "liminoid" regarding the "liminoid" as separate from the "liminal" in the sense that the *liminal* forms the integral part of the traditional structure of successful rituals which seek and establish completion. On the other hand, the *liminoid* can only be experienced in "post-industrial", revolutionary and voluntary modern modes that are open to cultural adaptation and appropriation, in which there is a continuous tendency to escape from closure, where, "to be either [the] agents or [the] audience [of ritual] is an *optional* activity" for the modern

participant / observer (*Dramas* 15-16). As a result, the “liminoid [...] symbolic activity” (15) becomes a crucial mechanism along with the liminal, providing both association and dissociation. It allows for a continuous familiarization and defamiliarization process, where “yesterday’s liminal becomes today’s stabilized, today’s peripheral becomes tomorrow’s centred” (16). For Turner “[t]he liminoid is more like a commodity—indeed, often *is* a commodity, which one selects and pays for—than the liminal, which elicits loyalty and membership [...] One *works at* the liminal, one *plays with* the liminoid” (“Liminal to Liminoid” 86). In other words, the liminal establishes questionable but accepted connections to worlds of serious religious association, or worlds of commitment, which designate an order, expect responsibility, and give a sense of belonging in return. The liminoid, however, has to do with criticism and a closer critical look at the inner dynamics of cultural alteration for its own sake including the pleasure principle; questionable and pleasurable only if the connection stays uncommitted and continuously adrift. This is not to say that Empedocles takes pleasure in living adrift amongst his no longer valid connection with poetry, myth, ritual, and his past existence which used to be in harmony with his surroundings. But it is also true that Empedocles no longer takes comfort in belonging to the same world Calicles is shown to inhabit, which is of participation and an assured sense of belonging, since Empedocles can only question, and no longer participate in the same world.<sup>6</sup>

If human life is the predestined liminal state which demands continuous work, shifting from one stage to the other and offering no escape other than ritualization, but only allowing for suitable strategies to deal with the in-between, can the dynamics underlying in-betweenness and ritual be considered as providing or necessitating an

<sup>6</sup> Mircea Eliade’s notion of the participatory origins of myth is highly suggestive here, as Empedocles sits in-between what Eliade considered to be “the sacred” and “the profane”. In Eliade’s view, *homo religiosus*, that is, the man who knows himself to be part of some greater design and who tries to participate within that design gives way to a profane consciousness as individuality, authenticity, and a self-centred understanding of existence gains prominence over a “primordially” connected understanding of the self with the universe:

[t]he perspective changes completely when the sense of *the religiousness of the cosmos becomes lost*. This is what occurs when, in certain more highly evolved societies, the intellectual elites progressively detach themselves from the patterns of the traditional religion. The periodical sanctification of cosmic time then proves useless and without meaning. The gods are no longer accessible through the cosmic rhythms. The religious meaning of the repetition of paradigmatic gestures is forgotten. But *repetition emptied of its religious content necessarily leads to a pessimistic vision of existence*. (*The Sacred and the Profane* 107).

Eliade argued that religiosity was embedded within the very structure of the human cosmos, where participation with *being* was the key. Once this sense of participation was lost, the sense of belonging was also lost with it, and “[w]hen it [was] no longer a vehicle for reintegrating a primordial situation, and hence for recovering the mysterious presence of the gods, [existence became] *desacralized*, cyclic time bec[ame] terrifying; [perceived as] a circle forever turning on itself, repeating itself to infinity” (*The Sacred...* 107).

analytical perspective, where the question leans more towards considering the role of the liminal within the liminoid, or vice versa? If that is the essential question, Empedocles' voicing and probing of the in-between can be seen to stress the interplay within the kind of critical "flow" Turner has been emphasizing, since

ritual (including its liminal phase) in archaic *theocratico-charismatic* [...] societies [through] religious drama provided the main cultural flow-mechanisms and patterns. But in those ages in which the sphere of religious ritual has contracted [...] a multiplicity of (theoretically) non-serious [...] genres, such as art and sport (though these may be more serious than the Protestant ethic has defined them to be), have largely taken over the flow function in culture ("Liminal to Liminoid" 90).

When Empedocles is considered in relation to his former 'poetic' and participatory involvement with the world as seen in the dubious resurrection story of Pantheia referred to by Pausanias, or in the context of praising and thus appreciating the poetry of Callicles, he seems to be aware of both the liminal and the liminoid play already present within the perpetual in-betweenness and poeticity of human experience, regardless of the cultural surroundings defining it. If there will be insistence on a separation between myth and fiction, as Longenbach puts it, Empedocles self-defeatingly gives the answer by formulating the counter-question: "But what happens when the fiction shows itself to be as powerful as the myth?" (853).<sup>7</sup> If nothing else, Empedocles seems to be in possession of this knowledge of the mirror-like but distortive qualities of the human mind and of human ritual, both in poetry and in life, which ends in the eternal physical passage into nature itself, as being dissolves "To the elements it came from / Everything will return. / Our bodies to earth, / Our blood to water, / [...] But mind?..." (II. 333-338). The three little dots of uncertainty following Empedocles' question mark at the end unveils Empedocles' own inner reflection upon his "triple gloom" Pausanias has been suggesting in all his ironic ignorance. However, Pausanias lacks the intellect, or self-consciousness required to notice that Empedocles' particular gloom entails a tripartite structure of mirroring nature along with the self, and also entails being mirrored by people, further involving a poetic reflection upon the fact that humanity had been constantly mirrored by the poet-people all the time—even now, by the poets of the past and the present

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<sup>7</sup> Eliade tackles the same point in *Myth and Reality* (see 180-193), where he argues that the modern profane consciousness keeps producing broken fictions, including the act of reading for pleasure (see also *The Sacred and The Profane*, 205), rather than totally functional myths of its own, bearing only a mere resemblance to the ancient and participatory sacred understanding of the centrality of myths for pre-modern humanity. A striking example Eliade relates is Andrew Greeley's interpretation of annual automobile shows becoming "the cult of the sacred automobile" in the modern consumer society, and replacing earlier temple worship, but still carrying the broken remnants of that earlier religious experience seen in the utilization of colourful lights, "the music, the awe of the worshippers, the presence of the temple priestesses (fashion models), the pomp and splendour [...] No gnostic more eagerly awaited a revelation from an oracle than does an automobile worshipper await the first rumours about the new models" (186).

simultaneously as they have been using the same limitations human language allows for. In its physical references, there is no problem with death or the mirror. People die, and mirrors reflect supposedly exact images as they get faded and broken. Be that as it may, it is the reflection which is the most troublesome, as it is both traceable yet also untraceable, always employing the beyond within the beyond. Empedocles is quite aware of this impasse, and seems to imply that physical decay and transformation is easily observed and understood, but what of the nature of poetry, of myth and ritual, and of the nature of the mind?

### III. Conclusion

What becomes of the mind once the poet dies? What becomes of poetry, the origins of which has the same speculative quality as its linguistic function? Does it unite humanity and make it understandable and bearable for the human experience, or does it divide and in the process make its own inner dynamics apparent for the select but unfortunate few? This poetically oriented and self-reflective affliction of uncertainty above all else seems to be the cause of Empedocles' self-conscious suffering, or his "curse of reflectiveness" (Collini 27), because, as various passages stressing the paradoxical relationship between experiential and narrative modes make it clear, that Empedocles understands the paradox of poetry in its comfort as well as at its discomfort. Poetry is comfort, just as Callicles sings, that "The lyre's voice is lovely everywhere! / In the court of Gods, in the city of men, / And in the lonely rock-strewn mountain glen," (II. 37-40). Poetry unites, and can penetrate anywhere and everywhere. However, it is also because of poetry, that suffering is loosed upon the world, because it penetrates *everywhere*, as Empedocles, upon hearing Callicles sing for the first time in the first act, indulges to warn the reader, taking up the theme "*in a solemn manner on his harp*" (aside, I. ii. 77-78), reclaiming the role of the wise poet unwillingly, and singing in reply to Callicles' song, that "[...] we are strangers here; the world is from of old. / [...] Born into life we are, and life must be our mould. / [...] And, when here, each new thing / Affects us we come near; / To tunes we did not call our being must keep chime. / [...] We measure the sea-tides, we number the sea-sands; / [...] We search out dead men's words, and works of dead men's hands; / We shut our eyes, and muse / How our minds are made," (I. ii. 182- 329). For Empedocles, then, the paradox of life lies in poetry as its chief creator and representative, as it can always be found somewhere in-between "dead men's words, and works of dead men's hands;" (I. ii. 327), where myth and ritual further complicate things. Rather than showing the way out, poetry by unveiling its own dynamics draws the poet further in, estranging him from life and participation, since the poet is burdened with the knowledge that 'works of dead men' are simultaneously poetic statements *and* social or ritual structures, spatial-temporal building blocks for human culture *and* mythic-narrative ideas which like to pose as concrete facts and credible reasons for human existence at the same time. But what makes and un-makes the mind? That is the infernal question vexing Empedocles.

Empedocles no longer wants to be alone in the kind of broken poetic ritualization he comes to realize through his years of poetic involvement with the world and his own self,



thus he addresses Apollo, "Take thy bough, set me free from my solitude; / I have been enough alone!", but the problem is not that simple, as Empedocles knows well, and continues in the paradoxical passage, further questioning his own in-between situation:

Where shall thy votary fly then? back to men?—  
But they will gladly welcome him once more,  
And help him to unbend his too tense thought,  
And rid him of the presence of himself,  
And keep their friendly chatter at his ear,  
And haunt him, till the absence from himself,  
That other torment, grow unbearable;  
And he will fly to solitude again,  
[...] and many thousand times  
Be miserably bandied to and fro  
Like a sea-wave, betwixt the world and thee (II. 218-231).

As the above passage also demonstrates, the essential condition for Empedocles' broken ritualization materializes within his own in-betweenness; no longer the poet of Apollo, and no longer the philosopher of the people, but what to become? Because 'ridding one's self from the presence of one's self' is always double edged, and paradoxically included in 'that other torment', which is 'the absence of one's self' amongst the community or within a shared custom, where solitude and communion become two sides of the same coin. The liminoid-play Empedocles recognizes between participation and rejection shows the liminal and liminoid sides of the coin in its spin-motion, which allows the realization of the liminal paradox to be central for the human condition. Those who get to know that they are liminal through myth or poetry tend to get liminoid as well. And without a safely anchored sense of belonging, which Empedocles could have achieved through a successful integration by way of ritualizing himself into the kind of communion or solitude he once knew so well, he fails to participate, both in the world of Callicles and within his own once peaceful solitary existence, as his sense of a broken ritualization stays adrift, troubling Empedocles through the end. The in-betweenness of Empedocles, is perhaps resolved with his suicide, but *our* own paradox of the liminal-liminoid play represented within the in-betweenness of Empedocles' experience is once more enhanced, and assured of its problematic continuity, as Arnold's Empedocles will continue to serve as the poetic example of alienation and broken ritualization for future generations, regardless of Arnold's original classical source. Although Callicles' songs help to relocate a poetic consciousness towards Olympian wholeness, Empedocles' response with his harp brings the reader back into fragmentation, to "this charr'd, blacken'd, melancholy waste", where Empedocles wants to find himself "Alone!—" (II. 1-2). This is not a calm setting,

but rather the fragmented mirror of a setting, just like the consciousness of its fragmented protagonist, interrupted at all times by his own mind. As Pratt suggests, “the image of the self as a mirror which catches only fragmented images as it whirls in the wind is the reality of the self in the new social and scientific order which contains the individual but does not address him” (86). Similarly, Arnold’s reworking of Empedocles contains the individual as a human being, also addresses him in his split and displaced situation, but cannot reconcile problems of reflection, because it would require a successful process of ritualization which Arnold’s Empedocles fails in, or rather chooses to resist. It is not because Empedocles is ignorant of the paradox of ritualization, of myth and poetry, but just *because* he knows the structure to be impermeable and all engulfing, he decides to step out of it.

Herbert R. Coursen notes, that the irony “enforced” by the second act of Empedocles “is that man cannot stop dreaming, cannot choke his response to beauty. [...] Empedocles is trapped between the philosophy which tells him to expect nothing and the beauty which implores him to desire everything” (578). Poetry allows for this desire to exist, as it is made clear by the songs of Callicles. But to reach the depths of poetic alienation, as Empedocles strives for, it is imperative that one must philosophise between the role of the poet and the philosopher, suffering the experience of being divided, both from one’s own self, and from the others, which also forms the inner paradox of poetry and poetic creation. Self-discovery is as necessary as self-forgetfulness, as Pratt further suggests, that “[i]n trying to rescue ‘the timeless’ from time, Arnold charts the psychological and cultural trauma of the self’s discovery that its place in the universe is but a point on a plane in time through which an infinite number of lines may be drawn” (88). Although Empedocles seems to realize this when he gives advice to Pausanias in the first act, that “Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven. / Man has a mind with which to plan his safety; / Know that, and help thyself” (I. ii. 28-30), Empedocles himself is powerless to ensure his own safety, as he intentionally fails to relate to the world around him.

Empedocles, through his self-questioning, epitomizes the mind’s inherent and perpetual dilemma; the inner-voicing of the paradoxical distance between myth and ritual, and the continuous suspension of a broken identification, a broken sense of ritualization with the world, which, in its alienating effects, also provides an inquisitive window to the riddle of human existence. Detachment, in this sense, arises both as the precondition, but also as the cursed fruit of the mind’s own in-betweenness. As Rowen suggests, “psychic confusion” is the trademark of Arnold, but this confusion entails a significant quality of the self-conscious distance, where “Empedocles sees man as being perpetually divided from himself, polarized into ‘some bondage’, [but also] feels himself to be so thoroughly enclosed in the mental life” (355). Therefore, Empedocles’ main concern becomes, not only his own mental life of the in-between, but the mental life of humanity’s perpetual in-betweenness, and the place of ritualization within this mental and physical life, whether successful or not, with its consequences for human emotion and experience. The following final passage demonstrates this concern clearly:

But mind—but thought—  
If these have been the master part of us—  
Where will *they* find their parent element?  
What will receive *them*, who will call *them* home?  
But we shall still be in them, and they in us,  
And we shall be the strangers of the world,  
And they will be our lords, as they are now;  
And keep us prisoners of our consciousness,  
And never let us clasp and feel the All  
But through their forms, and modes, and stifling veils.  
And we shall be unsatisfied as now,  
And we shall feel the agony of thirst,  
The ineffable longing for the life of life  
Baffled for ever: and still thought and mind  
Will hurry us with them on their homeless march, (II. 345-359)

What, really, does 'the life of life' entail? Can there be life without the mind? But Empedocles is already aware of the fact that there is life in the elements, too; however, they are born whole, without the mind: "They were well born, they will be well entomb'd" (II. 337). But man? "But mind?..." (II. 337). Therefore, Empedocles knows the mind to be the problematic place where the mind, with its inseparable and continually active agent, which is the constant creation of thought by way of poetic association with the world, is all powerful, time-defying and impermeable against all, yet powerless against itself. There is no going out of it, as "we shall still be in them, and they in us" (II. 349), so mind and thought "Will hurry us with them on their homeless march," (II. 359). As the situation stands thus, the 'life of life' makes its presence known, but continually escapes expression, because it is admittedly a longing, but manages to stay "ineffable" (II. 357). It is *in* the utterance, it is *in* the voice, but it is also continuously *beyond* the utterance, and *beyond* the voice, making the unspeakable speakable, yet defying all attempts to finalize what Empedocles calls 'the life of life'. This is also the paradoxical life of poetry, of poetic creation, of myth, ritual, and of in-betweenness as seen in Empedocles' broken sense of ritualization within Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna", representing, but more so allowing a self-reflexive and self-conscious critical gaze towards the dynamics of in-betweenness regarding modern human experience.

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