

**Porphyry's *On the Cave of the Nymphs*
in its Intellectual Context**

by

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Declaration

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Summary

The primary aim of my research project is to analyse and evaluate the symbols and images found in the treatise, *On the Cave of Nymphs*, in the *Odyssey* by the Neoplatonic philosopher, Porphyry of Tyre (234–c305 C.E.) and to offer an exegesis of Porphyry's allegorical interpretation against the backdrop of his wider oeuvre. The treatise is a significant landmark in both the history of allegorical interpretation and in the history of Neoplatonic philosophy, and can be deemed to be indicative of the Neoplatonic movement in the direction of mystery religions. As developed by Porphyry, Iamblichus and their contemporaries, Neoplatonism came to share more and more features with philosophically inspired mystery cults such as mysteries of Mithras, Orpheus or Eleusis. According to Plato, the higher level of reality, the world of immutable forms, is incomprehensible to our senses. Later Platonists sought to connect the material world and the world of higher truths through allegory. Allegory, a mode of symbolic interpretation and thinking, had been employed since the sixth century B.C.E., but was systematised, especially by the Stoics in the Hellenistic period, and became increasingly prominent during the Roman Empire. Instead of opposing mythological figures and stories of traditional Greek literature, such as the Homeric epics, to the principles of a philosophical system, Neoplatonic allegorical interpretation seeks to expound how literary texts present philosophical ideas in an enigmatic and coded form, offering to those who can decipher them an alternative way to the same higher truths. The approach that is needed to gain access to this symbolic meaning was not developed by the Neoplatonists themselves, but was derived from earlier thinkers, first of all their master Plato; even Plotinus does not consider himself an innovator, only an interpreter of Plato's thoughts (*Enneads* 5.1.8). Regardless of their genre, Neoplatonic allegorical interpretation treats texts, including religious or poetic texts, as objects worthy of philosophical reflection in their own right, being potentially no less enlightening

than the dialogues of Plato. Literary criticism, thus, becomes an important ally to dialectic in the Neoplatonic mission to save the human soul. In this thesis, I intend to show that *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, although ostensibly a literary-critical, rather than a conventional philosophical text, in fact, provides valuable insights into Porphyry's philosophical thought. *On the Cave of the Nymphs* is an elaborate allegorical reading of *Odyssey* 13.102-112, Homer's description of the cave near the harbour of Phorcys in Ithaca, where Odysseus is dropped by the Phaeacians and in which, under the guidance of the goddess Athena, he stores the Phaeacians' valuable gifts. Porphyry analyses these lines and provides a setting for an allegorical interpretation of the *Odyssey* as a narrative of the cyclical journey of the human soul. This soul becomes embodied in the material world where all kinds of pleasures try to beguile it and keep it from attaining the intelligible realm, and, after its dissociation from the body, the soul returns to its point of departure, the intelligible realm. Porphyry's interpretation is, in essence, a legitimization of the doctrines of Plato and Plotinus. His treatise is a unique example of how the Neoplatonists use canonical literary texts for their own philosophical and theological speculations. These texts, they claim, include symbols which point to philosophical truth but which are only comprehensible to a small group of people, that is, philosophers. Homer's text, as interpreted by Porphyry, enables those enlightened readers to attain the philosophical, metaphysical and theological truth in a similar way as the initiates of mystery cults do. Porphyry's ultimate goal is to illustrate that virtue attained through philosophy is the ideal path to salvation for the human soul; it is a universal path which shares important features with religious rituals and other approaches but is, in the end, a superior path.

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Abbreviations

Aeschylus:

Ag. *Agamemnon*

Aristotle:

De Cael. *De Caelo*

De Gen. Anim. *De Generatione Animalium*

Met. *Metaphysica*

Phys. *Physica*

Poet. *Poetica*

Augustine:

Civ. Dei *De Civitate Dei*

Serm. *Sermones*

D.L. Diogenes Laertius (*Vitae Philosophorum*)

Eunapius:

VS *Vitae Sophistarum*

Euripides:

El. *Electra*

Hel. *Helena*

Or. *Orestes*

Eusebius:

PE *Praeparatio Evangelica*

Hist. Ecc. *Historia Ecclesiastica*

Hesiod:

Op. *Opera et Dies*

Th. *Theogonia*

Homer:

Il. *Ilias*

Od. *Odyssea*

Iamblichus:

VP *Vita Pythagorica*

Origen:

Cont. Cels. *Contra Celsum*

Plato:

Apol. *Apologia Socratis*

Crat. *Cratylus*

Crit. *Critias*

Gorg. *Gorgias*

Leg. *Leges*

Parm. *Parmenides*

Phil. *Philebus*

Polit. *Politicus*

Prot. *Protagoras*

Rep. *Respublica*

Soph. *Sophista*

Symp. *Symposium*

Theaet. *Theaetetus*

Tim. *Timaeus*

Plotinus:

Enn. *Enneades*

Plutarch:

De Defectu *De Defectu Oraculorum*

De Facie *De Facie Quae in Orbe Lunae Apparet*

De Genio *De Genio Socratis*

De Iside *De Iside et Osiride*

Plat. Quaest. *Platonicae Quaestiones*

Symp. *Symposium (Septem Sapientium Convivium)*

Porphry:

<i>Ad Marcellam</i>	<i>Epistula ad Marcellam</i>
<i>De Abstinencia</i>	<i>De Abstinencia ab esu animalium</i>
<i>De Antro</i>	<i>De Antro Nympharum</i>
<i>In Tim.</i>	<i>Commentaria in Platonis Timaeum</i>
<i>Sententiae</i>	<i>Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes</i>
<i>Tetrabiblos</i>	<i>Introductio in Ptolemaei Tetrabiblum</i>
<i>VP</i>	<i>Vita Pythagorae</i>
<i>VPlot.</i>	<i>Vita Plotini</i>

Proclus:

<i>In Alc.</i>	<i>In Platonis Alcibiadem</i>
<i>In Crat.</i>	<i>In Platonis Cratylum Commentaria</i>
<i>In Parm.</i>	<i>In Platonis Parmenidem</i>
<i>In Remp.</i>	<i>In Platonis Rem Publicam Commentarii</i>
<i>In Tim.</i>	<i>In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria</i>

Stobaeus:

<i>Ecl.</i>	<i>Eclogae physicae et ethicae</i>
<i>Anth.</i>	<i>Anthologium</i>

Xenophon:

<i>Symp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
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Standard works:

<i>BNJ</i>	<i>Brill's New Jacoby</i> , ed. I. Worthington, Leiden, 2007–.
<i>CCAG</i>	<i>Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum</i> , eds. F. Cumont and F. Boll, Brussels, 1898-53.
<i>CIMRM</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae</i> , ed. M. Vermaseren, Leiden, 1956–60

<i>DK</i>	<i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> , eds. H. Diels and W. Kranz, Berlin, 1954.
<i>FGrH</i>	<i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , ed. F. Jacoby, Berlin and Leiden, 1923–.
<i>IEG</i>	<i>Iambi et elegi Graeci</i> , ed. M. L. West, Oxford, 1989–92.
<i>LSJ</i>	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon, Ninth Edition with Revised Supplement</i> , eds. H. G. Liddell and R. Scott and H.S. Jones, Oxford, 1996.
<i>OF</i>	<i>Orphicorum Fragmenta</i> , ed. O. Kern. Berlin, 1922.
<i>PGM</i>	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i> , ed. K. Preisendanz, Leipzig, 1928–31.
<i>P.G.</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , ed. J.P. Migne, Paris, 1857-66.
<i>RhGr</i>	<i>Rhetores Graeci</i> , ed. Leonhard von Spengel, Leipzig, 1853-56.
<i>SVF</i>	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> , ed. H. von Arnim, Leipzig, 1903-21.

When you set out for Ithaka
ask that your way be long,
full of adventure, full of instruction.
The Laistrygonians and the Cyclops,
angry Poseidon – do not fear them:
such as these you will never find
as long as your thought is lofty, as long as a rare
emotion touch your spirit and your body.
The Laistrygonians and the Cyclops,
angry Poseidon – you will not meet them
unless you carry them in your soul,
unless your soul raise them up before you.

...

Have Ithaka always in your mind.
Your arrival there is what you are destined for.
But don't in the least hurry the journey.
Better it last for years,
so that when you reach the island you are old,
rich with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to give you wealth.
Ithaka gave you a splendid journey.
Without her you would not have set out.
She hasn't anything else to give you.
And if you find her poor, Ithaka hasn't deceived you.
So wise you have become, of such experience,
that already you'll have understood what these Ithakas mean.

Ithaka by Konstantinos P. Kavafis (Trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard)

Introduction

The Neoplatonic philosopher, Porphyry, was born in Tyre in Phoenicia, probably in 234 C.E.¹ According to Porphyry's own *Life of Plotinus* and Eunapius' report, he had distinguished ancestors, and his original name (in Phoenician) was Malchus, meaning 'king.'² He studied rhetoric and grammar with Longinus in Athens before joining the circle of Plotinus in Rome in 262-268. Porphyry collected and edited the works of his teacher Plotinus under the title, *Enneads*, and divided them into six books, consisting of nine treatises each, prefaced by his own *Life of Plotinus*. He himself is believed to have written sixty works, but, unfortunately, most are lost or survive only in fragmentary form. Fully or substantially extant works include, apart from *On the Cave of the Nymphs* and *Life of Plotinus*, also a large excerpt of a *Life of Pythagoras*, *Homeric Questions*, *Letter to Marcella* (written to his wife, Marcella), *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, *Sententiae ad Intelligibilia Ducentes* (*Starting-points Leading to the Intelligibles*, *Sententiae* in short), *Isagoge* (*Introduction*) to Aristotle's *Organon*, *Introduction to Ptolemy's Tetrabiblos* and a *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*. In addition, Porphyry is often credited with the authorship of an anonymously transmitted *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* and he almost certainly wrote a likewise anonymously transmitted work on embryology, attributed in the manuscripts to Galen, and entitled *To Gaurus on How Embryos Are Ensouled*. There are also fragments of many lost works such as a history of philosophy, a *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, *Letter to Anebo*, several treatises, such as *On Images*, *On the Styx*, *Philosophy from Oracles*, *On the Return of the Soul*, *On What Is in Our Power* (or *On Free Will*), and a large work *Against the Christians*.

¹ Eun. VS 4.1.1.

² *VPlot* 17; Eun. VS 4.1.4.

As this corpus suggests, Porphyry had very broad interests, covering fields as diverse as grammar, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, logic, music, religion and literary criticism, and his work had a deep impact on his contemporaries and successors. The fourth-century historian and sophist, Eunapius, praises Porphyry as a polymath (VS 4.2.2-3), and, in his *City of God*, Augustine (354-430 C.E.) calls him ‘the most learned of the philosophers’ (*doctissimus philosophorum*, 19.22). In the translation of Boethius, Porphyry’s *Isagoge* was used as a standard textbook on logic until the end of the Middle Ages. Because so much of his output does not survive, it is difficult to establish to what extent Porphyry generated original philosophical ideas, particularly ideas independent of his teacher Plotinus. There is a common tendency in modern scholarship to see him primarily as a follower on the path set out by Plotinus. Hadot argued nearly 40 year ago that Porphyry is a much more original thinker than has been thought,³ despite earlier claims that his thought lacked originality,⁴ and there has been a growing consensus that this assessment is correct. One of the aims of my thesis will be to show that, at least in his approach to poetry, myths, religion and rituals, Porphyry went well beyond Plotinus, developing original ideas that are on a par with those of his contemporary, Iamblichus.

As for existing scholarship on the Porphyrian treatise to which this dissertation is dedicated, *On the Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey* (Περὶ τοῦ ἐν Ὀδυσσεΐᾳ τῶν νυμφῶν ἄντρου, *De Antro Nympharum*; hereafter *De Antro*), Laura Simonini’s *L’antro delle Ninfe*, in 1986, is an extensive annotated edition, with an Italian translation, whose text and apparatus are taken over from the Arethusa Monograph edition in 1969. Simonini situates *De Antro* within a wide range of disciplines and offers a commentary of the treatise at large and makes references to various ancient sources. Simonini’s references related to Porphyry’s other works are compatible with those in this thesis, e.g., her reference to *Sententia* 20 for the definition of Matter, to *Sententia* 29, *Ad Gaurum* 11.3 and *De Regressu Animae* for

³ Hadot 1968; Simmons 2015: 1 n. 4.

⁴ Bidez 1913: 133; Dodds 1970: 864-5; Smith 1974: xii; Lambertson 1983: 4; Simmons 2015: 1 n.3.

the theory of pneuma-ochema, to *Sententia* 32 for the connection of the cathartic virtues with the image of the goddess Athena (*phronesis*) and Odysseus sitting under the olive tree. In her article 'Homers Nymhengrotte in der Deutung des Porphyrios,' Karin Alt does not present a detailed interpretation of the treatise, but rather provides the outline of each section; she argues that, although Porphyry's interpretation is based on a plan, it lacks consistency – a claim which is at odds with the findings of this thesis.⁵

A significant recent paper on *De Antro* is Mark Edwards' 'Porphyry's 'Cave of the Nymphs' and the Gnostic Controversy.' Edwards, here, compares certain features of *De Antro*, particularly Porphyry's employment of Zoroaster, Mithras as the Maker and Father of all and the Mithraic cave, with Plotinus' *Enneads* 2.9, a treatise written against a group of Gnostics, Christian Heretics, while Porphyry was a member of Plotinus' school.⁶ He concludes that Porphyry intended to write the treatise, not only as a work of interpretation, but as a manual for interpreters, directed in particular against the Gnostics, showing that the truth is reached, not immediately, but gradually.⁷ Edwards also discusses Homer's influence on the writings of Plotinus and Porphyry in his paper 'Scenes from the Later Wanderings of Odysseus',⁸ in which he connects the Delphic Oracle in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* 22 with *De Antro* and shows that the oracle, which reveals the fate of Plotinus' soul after his death, bears resemblance to the description of Odysseus' arrival in Phaeacia. In contrast to Plotinus, who is never deceived by tricks of the material world, as Edwards points out, Porphyry's Odysseus in *De Antro* achieves his ultimate goal only when he gets rid of his earthly life.

⁵ Alt 1998: 466-87. See Pépin 1965: 243-9 for Porphyry's deliberate use of pluralism as an exegetical method; on the same matter see also Lamberton 1986: 120-1 and Simonini 2010 (1986): 19; Demiralp 2011: 215-33 for the outline of the treatise in Turkish.

⁶ Edwards 1996: 89-94.

⁷ Edwards 1996: 95-100.

⁸ Edwards 1988: 509-21.

De Antro has also regularly been discussed by scholars interested in the field of ancient allegorical interpretation, most prominently by Peter T. Struck, in *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts*,⁹ and Robert Lamberton, in *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*,¹⁰ and other works. Struck offers a wide-ranging assessment of allegorical interpretation from the Presocratics to the Neoplatonists, along with the development of the concept of the ‘symbol’ as an authentic token or divine sign, from passwords used by the Pythagoreans and initiates of the Orphic, Dionysian and Eleusinian mysteries, via an ontological concept in Stoic language theory, to a sign of divinity itself in Iamblichus and Proclus. Lamberton’s *Homer the Theologian*, meanwhile, focuses on how the Neoplatonists read Homer in line with their own philosophy, and particularly how they interpreted Odysseus as a symbol of the descended soul trying to return to the intelligible realm. The most recent monographs that touch upon *De Antro* in the context of a discussion of allegory are Crystal Addey’s *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods*, in which she explores Porphyry’s method of allegorical exegesis in *De Antro* while examining the common features of allegory and oracles;¹¹ and Aaron P. Johnson’s *Religion and Identity in Porphyry of Tyre: The Limits of Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, in which he compares *De Antro* with another Homeric study by Porphyry, *On the Styx*, pointing out their structural and methodological similarities.¹² All of these works throw important light on Porphyry’s allegorical method and the place of *De Antro* in the history of allegorical interpretation.

Scholars of Mithraism have likewise shown a great interest in *De Antro*, because it offers the only reliable cosmological discussion of a *Mithraeum*,¹³ the ‘cave’ where the followers of Mithras worship, to which Porphyry refers in *De Antro*

⁹ Struck 2004: 71-5.

¹⁰ Lamberton 1989: 119-33.

¹¹ Addey 2014a: 57-71.

¹² Johnson 2013: 31-7.

¹³ Beck 2006: 17, 85-7; Ulansey 1991: 18; Beck 1987: 308 n.37.

6 and 24. Section 6 provides significant information about the function of the cave in the mysteries of Mithras and Section 24 mentions the seat of Mithras at the equinoxes in relation to the solstitial gates of the soul. The state of the question and what can, and cannot, be safely inferred from *De Antro* regarding Mithraism is most clearly laid out in Roger Beck's most recent work, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire*, in which he builds on ideas expounded in many earlier publications.¹⁴ Beck posits that in a *Mithraeum*, the place of cult worship that represented the Mithraic cosmos, the initiates acquired information about the process of 'soul journeying,' the descent of one's soul at birth and its ascent at death, through a ritualised execution of the soul's heavenly journey. Beck convincingly argues for close analogies between Mithraic doctrine and the Neoplatonic ideas of Porphyry while avoiding speculative reconstructions of the precise relationship between the two paradigms. Such constructions were attempted most prominently by Robert Turcan in his *Mithras Platonicus*, in which he posits influence of the cult of Mithras on the Platonic tradition from the first century B.C.E. onward and uses the references to Mithraism in *De Antro* to argue that Mithraism and Neoplatonism are, in essence, the same.¹⁵ My analysis of *De Antro* in this dissertation is compatible with Beck's argument and puts it on more solid ground by situating *De Antro* more comprehensively within Porphyry's wider philosophical thought.

There are two modern English translations of *De Antro*, whose dates are indicative of the lack of scholarly attention for the treatise in his own right: one was produced by a postgraduate seminar class in 1969, conducted by the distinguished Neoplatonic scholar, L.G. Westerink,¹⁶ the other by Robert Lamberton in 1983. These and earlier versions (such as the one published by Thomas Taylor in 1823) include little or no annotation and there is no comprehensive analysis of the entire treatise. In this thesis, I shall use the Greek text produced by the 1969 postgraduate

¹⁴ Beck 2006; earlier work collected in Beck 2004.

¹⁵ Turcan 1975; see also Dillon 1990 (1977): XVII (79-85) for a detailed review of Turcan's book.

¹⁶ Participants in the seminar were: John M. Duffy, Philip F. Sheridan, G. Westerink and Jeffrey A. White.

seminar, which is based on a comprehensive consideration of the manuscript tradition. Earlier Greek editions of the treatise were published, in many cases with Latin translations, by J. Lascaris (1518), Lucas Holstenius (1630), J. Barnes (1711), R. M. Van Goens (1765), R. Hercher (1858), and A. Nauck (1887).

De Antro has been generally given little attention in discussions of Neoplatonic philosophy, as it is deemed to be of little importance for establishing Porphyrian doctrine. Scholarship on this doctrine, however, has thrived over the last decade or so. A number of important studies¹⁷ have centered on the religious philosophy of Porphyry and Porphyrian soteriology, as expounded, for example, in his *On the Return of the Soul (De Regressu Animae)* and in his *Philosophy from Oracles (De Philosophia ex Oraculis)*, both works which also enlighten his stance on traditional religious practices. The philosophical analysis of *De Antro* in this thesis builds on this recent scholarship, as it attempts to place the treatise within the context of Porphyry's other works and proposes that it contains significant philosophical ideas, particularly on the relationship between the soul and body, embodiment, demonology and the concept of salvation of soul. Apart from these, there are a number of major studies addressing the question on Porphyry's reconciliation of Aristotle with Platonism.¹⁸

This thesis, the first doctoral research project in English dedicated exclusively to the analysis of *De Antro*, seeks to demonstrate in detail that *De Antro* provides valuable insights into Porphyry's philosophical thoughts through an allegorical exegesis of Homer's description of the cave of the nymphs in which Odysseus places the gifts he has received from the Phaeacians at *Odyssey* 13.102-112, a passage cited

¹⁷ Simmons 2015; Addey 2014a; Johnston 2013; Smith 2012: 30-43; Smith 2011; Chase 2010: 383-405; Smith 2010: 325-357; Chiaradonna 2008: 1-30; Wilberding 2008: 406-32; Clark 2007: 127-140; Karamanolis 2007, 2006 and 2004: 79-113; Chase 2004a: 77-93; Chase 2004b: 37-58.

¹⁸ See Adamson 2015: 205-220 on this subject and the latest studies on Neoplatonism.

in full at the beginning of the treatise after the briefest possible indication of the project on which Porphyry is embarking.¹⁹

(1.1-14) Ὅτι ποτὲ Ὀμήρῳ αἰνίττεται τὸ ἐν Ἰθάκῃ ἄντρον, ὃ διὰ τῶν ἐπῶν τούτων διαγράφει λέγων.

αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ κρατὸς λιμένος τανύφυλλος ἐλαίη,
ἀγχόθι δ' αὐτῆς ἄντρον ἐπήρατον ἥροειδές,
ἱρὸν νυμφάων αἰ νηϊάδες καλέονται.
ἐν δὲ κρητῆρές τε καὶ ἀμφιφορῆες ἕασιν
λάϊνοι· ἔνθα δ' ἔπειτα τιθαιβώσσουσι μέλισσαι.
ἐν δ' ἱστοὶ λίθιοι περιμήκεες, ἔνθα τε νύμφαι
φάρε' ὑφαίνουσιν ἀλιπόρφυρα, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι·
ἐν δ' ὕδατ' ἀενάοντα. δύω δέ τέ οἱ θύραι εἰσίν,
αἱ μὲν πρὸς Βορέας καταβηταὶ ἀνθρώποισιν,
αἱ δ' αὖ πρὸς Νότου εἰσὶ θεώτεραι· οὐδέ τι κείνη
ἄνδρες ἐσέρχονται, ἀλλ' ἀθανάτων ὁδὸς ἐστίν.

(1.1.-14) One wonders what the cave in Ithaca symbolises for Homer, the one which he describes in the following verses:

At the head of harbour there is an olive tree with acuminate leaves,
and near it, a lovely and dark cave,
consecrated to the nymphs called Naiads.
In the cave are mixing bowls and amphoras,
made of stone. There, bees store up honey.
In the cave, there are very high stone looms, where the nymphs
weave garments of sea-purple, a wonder to be seen,
and in it there are ever-flowing waters. It has two entrances:
one is northerly, for humans to descend,
the other, southerly, is more divine; through that entrance
men do not enter, but it is the way of immortals.

¹⁹ Section and line-numbers throughout this dissertation follow the edition of Seminar Classics 609 1969; unless otherwise indicated the translations are my own.

In his exegesis of Homer's cave 'at the head of the harbour' and its elements and attributes – that is, the olive tree, the Naiad nymphs weaving sea-purple garments on stone looms, ever-flowing waters, stone mixing bowls and amphoras, bees storing up honey, and the two entrances, one oriented towards the South for the immortals to ascend and the other towards the North for the mortals to descend – Porphyry touches on a remarkable number of philosophical concepts. These include, for example, Anaximander's *apeiron*, Heraclitus' *flux* theory, the Pythagoreans' orderly arrangement of the cosmos, and Plato's participation in Forms. Porphyry uses these concepts to define the characteristics of the material realm, which is the inferior principle in the process of the creation of the cosmos, symbolised by the cave of the nymphs. Interpretations of this kind are in line with Plotinus' view that the doctrine of Plato should be explained and clarified through the teachings of other philosophical schools, including the Peripatetics and the Stoics. Furthermore, the treatise is also a clear manifestation of Porphyry's great interest in the association and dissociation of the soul and body. In his *Life of Plotinus* (13), Porphyry tells how he interrogated Plotinus for three days about the precise association of the soul with the body. In *De Antro*, he provides a wide range of philosophical and astrological explanations of these processes through the concepts of *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), *genesis* (γένεσις), *apogenesis* (ἀπογένεσις), and the gates of heaven (πύλαι οὐρανοῦ), including the gates of the Sun, the gates of the Sun and the Moon, and the solstitial gates.

In comparison with his *Homeric Questions*, a more philological interpretation of passages in Homer's poems, which Porphyry wrote while studying with Longinus in Athens, Porphyry's Homeric interpretation in *De Antro* shows his transformation from a literary critic into a Neoplatonic philosopher. I hope to show that *De Antro* is part of a corpus of Porphyrian philosophical writings on the salvation of the soul, aimed partly at the Neoplatonic philosophers, partly at a more general audience. Porphyry seems to have been engaged in enquiries to find the way(s) for salvation of the soul during his life, and to develop this topic in different ways throughout his

works. For example, *De philosophia ex oraculis*, preserved fragmentarily in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* (4.7) and *De regressu animae*, as preserved in Augustine's *City of God* (10.26), expound the purification of the soul that is attainable for the majority of people through rituals and theurgy, which aim to cleanse the spiritual or lower part of the soul. Porphyry's key difference from Plotinus in this area is his approval of the practical role of theurgy for the salvation of the soul, even though they both accept it in theory. As Smith rightly states, 'it is Porphyry who first introduces the idea of theurgy into Neoplatonism and he goes much further than Plotinus' magic in making magic/theurgy a means to communion with the divine.'²⁰

In *Sententia* 32 (Lamberz),²¹ on the other hand, we find that Porphyry provides guidance for the purification of the soul through his classification of the Neoplatonic virtues, that is, the political, the cathartic, the theoretical, and the paradigmatic virtues. All these virtues are related to the purification of the intelligent part of the soul. The political virtues, for example, teach us to live up to the laws of human nature by moderating passions, whereas the aim of the cathartic virtues is the complete removal of passions from the soul. As Rappe observes, in *Sententia* 32, 'these virtues are defined in terms of the soul's ability to direct its attention inwardly, to abide in a state of contemplation, and to become one with the object of contemplation.'²²

As we have seen, Edwards has argued that Porphyry 'meant to write, not only a work of interpretation, but a manual for interpreters.' I would take this in a somewhat different direction and believe that Porphyry uses *De Antro* to educate his disciples. Porphyry's scattered quotations, e.g. his quotation of Plato's *Republic* 7 in *De Antro* 8, brief statements such as his definition of matter in *De Antro* 5, and the plurality of subjects, give the impression that he wrote the treatise for presentation to and discussion in lectures. Of course, symbolism also enables

²⁰ Smith 1974: 139.

²¹ Section numbers throughout this dissertation follow Lamberz 1975.

²² Rappe 2000: 18.

Porphyry to convey his religious and philosophical ideas to his disciples by elaborate explanations. There is already a general consensus among scholars that there is a close connection between *De Antro* and the myth of Er in *Republic* 10, and that *De Antro* is to be read as an ethical text.²³ In addition to this, I shall seek to demonstrate that *De Antro* is closely connected with Porphyry's philosophical works, particularly passages of his *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, *Sententiae* and *De Abstinencia*. It is primarily in its readings of individual sections of *De Antro* against these philosophical works that the original contribution of this thesis resides. I will, for example, consider the perception of the darkness of the material realm in *De Antro* in light of the noetic triad in Porphyry's commentary on the *Parmenides*; read his assignments of the different regions to the gods, *daimones*, mortals and more divine beings against his commentary on the story of Atlantis in the *Timaeus*; situate Porphyry's association of Homer's Naiad Nymphs with blood vis-à-vis *Ad Gaurum*; interpret the 'divinities' shedding of powers' in the context of *Sententia* 37 and *De Abstinencia*; place the gates of the Sun and the Moon in the context of the noetic triad at the celestial level in Porphyry's commentary on the *Timaeus*; relate his identification of the goddess Athena to the doctrine of virtues in *Sententia* 32; and so on.

De Antro, which I read as the product of a highly intelligent thinker (not an undisciplined or chaotic mind, as might appear on first reading), proves that symbols and images are a key language and tool for the Neoplatonists to reveal their doctrines, similar to the Pythagoreans' use of dual discourses, direct and symbolic. According to reports by Porphyry (*VP* 37) and Iamblichus (*VP* 18.81), the Pythagoreans divided their disciples into Learners and Hearers, the former being given elaborate explanations and the latter assumed to be capable of studying philosophy from mere maxims without arguments. In his *Life of Plotinus* (7.1-2), Porphyry's division of Plotinus' disciples into two groups as ἀκροαταί, 'hearers,' and ζηλωταί, 'zealous students,' seems to imply that the Pythagorean tradition was maintained in Plotinus' school in Rome. Porphyry interprets the literary symbols in

²³ See Chapter 1.5.1.

De Antro both as transcendent being and as natural realities. Following, apparently, the Pythagoreans' mode of examination, Porphyry calls them 'images' (εἰκόνες) when he explains principles perceived by the senses, and 'symbols' (σύμβολα), when his intention is to explain abstract principles. Thus, symbols function as contemplative objects for the students, and their meanings allow them to develop philosophical awareness and consciousness through the use of sensual and mental powers.

Starting from the assumption that Porphyry uses *De Antro* to explain his philosophical ideas, and to educate his disciples through allegorical interpretation, my overarching aim throughout the thesis is to offer an exegesis of Porphyry's *De Antro* against the backdrop of his wider philosophical oeuvre. Inspired most likely by Numenius, Porphyry's allegorical method attempts to unfold the deeper meaning of Homer's text by asking meticulous questions about the literary symbols of his verses and elaborately examining them in light of these questions. In this thesis, I have chosen and organized my topics of discussion in accordance with Porphyry's questions as they emerge from *De Antro*. These are the nature, method and purpose of allegorical interpretation, the features of the material realm symbolised by Homer's cave of the nymphs, the association of the soul with the body, and the ways of descent and ascent of the soul.

In accordance with, on the one hand, my aim to situate *De Antro* within the wider context of Porphyry's thought and, on the other hand, my reading of the treatise's central interests as the association and dissociation of the soul and the body, and, above all, the salvation of the soul, I focus in my discussion on a specific set of Porphyry's philosophical works, namely relevant passages of *De Abstinencia* and *Sententiae*, surviving fragments of Porphyry's commentaries on the *Timaeus*, the *Parmenides* and the *Republic*, *Ad Gaurum*, and other fragmentary works that are related to sections of *De Antro*. I hope that this first detailed and thematic study of *De Antro* in English will contribute to a recognition of Porphyry as a complex, original and interesting thinker and will demonstrate that, for Porphyry, allegorical

interpretation is an important tool to teach Platonic 'philosophy,' and the 'philosophical way of life,' at the meeting point of *muthos* and *logos*.

Chapter 1

Allegory as a Way of Thinking in *On the Cave of the Nymphs*

This chapter begins with a brief survey of the history and development of allegorical interpretation, highlighting its milestones, from the beginnings before Plato to Porphyry's time. I will focus, in particular, on those critics and thinkers who, directly or indirectly, may have influenced Porphyry, with respect to his methodology and composition in *On the Cave of the Nymphs*. In the second part, I will seek to clarify Porphyry's approach, goals and strategies, and to evaluate them against the background of the allegorical tradition. An important point of discussion is the influence of the ideas of the Neopythagoreans Numenius and Cronius on *De Antro*, and, more broadly, the relationship between Homer, Pythagoras and Plato, and the belief that Homer's poems were seen as repositories of divine truth. My discussion will also encompass important features of *De Antro* such as the organisation of the text, which, in turn, underlines the thematic topics of the thesis, and the way in which Porphyry uses allegorical concepts, particularly image and symbol, and the issues that form the basis of Porphyry's interpretation.

1.1. Allegory and Allegorical Interpretation before Plato

The term ἀλληγορία, 'allegory' is a combination of two Greek words: ἄλλος, meaning 'other,' and ἀγορεύειν, meaning 'to speak publicly,' which gives a core meaning for ἀλληγορία of 'other speaking.'²⁴ It has two common usages: one is

²⁴ Struck 2010: 1-11.

allegorical composition, the other allegorical interpretation. The former denotes writing with a dual meaning, a surface meaning and another indirect meaning implied by the author. The latter is also called *allegoresis* (a modern term derived from the verb ἀλληγορέω), and refers to commenting on a work, a figure or an entity in order to reveal a hidden meaning. It is a mutual activity between the reader who seeks out allegories in a text, and the author who includes allegory in his text. Allegory may be systematic and pervasive, with regard to the characters, objects and events of a text, or it may reside in a word or phrase through wordplay, etymologies or in making a connection between the gods or heroes and their main features.²⁵

The main concepts of the ancient allegorical interpretation are expressed by the terms: σύμβολον, 'symbol' and αἶνιγμα, 'enigma' or 'riddle.' In addition, the term ὑπόνοια, 'under-meaning,' corresponds to the verb ὑπονόειν, referring to a deeper sense or real meaning which lies underneath a thing,²⁶ especially the hidden meaning conveyed through myths and allegories.²⁷ However, *hyponoia* does not seem very significant in the allegorical texts themselves,²⁸ and Plutarch says that it is only used for allegory in earlier Greek language (*Moralia* 19e). *Hyponoia* can be found in ancient criticism more broadly for inferences regarding what is not openly stated in or obvious from the surface of the text, regardless of whether the inferred sense is allegorical or not.²⁹

It is difficult to trace the origins of allegory, since no theoretical debate or clear and unambiguous definition survives from antiquity. Aristotle's *Poetics*, a pioneer work in the tradition of literary theory and criticism, has no word related to allegory or *hyponoia*, and it only once refers to 'enigma.' According to Aristotle, clarity shows excellence of diction or style (*Poet.* 1458a18-35). The diction replete with standard terms is the clearest one, but it is also very ordinary. If the diction is

²⁵ Califf 2003: 24-5.

²⁶ *LSJ* s.v. ὑπόνοια; Lamberton 1986: 20-1.

²⁷ *Pl. Rep.* 378d.

²⁸ Struck 2004: 39.

²⁹ Ford 2002: 72-3.

completely composed of loanwords and metaphors in order to be impressive, it will be an enigma or barbarism. Aristotle states that it is essential to use an appropriate mixtures of metaphors, loanwords or ornaments, and standard terms in poetic language.

Demetrius, a literary critic of the first or second century B.C.E., writes in his *On Style* (99-102) that allegory is impressive (μεγαλεῖον) and very effective in generating fear and awe. The Spartans, for instance, speak in allegories to induce fear. Demetrius interestingly associates allegory with darkness and night and the language of mysteries. In line with Aristotle, he points out that one should avoid using allegories one after another, otherwise the words become an enigma. It is important to bear in mind here that both Aristotle and Demetrius formulate their views on language, diction and style from a rhetorical perspective, that is, from the intention to influence people and to persuade them. Thus, clarity and avoidance of riddles or enigmas take centre stage. In the Hellenistic period, allegory is no more than a rhetorical device, which is found in the form of extended metaphors, gnomes and riddles. It does not appear as a term for exegetical activities until the Roman Empire. For example, around 100 C.E., Plutarch speaks of *allegoria* as a new critical term that equals *hyponoia*, the word used for allegorical interpretations in the earlier times (*Moralia* 19e8-f1).

One of the oldest allegorists seems to be the Pythagorean philosopher of the sixth century B.C.E., Pherecydes of Syros, whom Porphyry quotes in *De Antro* 31.8, and probably considers as one of the so-called ‘theologians’ throughout the text. In his *Against Celsus* (6.42 = 7 B 5 DK = F 83 Schibli), Origen refers to an allegorical reading by Pherecydes of Syros which was reported by Celsus:³⁰

καὶ διηγούμενός γε τὰ Ὀμηρικὰ ἔπη φησὶ λόγους εἶναι τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὴν ὕλην τοὺς λόγους τοῦ Διὸς πρὸς τὴν Ἥραν, τοὺς δὲ πρὸς τὴν ὕλην λόγους αἰνίττεσθαι, ὥς ἄρα ἐξ ἀρχῆς αὐτὴν πλημμελῶς ἔχουσαν διαλαβὼν ἀναλογίαις τισὶ συνέδησε καὶ

³⁰ Trans. Schibli 1990: 172; on this passage see also Schibli 1990: 99-100 n. 54; Tate 1927: 214-15; Struck 2004: 26-9.

ἐκόσμησεν ὁ θεός, καὶ ὅτι τοὺς περὶ αὐτὴν δαίμονας, ὅσοι ὕβρισταί, τούτους ἀπορριπτεῖ κολάζων αὐτοὺς τῇ δεῦρο ὁδῶι. ταῦτα δὲ τὰ Ὅμηρου ἔπη οὕτω νοηθέντα τὸν Φερεκύδην φησὶν εἰρηκέναι τὸ 'κείνης δὲ τῆς μοίρας ἔνερθέν ἐστιν ἡ ταρταρὴ μοῖρα· φυλάσσουσι δ' αὐτὴν θυγατέρες Βορέου Ἄρπυιαι τε καὶ Θύελλα· ἔνθα Ζεὺς ἐκβάλλει θεῶν ὅταν τις ἐξυβρίσῃ'. Τῶν τοιούτων δὲ φησιν ἔχεσθαι νοημάτων καὶ τὸν [περὶ] τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς πέπλον ἐν τῇ πομπῇ τῶν Παναθηναίων ὑπὸ πάντων θεωρούμενον.

Celsus says that the words of Zeus to Hera (*Il.* 15.18) are the words of god to matter, and that they show in an enigmatic way that god took the matter, which was in a confused state from the beginning, and bound it by certain proportions and ordered it. And Celsus says that Pherecydes, thus understanding the words of Homer, has said: 'Below that portion is the portion of Tartaros; the daughters of Boreas, the Harpies and Thuella, guard it; there Zeus banishes any of the gods whenever one behaves with insolence.' Related to such conceptions, he says, is also the robe of Athena that is seen by all at the Panathenaic procession.

Tate was the first to suggest that Pherecydes was the first philosopher to consider the mythological tradition allegorically, and the first conscious allegorist to interpret and use myths for his own philosophical purpose.³¹ According to Tate, the motive behind Pherecydes' allegorical interpretation was positive rather than defensive, that is to say, his purpose was not to vindicate traditional tales, per se, but to expound ideas about the cosmos. It is difficult to say anything with confidence about Pherecydes on the basis of the fragmentary evidence available and Origen's thirdhand quotation. However, although many Presocratic philosophers, including Heraclitus and Empedocles, used mythological and enigmatic language to express their own doctrines, there is no indication that they read the works of Homer and Hesiod allegorically as Pherecydes seems to have done.

In contrast to Pherecydes' stance, two prominent Presocratic philosophers denounced Homer and Hesiod in the sixth century B.C.E. Xenophanes of Colophon

³¹ Tate 1927: 214-15; cf. Schibli 1990: 99-100 n. 54; Struck 2004: 26 n. 14.

(c. 570-470 B.C.E.) criticised Homer and Hesiod because they attributed to the gods everything that is dishonorable and disgraceful among men, including stealing, committing adultery and deceiving one another (21 B 11-12 DK).³² In his elegiac poem (21 B 1 DK),³³ he expressed his refusal to sing about the battles of Titans, Giants and Centaurs and called them fabrications of the ancients (πλάσματα τῶν προτέρων), in which there is nothing of use, and urged his audiences to hymn to god with auspicious words and pure speech (εὐφήμοις μύθοις καὶ καθαροῖσι λόγοις). The phrase ‘fabrications of the ancients’ refers to ‘the battles’ described by the poets and indicates Xenophanes’ disapproval of the popular epic tradition.³⁴ Heraclitus of Ephesus (540-480 B.C.E.) expressed similar opinions: he said that Homer, together with Archilochus, deserved to be expelled from the rhapsodic competition and beaten with the staff that was a tool of the rhapsode’s trade (22 B 42 DK = D.L. 9.1)³⁵ and implied that Homer did not even manage to solve a puzzle that is easily solved by children (22 B 56 DK).³⁶ Heraclitus not only rejected Homer and Hesiod, but also Pythagoras, Xenophanes and Hecataeus, because of their lack of understanding (22 B 40 DK = D.L. 9.1).³⁷

Both Xenophanes and Heraclitus acknowledged the status of Homer as the educator or the wisest of all the Greeks,³⁸ but ostensibly they opposed the idea that his poetry contained wisdom in itself.³⁹ Xenophanes did not object against poetry, per se, as he was a professional rhapsode who recited his own poetry (21 A 1 DK = D.L. 9.18), but rather his criticisms are a reflection of his ‘scepticism,’ along with his ethical concern about the mythological tradition represented by Homer and Hesiod, which is closely related to his rejection of anthropomorphic representation

³² Sextus Empiricus *Adversus Mathematicos* 9.193 and 1.289.

³³ Athenaeus *Scholars at Dinner* 11.7.4-27.

³⁴ Leshner 1992: 50; Feeney 1993: 5-13; Ford 2002: 46-66; Naddaf 2009: 99-119.

³⁵ 21 Kahn = 30 Marcovich; Kahn 1979: 111.

³⁶ Hippolytus *Refutatio* 9.9.5 = 22 Kahn = 21 Marcovich.

³⁷ Other belittling references to Hesiod include 22 B 57 and 106 DK (19 Kahn = 43 Marcovich and 20 Kahn = 59 Marcovich) and to Pythagoras 22 B 81 and 129 DK (26 Kahn = 18 Marcovich and 25 Kahn = 17 Marcovich).

³⁸ Xenophanes 21 B 10 DK (= Herodian *On Doubtful Syllables* 296.6); Heraclitus 22 B 56 DK.

³⁹ Feeney 1993: 5-13; Ford 2002: 46-66; Naddaf 2009: 99-119.

of the gods (21 B 15-16 DK).⁴⁰ Morgan reads fragments 21 B 34-35 DK⁴¹ as an expression of Xenophanes' scepticism regarding the limitations of human knowledge, by which the divine truth is not attainable.⁴² Xenophanes highlights the difference between his unanthropomorphic way of expressing the divine and the conventional attitude of the poets, who do not know the true nature of the gods. In fragment 21 B 35 DK, he states that his thoughts are 'like true things' (ἐοικότα τοῖς ἐτύμοισι), whereas Hesiod and Homer present falsehoods that are similar to true things. Homer describes Odysseus as making the many falsehoods of his tale seem like the truth (ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, *Od.* 19.203), and Hesiod's Muses admit that they know how to say many false things as if they were true (ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, *Th.* 27). Xenophanes rejects poets and poetry that tell harmful and unreasonable stories, as poets seem to have the freedom of altering, inventing, rejecting and selecting stories through the Muses, using 'poetic licence' (ποιητική ἐξουσία).⁴³ As in the case of Xenophanes, Heraclitus' rejection of Homer and Hesiod is based on their misunderstanding of the truth and its expression.⁴⁴ What concerns him is the majority's rejection of unity, that is, of *logos* for multiplicity; or as he puts it in 22 B 2 DK, he objects to the fact that many people live as if they have a private understanding, although *logos* is common to all.⁴⁵ Heraclitus regards poets as responsible for this situation because of their diverse treatment of myths and emphasises the ignorance of the popular poets and their pupils (22 B 104 DK).⁴⁶ In sum, neither Xenophanes nor Heraclitus seem to have considered the possibility that the works of Homer and Hesiod might have a hidden meaning and should be read allegorically and not literally.

⁴⁰ Clement *Stromata* 5.110 and 7.22.

⁴¹ Sextus Empiricus *Adversus Mathematicos* 7.49.110 and Plut. *Symp.* 9.7.746b.

⁴² Morgan 2004: 47-53; see also Leshner 1992: 155-76; Bryan 2012: 12-28 for a detailed discussion of Xenophanes' allusion to Homer and Hesiod in 21 B 35 DK.

⁴³ I shall return to this term with regard to *De Antro* 2.18 at the end of this chapter.

⁴⁴ 22 B 1 DK = Sextus Empiricus *Adversus Mathematicos* 7.132; Morgan 2004: 53-58.

⁴⁵ Sextus Empiricus *Adversus Mathematicos* 7.133.

⁴⁶ Morgan 2004: 55; 22 B 104 DK = Procl. *In Alc.* 1 p. 117 Westerlink (59 Kahn = 101 Marcovich); Kahn 1979: 175.

As a thesis always brings forth its antithesis, such critical reflections on Homer and Hesiod were countered by various types of interpretation aimed at justifying the poets. Led by a deep commitment to Homer and Hesiod as wise educators, Greek thinkers sought to defend them against criticisms, proposing to read their gods and heroes as symbols of elements in nature (physical allegories), states of mind (psychological allegories), or virtues and vices (moral allegory). As Brisson states, these three types of allegory seem to have developed from the general practice of etymologising proper names, a practice whose exhaustive examples are found in Plato's *Cratylus*, as will be discussed later.⁴⁷

Our earliest firm indications for an allegorical reading of Homer – beyond the suggestive information about Pherecydes of Syros preserved by Origen – are linked to southern Italy and can be dated to a period shortly after the Pythagoreans settled there.⁴⁸ Theagenes of Rhegium, who was active around 500 B.C.E., explained Homer's gods, whose fights, disputes, adulteries and battles appear to be pointless and offensive on the surface, by reading them as physical elements and their disputes as the conflict of opposite elements in nature. On the basis of Porphyry's testimony in *Homeric Questions* 20.67-75, Theagenes may be regarded as the pioneer of physical and moral allegory:⁴⁹

τοῦ ἀσυμφόρου μὲν ὁ περὶ θεῶν ἔχεται καθόλου λόγος, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τοῦ ἀπρεποῦς· οὐ γὰρ πρέποντας τοὺς ὑπὲρ τῶν θεῶν μύθους φησὶν. πρὸς δὲ τὴν τοιαύτην κατηγορίαν οἱ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως ἐπιλύουσιν, ἀλληγορίᾳ πάντα εἰρῆσθαι νομίζοντες ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν στοιχείων φύσεως, οἷον ἐν ταῖς ἐναντιώσεσι τῶν θεῶν. καὶ γὰρ φασι τὸ ξηρὸν τῷ ὑγρῷ καὶ τὸ θερμὸν τῷ ψυχρῷ μάχεσθαι καὶ τὸ κοῦφον τῷ βαρεῖ. ἔτι δὲ τὸ μὲν ὕδωρ σβεστικὸν εἶναι τοῦ πυρός, τὸ δὲ πῦρ ξηραντικὸν τοῦ ὕδατος. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ πᾶσι στοιχείοις, ἐξ ὧν τὸ πᾶν συνέστηκεν, ὑπάρχει ἡ ἐναντιώσις καὶ κατὰ μέρος μὲν ἐπιδέχεσθαι φθοσυνέστηκεν, φθορὰν ἅπασι, τὰ πάντα δὲ μένειν αἰωνίως. μάχας δὲ διατίθεσθαι αὐτόν, διονομάζοντα τὸ μὲν πῦρ

⁴⁷ Brisson 2004: 32.

⁴⁸ Lamberton 1986: 32; Ford 2002: 69-72; Naddaf 2009: 109-14.

⁴⁹ Trans. Struck 2004: 27-8.

Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ Ἥλιον καὶ Ἥφαιστον, τὸ δὲ ὕδωρ Ποσειδῶνα καὶ Σκάμανδρον, τὴν δ' αὖ σελήνην Ἄρτεμιν, τὸν ἀέρα δὲ Ἥραν καὶ τὰ λοιπά. ὁμοίως ἔσθ' ὅτε καὶ ταῖς διαθέσεσι ὀνόματα θεῶν τιθέναι, τῇ μὲν φρονήσει τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν, τῇ δ' ἀφροσύνην τὸν Ἄρεα, τῇ δ' ἐπιθυμίᾳ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, τῷ λόγῳ δὲ τὸν Ἑρμῆν, [τῇ λήθῃ δὲ τὴν Λητώ], καὶ προσοικειοῦσι τούτοις· οὗτος μὲν οὖν τρόπος ἀπολογίας ἀρχαῖος ὦν πάνυ καὶ ἀπὸ Θεαγένους τοῦ Ῥηγίνου, ὃς πρῶτας ἔγραψε περὶ Ὀμήρου, τοιοῦτός ἐστιν ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως.

The account of the gods is held universally to be infelicitous and inappropriate. For it tells myths about the gods that are not fitting. In the face of this charge, some resolve it from the standpoint of language, by considering everything to have been spoken as an allegory concerning the nature of the elements, for example, in the case of the oppositions of the gods. For indeed, they say that the dry battles the wet, the hot the cold, and the light the heavy. Furthermore, water extinguishes fire, but fire dries out water. Likewise also in the case of all the elements, from which the universe is joined, opposition arises and destruction is admitted once in a while, but all things endure eternally. The story sets forth battles by naming fire 'Apollo,' 'Helios,' and 'Hephaistos,' water 'Poseidon' and 'Scamander,' the moon 'Artemis,' the air 'Hera,' and the rest. The case is similar when the story attributes the names of the gods also to dispositions: Athena to sensibleness, Ares to senselessness, Aphrodite to passion, Hermes to reason, and they assign them to these. Such is the method of explanation from language, then, which is very ancient, even coming from Theagenes of Rhegium, who first wrote about Homer.

Several other ancient sources, even if they do not refer in particular to allegorical interpretation, confirm that Theagenes was an early Homeric scholar and an early grammarian, with an interest in using the Greek language correctly.⁵⁰ In addition, he is associated with rhapsodes,⁵¹ who, not only recited Homer's works publicly, but also interpreted them, as is clear from Plato's *Ion* (esp. 530 c-d) and Xenophon's *Symposium* (3.6). If Theagenes was a rhapsode, he would certainly have been one

⁵⁰ Homeric Scholarship: Theagenes 31.2 (Tatianus); Theta 81 (Suda).

⁵¹ Ford 2002: 70.

who could not have been blamed by either Socrates or Xenophon for not knowing the deeper meaning of Homer's poems (*Symp.* 3.6-7). In any case, the influence of Theagenes must have been remarkable, since Porphyry still cites him over seven centuries later.

It is unclear whether Theagenes was influenced by the Pythagoreans. It is a fact that Pythagoreans were present in Southern Italy in the sixth century B.C.E., and that they used the kind of etymologies Porphyry attributes to Theagenes to support their esoteric doctrines. This suggests that Theagenes may merely have employed a mode of interpretation which was in current use in his intellectual surroundings. Andrew Ford ventures that Theagenes may have presented readings of the Homeric poems to his peers.⁵² Although this must remain a conjecture, I agree with Ford that allegorists were, by default, far from democratic, as allegoresis turns epic poetry into riddles that can only be decoded by an elite – privileged wise men who have the capability to reveal truths which are hidden in the poetic texts. One might speculate that such exegetical activities served as a way to become an almost religious authority in the community, a dynamic that is also in evidence in stories about the Milesians, the Orphics and the Pythagoreans. What distinguishes the allegorists is that they attempt to rationalise the works of the most prominent Greek master of wisdom and truth – inspired, not by the Delphic oracles or the Muses, but by Homeric verses as the repository of the divine truth.

Tate rightly points out that, regardless of their specific ideas, all early philosophers, including the critical Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides and Empedocles, were students of Homer.⁵³ All engaged in one way or another with the tradition that held that poets were divinely inspired and therefore transmitted profound truths. This explains why philosophers such as Xenophanes, Parmenides and Empedocles expressed their ideas in hexameter verse,⁵⁴ borrowing with this

⁵² Ford 2002: 78; Naddaf 2009: 109.

⁵³ Tate 1934: 105-14.

⁵⁴ See Aristotle's comment in *Poet.* 1447b that Homer and Empedocles have only metre in common.

medium, paradoxically, the authority and credibility of Homer and Hesiod. Thanks to the figurative aspect of myths that enabled philosophers to interpret them in their own way, they were able to reconcile these myths with their philosophical concepts.

Empedocles (490–430 B.C.E.) explains the cosmos in hexameters as the mixture and separation of fire, air, earth and water. He calls these elements by the name of the gods, Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus and Nestis, respectively, and associates Love (Philia) and Strife (Neikos) with the attractive and repulsive forces that rule them (31 B 6, 96, 98 DK). Empedocles is thought to have taken his inspiration for these two cosmic forces from Homer and Hesiod.⁵⁵ Later in the fifth century, Diogenes of Apollonia (fl. 430s B.C.E.), allegedly the last of the Presocratic natural philosophers, believed that air is the one source of all being, and is intelligent (νόησις) and, as the primary element, divine (61 B 5-7 DK). Philodemus testifies in his *On Piety* (6b) that Diogenes praised Homer for talking about the gods, not mythically, but correctly. This must imply that Diogenes interpreted Homer allegorically and thus justified the poet who speaks of Zeus as being all-knowing.⁵⁶

Furthermore, Plato speaks of Metrodorus of Lampsacus, who offered interpretations of Homer's *Iliad* in the fifth century B.C.E., in the *Ion*, in which the rhapsode Ion compares himself with Metrodorus, and claims that he interprets Homer better than Metrodorus, Stesimbrotus of Thasos, or Glaukon (*Ion* 530c).

Metrodorus, a disciple of Anaxagoras (c. 510-428 B.C.E.), distinctively equated the gods with the parts of the human body and heroes with the main parts of the cosmos. In his *Lives of the Philosophers*, Diogenes Laertius reports that Anaxagoras was the first to maintain that Homer's poetry is about virtue and justice, and that in his defense of Anaxagoras' interpretation, Metrodorus was the first to deal with Homer's 'physical matter' (τοῦ ποιητοῦ περὶ τὴν φυσικὴν πραγματείαν).⁵⁷ Metrodorus then adapts Homer's gods to the Anaxagorean microcosm (human

⁵⁵ Naddaf 2009: 115.

⁵⁶ Betegh 2004: 308-9.

⁵⁷ D.L. 2.11 (61 A 2 DK).

organism) and Homer's heroes to his macrocosm (nature).⁵⁸ The interpretation of Metrodorus received its share of criticism in antiquity. Philodemus considers such approaches to be mad men's work and Tatian calls them foolish (*Ad Graecos* 21).⁵⁹ But whatever one may think of the particulars of Metrodorus' interpretation, it is clearly an attempt to reconcile his own doctrines with Homer's poetry (rather than a defensive exercise), and, for this reason, he occupies an important position in the history of allegorical interpretation.

The discovery of the Derveni Papyrus made a significant contribution to the history of allegorical interpretation, as well as of ancient Greek religion and philosophy. The text, found in January 1962 among the remains of a soldier's funeral pyre in Derveni, twelve kilometres north-west of Thessaloniki, is one of the oldest known Greek papyri and provides the earliest comprehensive evidence of allegorical interpretation conducted by an unknown sophist.⁶⁰ Although the papyrus stems from the fourth century B.C.E., the text explicitly includes pre-Socratic ideas, particularly of Anaxagoras, Diogenes of Apollonia, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles and Democritus. It contains a cosmological and religious explanation of an Orphic poem, but the commentator's philosophical interests clearly go well beyond the text on which he is commenting.

In order to indicate how the commentator uses etymologies of the divine names and their connection with abstract principles, I offer, here, some examples from the text. The commentator gives an etymology of the name Kronos (cols. 14-15) and comments on Greek vocabulary and idiom (cols. 10, 11, 12, 18, 20). Kronos (κρούων νοῦς), son of Ouranos, and Zeus are both identified with Mind: they are not different deities, but merely different names for the same principle (cols. 14, 15,

⁵⁸ See for a detailed discussion Califf 2003: 21-36.

⁵⁹ Struck 2004: 28-9 Richardson 2006: 66-70; Naddaf 2009: 117.

⁶⁰ Obbink 2010: 19. Richard Janko has suggested that the author of the papyrus could be Diagonos of Apollonia or Diagoras of Melos. If the latter were the author, the papyrus would be a part of Diagoras' *Apopyrgizontes Logoi*, Janko 2001: 1-32.

19).⁶¹ The different names of the god vary according to activities, functions and positions: Aphrodite Ourania, Peitho, Harmonia and Zeus are in fact the names given to the same god (col. 21). When the god (Zeus) mixes diverse things with each other, his name becomes Aphrodite. In the same way, when things are in harmony with one another, the god takes the name Harmonia. Peitho is the name used when they yield to one another. Ge (Earth), Meter (Mother), Rhea and Hera are different epithets of the earth (col. 22): she is called Ge by convention; Meter because all things were born from her; Gaia because of different dialects; Demeter as Mother Earth (Ge Meter), and Deio because she was torn in sexual intercourse.

The attitude of the commentator in the Derveni Papyrus provides significant evidence to corroborate the fact that the ancient approach to the revelation of an oracle and allegorical interpretation of a poetic text are essentially the same: both oracles and poetic texts are presumed to convey divine truth, but in an enigmatic form, which needs to be deciphered. In order to defend Homer, the allegorists generally based their allegorical interpretation on the view that Homer hints at the physical elements of nature with the names of the gods. For example, Metrodorus' adaptation of Homer's gods to human organisms may undermine Homer's authority as the most important source of the gods for Greek religion. The Derveni commentator, however, strives to prove that Orpheus is the origin of our knowledge on the nature of the gods.⁶² The main interpretational term in the Papyrus is *ainigma*, the noun and its cognates being used throughout the text (cols. 7, 9, 10, 13). The commentator expects the poet (Orpheus) to talk in mystical language when addressing divine things (col. 7) and considers the Orphic poem allegorical in a strong sense, that is to say, its author deliberately speaks in riddles.⁶³

Lastly, the Derveni commentator talks about people who do not correctly comprehend the meaning of things (col. 9).⁶⁴ Elsewhere, he makes an explicit

⁶¹ Betegh 2004: 202-5.

⁶² Betegh 2004: 204.

⁶³ Betegh 2004: 132 n. 1; Long 2006: 213; Naddaf 2009: 118.

⁶⁴ See Ford 2002: 75-6.

distinction between the many (πολλοῖς) who do not clearly understand the poet's verse and by implication the select group of people who understand it correctly (col. 23). Orpheus, the commentator, does not wish all people to understand those words which he 'signals' to them (σημαίνει), as they are analogous to Delphic oracles (col. 25). This exclusionary attitude towards the many, the uninitiated, inexpert out-group, is also characteristic of the allegorical approaches that change the epic poems of Homer into cryptic texts. Found in full force in the Derveni papyrus, it may perhaps be traced back as early as Theagenes.

1.2. Allegorical Interpretation in Plato

Plato engages with allegorical interpretation of poetry, myths, the gods and inspiration in various ways in his dialogues. Because there is no dialogue which specifically deals with allegory, and because of the dialogue form of Plato's texts, it is difficult to come to a definitive conclusion regarding Plato's precise views on the viability and possibilities of allegorical interpretation of poetic texts, which are, overall, approached critically and with strong reservations in his dialogues. However, we will see that Plato's treatment of inspiration in the *Phaedrus* helped the Neoplatonists to reconcile Homer with Plato and to use allegorical interpretation of the Homeric texts as an alternative tool for exploring the truth.

Plato criticises the poets and poetry for various reasons. In his dialogues, he shows key differences in the attitudes and ways of thinking of philosophers on the one hand and poets and sophists on the other. For instance, in *Republic* 601a, he says that single words (ὄνοματα) and phrases (ῥήματα), which are mutable and untrustworthy, are the tools of the poets to imitate things that they do not actually know. These tools produce representations and are never perfect reflections of the truth. All poetic representations are related to mortal life or the sensible world, and they should, therefore, not be taken too seriously (*Rep.* 604c).

In *Republic* 2-3, Plato shows differences between *logos* and *muthos*: *logos* is a provable discourse in opposition to *muthos*, which is an unprovable and

unquestionable discourse.⁶⁵ *Muthos* is transmitted from generation to generation orally and anonymously. Tellers of *muthoi* rely, not on familiarity with events or on eyewitnesses, but on society's collective memory, and are unable to confirm the authenticity of what they relate. In *Republic* 582d, Plato claims that arguments (λόγοι) represent the main instrument of the philosophers for making judgements (κρίνεσθαι). *Logos* enables us to recognise the difference between true and false discourse, the discourse of the philosopher and that of the sophist. In *Sophist* 268b-d, the sophist, as imitator of the philosopher, is characterised by false discourse which gives a deceptive image of reality. The philosopher's discourse, in contrast, is based on the intelligible forms grasped by the intellect and is thus a reflection of reality (*Tim.* 51c). As discussed in the *Timaeus*, 'true opinion' (δόξα ἀληθής, *Tim.* 51d6) pertains to sensible things, and it is changeable by persuasion and irrationality. Whereas every man can take part in true opinion, only the gods and the philosophers, as privileged people, share in the intellect (*Tim.* 51e). In *Phaedrus* 247d-e, Plato states that the philosopher desires to have knowledge of true being, rather than of things that are subject to change or becoming. It is, therefore, unsurprising that Plato wants to banish the poets from his ideal state, because his philosophical ruler would seek the absolute and unchangeable truth, while the poets offer us an imaginary realm replete with myths, which addresses the irrational part of the soul instead of its rational part.

According to Brisson, Plato engages with the myths told by the poets because he wants to end their vast influence on society and enforce philosophical discourse instead.⁶⁶ Plato is well aware of the fact that Homer and Hesiod have the status of being educators of the Greeks. He admits his love and respect, particularly for Homer, because he had been his first teacher, but insists that the truth, absolute

⁶⁵ See Brisson 1998: 89-115 on myth as discourse and the opposition between myth and falsifiable and argumentative discourses; Brisson 2004: 15-28 for a detailed analysis of Plato's attitude towards myth; Brisson 2007: 143 for his interpretation of the *muthos/logos* opposition as verifiable and unverifiable discourse, and as narrative and argumentative discourse.

⁶⁶ Brisson 2004: 15-19 and 2012a: 118-19.

and unchangeable, must prevail (*Rep.* 595b-c). Thus, while Plato remains loyal to his mentor Socrates, he dismisses a widespread belief in Greek culture that 'what is the most ancient is the most revered' to some extent.⁶⁷

Although Plato thus rejects the conventional myths, he does not, of course, reject *muthos*, *tout court*, but resorts to it himself in many of his dialogues, creating his own myths which are distinct from the myths told by the poets such as Homer and Hesiod. These Platonic myths are generally built on a traditional story but developed into a philosophical version, such as the myth of Er in the *Republic* (614a-621d), the Judgement of Souls in the *Gorgias* (523a-527a) and the story of Atlantis in the *Timaeus* (21e-26d).⁶⁸ As Most has usefully outlined, Platonic myths have eight features:⁶⁹ most of the myths are found either at the beginning of the dialogues or they follow a philosophical argument; they are monologues, which are not interrupted by interlocutors; they are narrated by an older speaker to younger listeners; they 'go back to older, explicitly indicated or implied, real or fictional oral sources'; like conventional myths, they are unverifiable; they take their authority from the tradition; they aim for a psychological effect, name, pleasure; and lastly, they are not argumentative but narrative or descriptive.

When speaking about the traditional myths or his own myths, Plato's does not exclusively use the word *muthos*.⁷⁰ For example, in the *Phaedrus* (229c5; 229d2) he calls the myth of Boreas and Oreithyia *muthologema* and *logos*, the myth of Theuth and Thamus an *akoe* (274c1), and the myth of Kronos in the *Leges* is called a *pheme* (713c2). In the *Gorgias* (523a1-3), the myth of the Judgement of Souls, one of Plato's eschatological myths, is regarded as a story (*muthos*) by the interlocutor Callicles but as a true account (*logos*) by Socrates. This case suggests that, in Plato's view, a mythical narrative may be called alternatively a *muthos* or a *logos* according

⁶⁷ Arist. *Met.* 1983b; Lamberton 1986: 11.

⁶⁸ Edelstein 1949: 463-81; Clay 2007: 212; Partenie 2004 and 2014: 1-21 for a brief outline of Plato's myths.

⁶⁹ Most 2012: 16-19; Partenie 2014: 5-6.

⁷⁰ See Brisson 1998: 141-4 for the occurrences of the word *muthos* in Plato.

to the truth it contains and the evaluative criteria of the audience.⁷¹ In this dialogue, when Callicles is reluctant to be convinced through dialectic,⁷² Socrates adds the myth of the Judgement of Souls to his argument in order to persuade him. Here myth functions as a complement to the argument, as it also does in the *Leges* (903b), in which the Athenian shows that myth functions as a complementary tool for persuasion when philosophical argument falls shortly.⁷³

As regards the persuasive role of myth, Plato in the *Phaedrus* (272d8-e1) identifies ‘what is convincing’ (τὸ πιθανόν) with ‘what is probable’ (τὸ εἰκός);⁷⁴ he then points out that people accept what is probable because of its similarity to the truth, and that what is probable is always discovered by those who already know the truth (*Phaedrus* 273d2-6). From these statements, Tarrant infers: ‘if myths are to be persuasive, they will be likely; if they are likely, they will resemble the truth.’⁷⁵ This is compatible with Plato’s proposal in the *Republic* (379a) that the model used for the composition of myths should reflect the true nature of God, that is to say, that the traditional gods should be compatible with an ‘ideal model,’ that is, ‘an intelligible form.’⁷⁶

For the cosmological account in the *Timaeus*, Timaeus uses both *eikos muthos*, ‘likely’ or ‘probable story,’ and *eikos logos*.⁷⁷ Here, Brisson has suggested that *eikos logos* signifies ‘a discourse which bears upon the copies of the intelligible forms, that is, upon sensible things. If this is the case, then *eikos muthos* signifies a myth which bears upon the copies of the intelligible forms, that is, upon sensible

⁷¹ Brisson 1998: 108-9; Morgan 2004: 156-60; Clay 2007: 229-34 on Plato’s other eschatological myths, the myth of Er and the Winged Soul.

⁷² See Morgan 2004: 187-91 for a detailed analysis of the development of the dialogue.

⁷³ See Smith 1986: 27 for an analysis of myth as a complement to philosophical argument; Brisson 1998: 75-85; Partenie 2014: 6-8 on myth as a means of persuasion.

⁷⁴ See Tarrant 1990: 23-31 particularly on myth as a persuasive tool in the *Phaedrus*.

⁷⁵ Tarrant 1990: 25.

⁷⁶ Tarrant 1990: 29; Nadaf in Brisson 1998: xxix-xxx.

⁷⁷ *Eikos muthos*: *Tim.* 29d2, 59c6, 68d2; *eikos logos*: *Tim.* 29c2, 30b7, 48d2, 53d5-6, 55d5, 56a1, 57d6, 68b7, 90e8. See Brisson 1998: 129-30; Brisson 2004: 28; Morgan 2004: 272-7; Brisson 2012b: 369-91; Grasso 2012: 342-67; Partenie 2014: 9-12; Bryan 2012: 175-190. See also Burnyeat 2009: 167-86 prefers to translate *eikos muthos* as ‘reasonable/rational myth’ describing the work of reason.

things.’ Brisson argues that the epistemological status (truth versus belief) of a discourse, either an explanation or a myth, depends on the ontological level (model versus image) of its subject so that Plato’s designation of the cosmological account of the *Timaeus*, as a *muthos*, is based on the epistemological status of the dialogue.⁷⁸

Contrary to discourses that deal with the sensible, discourses that deal with the intelligible attain truths, which are unchanging, constant, and invincible. Since the *Timaeus* speaks of the origin of the gods and of the generation of the universe, the dialogue has the characteristics of a myth, which cannot be acknowledged to be true or wrong by any witness.⁷⁹ And the discourse in the *Timaeus*, either called a *muthos* or a *logos*, is likely because its object is sensible, and, thus, only an image of reality. Regarding *eikos logos*, it indicates an explanation, a reasoning or an account that is supported by arguments, but is probable because of its object belonging to the sensible.⁸⁰

Plato acknowledges that he can speak of certain topics through myth, especially if they are connected with the soul or the remote past, unattainable by the senses and through intellect.⁸¹ Platonic myths dealing with such topics are ascribed to an anonymous source, which can only be falsified by those experiencing the events, such as Er in the myth of Er in *Republic* 10.⁸² In *Republic* 621b8-d3, Socrates makes a comparison between the myth of Er and himself: the myth provides knowledge of the fate of the soul, inaccessible to humans, which enables the soul to safely cross the river Lethe, while Socrates’ guidance convinces us that the soul is immortal and leads us to live a virtuous life here and hereafter.

⁷⁸ Brisson 2012b: 381.

⁷⁹ Brisson 2012b: 371-9 for a detailed analysis of *eikos muthos* in *Tim.* 28b2-29d3; 59c5-d3; 68c7-d7. See Bryan 2012: 176-7 on the emphasis on *muthos* rather than *eikos*; cf Vlastos 1965: 382.

⁸⁰ Brisson 2012b: 382-91 for a detailed analysis of *eikos logos* in the dialogue.

⁸¹ Brisson 2004: 26-7; Brisson 2007: 144; Clay 2007: 212.

⁸² Morgan 2004: 201-10 for a discussion of how Plato integrates the myth of Er into the dialogue.

The idea of the unfalsifiability of myth also occurs in the *Gorgias*. Here, after having completed the myth of the Judgement of Souls, Socrates prevents criticism of his use of a *muthos* in the following manner (*Gorg.* 527a5-8):⁸³

Τάχα δ' οὔν ταῦτα μῦθός σοι δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι ὥσπερ γραδὸς καὶ καταφρονεῖς αὐτῶν, καὶ οὐδέν γ' ἂν ἦν θαυμαστόν καταφρονεῖν τούτων, εἴ πῃ ζητοῦντες εἴχομεν αὐτῶν βελτίω καὶ ἀληθέστερα εὐρεῖν.

Now perhaps you think that these things are a *mythos*, like an old wives' tale, and you despise them. And such contempt would not be at all surprising if we could somehow search out and discover better and truer things.

In this passage, Socrates' approval of myth as an appropriate discourse is based on the view that it is not possible to get closer to truth in any other way, and that the myth of the Judgement of Souls shows the result of the previous argument in *Gorgias* 526d, in which Socrates urges his audience to seek the truth and obtain the reward, that it is unprovable that a life other than a virtuous one will be good to the people in the hereafter.

Another reason for Plato's interest in myths develops from his concern about the education of the majority of the people and from his intention of making philosophy accessible to them.⁸⁴ As Brisson states, he recognises the effectiveness of myths for the persuasion and education of those without philosophical training and those in whose souls the irrational part, more precisely the desiring part, is dominant.⁸⁵ Myth, in Plato's view, may aid the ordinary people in acquiring true opinion, which makes them obedient to the law, and in learning how to control their emotions (*Rep.* 522a).⁸⁶ It should be noted, however, that while the acquisition of true

⁸³ Trans. Morgan 2004: 190.

⁸⁴ Yunis 2007: 13; Partenie 2014: 2.

⁸⁵ Brisson 2004: 26-7; Brisson 2007: 144.

⁸⁶ Smith 1986: 20-34 for a detailed analysis of Plato's use of myths in the education of philosophers and non-philosophers.

opinion may be the final stage in the education of an ordinary person, it constitutes only part of the education of a philosopher.

Plato is aware that myths have a strong influence on the moral principles of the public. He generally deals with the ethical values exemplified by myths when he is concerned with the public interest, displaying a utilitarian approach to social issues.⁸⁷ This approach is particularly evident when he explains a subject by means of myths, emphasising their potential to inculcate moral values independent of their factuality. In *Republic* 414b-415d, he underlines the benefit of creating false myths, so-called 'noble lies' (γενναῖα ψεῦδη) for the sake of the state.⁸⁸ For example, in the dialogue Plato uses Hesiod's Ages of Man (*Op.* 109-201) and the traditional story of Cadmus and the warriors that arise from the dragons' teeth he has sown. The latter serves to teach the citizens of his ideal state that the state is their mother that gives them their identity as the sons of the state and brothers of each other; in this way, the myth serves a function in maintaining the order and safety of the state. Although Plato seems to contradict himself, given his overall critical attitude towards traditional myths, it is clear that practicalities take precedence when it comes to ruling the state, and, in this context, the myths are not harmful as long as they teach useful moral values and promote unity and solidarity.

Plato's ethical concern reflects the pedagogic principles of his ideal state in the *Republic*. There, he acknowledges the importance of education, since the values that are indispensable to being a good man, such as virtue, justice and wisdom, can be taught, but they must be taught in the right way and by the right people. The education of children in Plato's time was a private matter, dependent on the resources and ambitions of families and on available opportunities. In the *Republic*, Plato institutionalises education and puts it in the hands of the state. Within this context, it is proposed, the activities of the storytellers ought to be tightly controlled: any 'good story' (καλὸς μῦθος) may be allowed by the state for

⁸⁷ See also *Leg.* 716d on the private religious rituals.

⁸⁸ Schofield 2010: 138-63.

educational purposes, but false or ugly ones should be rejected. These ‘false stories’ (μῦθοι ψευδεῖς) are harmful to children, since they imbue impressionable young minds with incorrect ideas (*Rep.* 377b-c). They give distorted images of the natures of gods and heroes in the same way that a painter cannot paint things as they really are (*Rep.* 377d-e). Plato provides, as an example, the story of the dealings between Uranus, Kronos and Zeus in Hesiod’s *Theogony*. Such exemplars might lead to conflict between father and son and encourage a son to punish his father. Likewise stories of the gods scheming and battling against one another might lead the prospective guardians of the state to believe that internal competition at the highest level of power and responsibility is normal. Plato’s other concern is the potential negative effect of the ‘dual aspect’ of myths and words on the young. While it is conceded that, where a mythical story might seem objectionable, the poet’s intention might be allegorical, the young are incapable of understanding what is meant allegorically (ὑπόνοια) (*Rep.* 378a-e).

Although it is impossible to draw straightforward conclusions from these dialogues, regarding Plato’s view of allegorical interpretation, he certainly considers, particularly in the *Republic*, the myths told by poets to be dangerous for children, and notably those who are to be involved in the government of his ideal state in the future. Yet, he nowhere completely rejects the allegorical interpretation of poetry. From various dialogues, it emerges that Plato is very conscious that myths are interpretable beyond the surface level and that, in them, one may identify underlying meanings. However, the bottom line seems to be that their openness to interpretation makes them deceptive and, ultimately, unsuitable for reaching the absolute truth, which is the prerogative of dialectic.

In Socrates’ etymological decoding of names in the *Cratylus*, his criticism of the ambiguous character of name may be associated with his criticism of poetry in the *Republic*.⁸⁹ As Sedley observes, Plato does not deem etymology a reliable route

⁸⁹ Levin 2001: 127-67; Van den Berg 2012: 46-7; Sedley 2013: 1-16 for a detailed outline of the dialogue.

for attaining the truth, but he does believe that it provides an adequate basis for good philosophical method, and that it can retrieve the beliefs of the ancestors who assigned names to entities, and these name givers had a superior position of understanding of the world due to their simple, brave, modest and righteous lifestyle.⁹⁰ However, this does not guarantee that the beliefs of the name givers are true. In the *Cratylus*, Socrates demonstrates that the original names have been corrupted due to sound shifts or morphological changes over time so that it takes an expert to understand the messages intended by their coiner, who is ‘the rarest of the artisans among people’ (τῶν δημιουργῶν σπανιώτατος ἐν ἀνθρώποις, *Crat.* 389a).⁹¹ It is implied that this special expertise is beyond the expertise of poets, whose misleading use of *onomata* and *rhemata* Socrates explicitly criticises in *Republic* 601a-b.⁹² The *Cratylus* also implies that names, with negative descriptive content, may have a harmful effect on people’s emotions.⁹³ This negative aspect of names is unwelcome to Plato’s educational programme for the majority of the citizens of his ideal state in the *Republic*, which aims at teaching them how to control their emotions through myth. It is thus understandable that Socrates criticises the belief that Hades, Ἅιδης, is derived from ‘unseen’ (ἀϊδής),⁹⁴ and that people’s fear of this appellation lead them to call the god Pluto, Πλούτων, meaning ‘wealth-giver,’ which inspires positive sentiments (*Crat.* 403a-404b).⁹⁵ Rejecting its traditional etymology, Socrates claims that Hades is derived from ‘knowing,’ in particular ‘all good things’ (πάντα τὰ καλὰ εἰδέναι, *Crat.* 404b1-3). Likewise, the name Apollo, Ἀπόλλων, which might also frighten people because of its conventional association

⁹⁰ *Leg.* 679a-e; Sedley 1998: 143-4; Boys-Stones 2001: 13-14 for a discussion of the virtue of the early men in Plato; Sedley 2003: 30-4. See also Van den Berg 2008: 13-17 on the seriousness of the etymological section of the dialogue.

⁹¹ Sedley 1998: 147-8; Sedley 2003: 29; Sedley 2013: 9. See also Sedley 2003:41-50 for a discussion about ‘technicity’ of etymology and 2003: 41 n. 30 for examples of words etymologised in Plato’s other dialogues.

⁹² See Levin 2001: 133.

⁹³ Levin 2001: 135.

⁹⁴ *Il.* 5.844-5 for Homer’s treatment of Hades as the unseen; cf. *Phaedo* 80d-81a for Socrates’ endorsement of derivation of Hades from ἀϊδής; see also Levin 2001: 61 n.41.

⁹⁵ Levin 2001: 53; Ademollo 2011: 193-5.

with ἀπόλλυμι, 'to destroy, perish,' is re-etymologised to emphasise the positive power of the god in the area of music, prophecy, medicine and archery (*Crat.* 404e-406b).⁹⁶

The discussion in *Cratylus* is conducted in response to Cratylus' view that anyone who knows the nature of a name also knows the thing itself. As an ardent partisan of the flux theory (*Crat.* 436e2-437a1), Cratylus believes that the study of names is the privileged route to knowledge because their etymologies reflect a Heraclitean worldview, according to which everything is in motion and flux (*Crat.* 411a-421c). However, Socrates proves that some names indicate, not motion, but rest, and thus refutes Cratylus' theory (*Crat.* 437c). In *Cratylus* 438a, the discussion culminates in Socrates' overarching question of what the source of knowledge is. In his final argument, after having implicitly associated the Forms with objects, Socrates concludes that things should be studied and learned for themselves rather than analysed through their names (*Crat.* 439b-440c). Names, Socrates concedes, are dialectical tools (*Crat.* 388b-390e), and because dialectic pertains to the Forms, names refer to them; however, his numerous etymologies of names show that current language is 'not the product of dialectical considerations, but reflects a Heraclitean worldview based on the perception of the material world,' not on intellectual understanding of the Forms.⁹⁷

Plato's Socrates sometimes dismisses those who analyse the verses of the poets. Yet, he himself is never reluctant to interpret them if this suits his purpose, and he contends with the experts as a fellow expert, a case in point is *Protagoras* 338e-340d, in which, in response to Protagoras, Socrates shows the inconsistency of some verses of Simonides, pointing out that 'being good' (ἔμμεναι ἐσθλόν) and 'becoming good' (ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι) are not the same. In another dialogue, the

⁹⁶ See Aesch. *Ag.* 1080-2, 1085-6; Eur. *Or.* 119-21, 954-6. For Socrates' emphasis on the harmful effect of names, see also *Crat.* 404c-d, discussing the etymology of Persephone. Levin 2001: 55, 60-62; Ademollo 2011: 175-6. *De E Apud Delphos* 393b10-c1 for Plutarch's identification of Apollo with the monad; see also Dillon 2005: 101 n.41.

⁹⁷ Van den Berg 2008: 19-20 for a summary of significant aspects of the dialogue.

Hippias Minor (364e-365d), Socrates and Hippias argue about the characters of Achilles and Odysseus, described by Homer as honest and simple, and cunning and unreliable, respectively (*Il.* 9.308ff). Socrates, here, concludes that the interpretation of poetry is a misleading endeavour, because it is not based on facts. It is pointless to look for truth in poetry, since the utterances of the poets are easily proven to be contradictory and refuted through dialectic. In *Phaedrus* 229d-e, where he gives a rational explanation of the 'mythical narrative' (μυθολόγημα) of Boreas and Oreithyia, Socrates ironically comments that he does not have time for that sort of laborious work, and is not ingenious enough to interpret myths.

Despite his criticism of poetry in the *Republic*, Plato in the *Ion* and the *Phaedrus* constructs a positive relationship between philosophy, on the one hand, and divination, mystery and poetry, on the other, through his theory of poetic inspiration.⁹⁸ We receive a first glimpse of the relationship between poetic inspiration and divination in the *Apology*,⁹⁹ in which the essence of Plato's approach to poetry can already be found in the well-known passage where Socrates reports on his pursuits of the 'riddle' of the Delphic god (τί ποτε αἰνίττεται, *Apol.* 21b): what the oracle might have meant by saying that Socrates is the wisest of all.¹⁰⁰ In order to find this out, Socrates questions poets, including 'tragedians and composers of dithyrambs and others' (τοὺς ποιητὰς τοὺς τε τῶν τραγωδιῶν καὶ τοὺς τῶν διθυράμβων καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους, *Apol.* 22b-c). He concludes that the poets compose their poems, not from wisdom, but rather from natural disposition – what we would call genius (*Apol.* 22c). When poets are creating their poems, they are inspired or possessed by a god, or are in ecstasy as if they were prophets and seers. If this is the case, there should be a difference between the surface and the deep meaning of poems, and they need to be deciphered like prophecies that are also enigmatically coded. In addition, Socrates may be implying that the works of the poets, just as

⁹⁸ *Ion*; *Apol.* 22a-c; *Meno* 99c-e; *Phaedrus* 245; *Leg.* 719c-d; Tate 1929a: 147-53; Murray 1996: 6-12.

⁹⁹ Halliwell 2011: 160-3.

¹⁰⁰ Tate 1929a: 148; Murray 1996: 10; Barfield 2011: 11-12; Halliwell 2011: 159-64.

oracles, contain profound truths, as he says that the poets tell ‘many beautiful things’ (πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ).¹⁰¹ In the *Apology*, however, the source of poetic inspiration remains unclear (φύσει τινί), and Socrates does not specify whether it is a kind of intuition or rather a form of divination. Socrates concludes that poets are no better than the statesmen he also questioned, in the sense that neither the statesmen nor the poets know what they do not know. Thus, he gives a new meaning to the well-known inscription engraved on the temple of Apollo, the god of the oracle at Delphi and the god of poetry, whose words ‘know yourself’ may in first instance have meant ‘only the god is wise and human wisdom is of little or even no value’ (*Apol.* 23a). As Plato’s Socrates takes it, the only way to learn the truth is self-consciousness, which is the starting point of knowing what is not known. Since Socrates is fully equipped with self-consciousness and awareness of his lack of knowledge, this is what makes him the wisest of all.

In the *Ion*, Socrates concludes that the rhapsode Ion talks about Homer successfully, not because of his ability, but because he is moved by a ‘divine power’ originating from the Muses (θεία δύναμις, *Ion* 533d-534e). At the beginning of that dialogue, Socrates posits that a ‘good rhapsode’ (ἀγαθὸς ῥαψωδός, *Ion* 530c) ought to, not only know Homer’s words, but also understand his intention (ἐρμηνέα δεῖ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τῆς διανοίας γίνεσθαι, *Ion* 530d). Here, a distinction is made between rhapsodic recitation, in which Ion excels, and the interpretation of poets’ thoughts; the former is performed by Ion. Rational understanding or knowledge are not necessary for the performance of poetry,¹⁰² but they are required if one is to competently talk about Homer or any other poet. The irrationality of the rhapsode’s mode of operation mirrors that of the poet, since it is through being possessed by the Muses that the poets compose their poems, ‘saying many beautiful things’ (πολλὰ λέγοντες καὶ καλὰ, *Ion* 534b). As in the *Apology*, Plato does not go into detail

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Meno* 99b-d; *Ion* 530d, 541e-542a; *Rep.* 599b. In *Prot.* 339b, Socrates says that the poet, Simonides, does not fall into contradiction if he correctly composes his poems.

¹⁰² See also Xenophon *Symp.* 3.5-6; Halliwell 2011: 167.

about these ‘many beautiful things’ but since the emphasis in the *Ion* is on the fact that their source are the Muses, they must be beautiful because they are inspired by a higher order. It easily follows, then, that these beautiful poems contain profound truths (*Ion* 534e), instilled into the poets who compose them, not through knowledge, but through divine inspiration. Thus, the creative process of the poets is reduced to a passive and irrational act, over which they have no control. They are the ‘messengers of the gods’ (ἑρμηνῆς τῶν θεῶν, *Ion* 534e4-5). In this sequence of divine inspiration, the rhapsodes represent the second link, mediating between the poets and the audience.

Socrates rejects the idea that poetry (ποιητική) is a craft (τέχνη), in the sense that the poets are not self-consciously aware of what they are talking about. With this, as Murray observes, Plato, in essence, reverses the early Greek belief that the sacred source of poetry warrants its truth.¹⁰³ The outcome of Plato’s dialogue, at first glance, depreciates the importance of poets and poetry. Yet, on further reflection, the idea that poets are, through inspiration and unconsciously, ‘messengers’ of a divine truth creates an important Platonic starting-point for Neoplatonic allegorists, as we shall see, and allows them to regard poets such as Homer as ‘theologians.’ Moreover, Plato’s insistence in the *Ion* that a good, ‘inspired’ rhapsode can know the underlying thought or real intention (διάνοια) of the poet, appears to provide a Platonic licence to the Neoplatonists’ interpretative activities.

Divine inspiration is also a central concern in the *Phaedrus*. In this dialogue, Socrates posits that there are two types of poets (245a): one is inspired by the Muses, the other composes his poems ‘without madness from the Muses’ (ἄνευ μανίας Μουσῶν) but rather relies ‘on art’ (ἐκ τέχνης). Only divine inspiration leads to good and useful poetry, whereas the poet who depends on his skill is condemned to be forgotten. In Socrates’ classification of the first incarnation of the soul, the

¹⁰³ *Ion* 534d; Murray 1996: 10; Murray 2006: 43-7.

lives of the poets and some other imitative artists are ranked in a worthy sixth position (*Phaedrus* 248d-e), be it well below the philosophers, who lead them to the highest of all lives, devoted to ‘wisdom, the beautiful, the Muses or love’ (φιλοσόφου ἢ φιλοκάλου ἢ μουσικοῦ τινος καὶ ἐρωτικοῦ) – concerns which, it appears, are essentially one and the same. The poet and the philosopher seem to share the same kind of divine inspiration, which takes the form of ecstasy for the poet, and contemplation for the philosopher, giving them access to the divine truth. However, while philosophers have the ability to rationalise what they have learned through inspired contemplation using dialectic, poets are unable to go beyond the sensible world due to ‘forgetfulness and baseness’ (λήθης τε καὶ κακίας, *Phaedrus* 248c7). This remark seems to pave the way for the successors of Plato, particularly the Neoplatonists, to develop the idea that only philosophers are capable of serious hermeneutics and able to reveal the profound truths hidden in poetic texts. Even so, as we shall see, they, on other points, move quite far away from the ideas of the *Phaedrus* and the *Ion* – most importantly, in their assumption that Homer composed his poems to be taken allegorically, which is in direct opposition to the Platonic idea that the poets do not know what they are talking about.

1.3. The Stoics and Allegory

In this section, before delving into the Stoics’ treatment of allegorical interpretation,¹⁰⁴ I would like to point to a doxographic report of Aetius on Xenocrates of Chalcedon (c. 396/395-314/313 B.C.E.), one of Plato’s successors and head of the Academy after Speusippus. Xenocrates had a significant influence on the mainstream of later Platonism, as Dillon states.¹⁰⁵ In accordance with Aetius’ report,

¹⁰⁴ See Brisson 2004: 41-55; Most 2010: 26-38 for detailed discussions on the Stoics’ treatment of allegorical interpretation.

¹⁰⁵ Dillon 2005: 154-5; in his paper, ‘Xenocrates on Plato, Pythagoras and the Poets,’ presented in a workshop in Durham University (*Exegesis and Hermeneutics in Platonism*, 26th May 2016), Dillon also discusses Xenocrates’ philosophical treatment of Homer, Hesiod and Orpheus along with the beginning of a long tradition with the exegesis of the *Timaeus* by Xenocrates and Crantor in the Old

Xenocrates is also supposed to have had influence on the Stoics' allegorical practices, who handed down the allegorisation of the Olympian gods, not only as being the principal elements, but as being the 'divine powers' (θείας τινὰς δυνάμεις) to the Stoics (F 15 Heinze = 213 IP = Aetius *Placita* 1.7.30 p. 304 Diels).¹⁰⁶ This kind of allegorisation is found in a lost work of Chrysippus (280-207 B.C.E.). In his work (*SVF* 2.1021 = D.L. 7.147), the god is called different names according to its various powers: the name Zeus (Ζῆνα) as the cause of life (ζῆν), since it pervades all life; the name Athena signifies the extension of the ruling part of the divinity to the aether, the name Hera due to its extension to the air; he is called Hephaestus because he extends to the creative fire; Poseidon, because it extends to the sea, and Demeter, because it extends to the earth.¹⁰⁷

Of Chrysippus' predecessors, Zeno of Citium (335-263 B.C.E.), the founder of Stoicism, practised 'physical allegory' and identified the gods with elements of nature, as he connected Hera with the air, Zeus with the aether, Poseidon with the sea, and Hephaistos with fire (*SVF* 1.169 = Minicius Felix *Octavius* 19.10).¹⁰⁸ Cleanthes (311-232 B.C.E.), the disciple and successor of Zeno, continued to reconcile the doctrine of Stoicism with the traditions developing from Orpheus and Musaeus and the works of Homer, Hesiod, Euripides and other poets (*SVF* 1.539 = Philodemus *On Piety* cp. 13), following Zeno's identification of the traditional gods with natural phenomena, as he described Zeus as the supreme aether (*SVF* 1.535-37) and Apollo as the Sun (*SVF* 1.540-42 = Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1.17.8, 36, 31; *SVF* 1.543 = Photius s.v.).

Academy, which I have mentioned in various places in the thesis. I am grateful to Prof. J. M. Dillon for sharing this paper.

¹⁰⁶ Parente 1982: 406.

¹⁰⁷ Struck 2004: 118-23 for Chrysippus' reading of Hesiod and his work on Homer *SVF* 3.769-77.

¹⁰⁸ Zeno is also said to have written five books of *Homeric Problems* (*SVF* 1.41 = D.L. 7.4) and commentaries on the *Iliad*, *Odyssey* and the *Margites*, the last of which is commonly attributed to Homer in antiquity (*SVF* 1.274 = D.L. 7.4). Zeno also expounded on Hesiod's *Theogony* (*SVF* 1.167 = Cicero *De Natura Deorum* 1.36).

In the Hellenistic period, when philosophy was increasingly practised within the context of competing schools, theoretical polarisation made what the Academics and Peripatetics disregarded appear attractive to their rivals.¹⁰⁹ Although there are no systematic attempts at allegoresis among the Epicureans, the Stoics embraced it with open arms. The purpose of their interest in Homer and Hesiod, and in the allegorical interpretation is not defensive but seems to legitimise their position in Greek culture and to use the poets in order to support their own tenets.¹¹⁰ The first generation of the Stoics were keen to adapt the gods of traditional religion to their doctrines through etymology, which suited their materialistic perception of the world. Averse to the idea of anthropomorphic gods, the Stoics hold the *logos* or *pneuma* as operating and controlling the universe and Porphyry refers to this materialistic cosmological and ontological doctrine of the Stoics in *De Antro* (11 p.12.27-p. 14.1).

As only fragments of the works of the Stoics have survived, one of our sources for their allegorical pursuits is Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*. This work features three protagonists who speak on behalf of the three main philosophical schools: C. Aurelius Cotta represents the Academy, C. Velleius is an Epicurean, and Q. Lucilius Balbus is a Stoic. In the second book, which deals with cosmology, astronomy, zoology, anatomy, and physiology, Balbus' explanation of Stoic theology provides valuable insights into how the Stoics use the names and functions of the mythical gods to explain cultural values and human behaviour in a similar way to modern anthropologists. He proffers four cultural reasons for the origin of gods. Firstly, he claims that, because people believe that any useful thing originates from the benevolence of the gods, they identify everything that is beneficial to them with a deity – for example, Ceres represents wheat, Bacchus wine (2.60). Secondly, humans also attribute drives and emotions to the gods, identifying, for example,

¹⁰⁹ Most 2010: 27-9.

¹¹⁰ Lamberton 1986: 13-16; Long 1996: 58-84 for a detailed discussion of the Stoics' treatment of Homer; Boys-Stones 2001: 32; Jedan 2009: 24.

Cupido (Desire) and Voluptas (Pleasure) as gods, along with immaterial values such as Fides (Fidelity), Mens (Spirit), and Virtus (Virtue) (2.61). Thirdly, certain individuals who had been of great service to mankind are placed in heaven, such as Hercules, Castor and Pollux, Aesculapius, Liber and Romulus-Quirinus (2.62). Finally, a great number of the gods, in fact, explain natural principles, used for stories in human form by the poets who fill up our lives with every sort of superstition (2.63).

For the Stoics, one of the ways of understanding the nature of gods is to analyse their names; in this sense, mythology provides the definition of the gods' names in their materialistic system. A Stoic examines the gods, not as the parts or powers of nature, but as the expression of the divine reason (νοῦς) in these parts and powers of nature. Divine names, myths and titles testify to how the ancients perceived nature, while etymology enables the Stoics to rediscover old beliefs. Names are deemed to be the product of nature; that is to say, like Socrates in the *Cratylus*, the Stoics believe that a name-giver forms names reflecting their objects. The Stoics etymologise names to gain the true nature of the objects identified by them.¹¹¹ Their focus on etymology is, in fact, based on their 'adoption of a theory of prephilosophical wisdom,' a theory which is derived from the idea that humankind of the prephilosophical period (*fortunata tempora*, Seneca *Epistle* 90.36) had a privileged and better insight into the world than we do.¹¹²

The Stoics emphasise that the purpose of poetry is, not merely to provide psychological relief or to amuse, but to teach. In their opinion, only the wise man is able to become a poet (*SVF* 3.654-5 = *Stob. Anth.* 2.7.5b12). They in essence adopt the traditional position with respect to the appreciation of poetry, but do so from a well-examined philosophical perspective. On the basis of the idea that primitive men lived well in the prephilosophical period,¹¹³ the Stoics try to recover the primitive

¹¹¹ Van den Berg 2008: 33-6 for a discussion of the Stoics' attitude towards etymology.

¹¹² Boys-Stones 2001: 3-27 for a summary of the beginning of the theory starting from Cynics, Plato to Dicaearchus of Messene and a discussion about Seneca *Epistles* 90.

¹¹³ The early Stoics believe that there was no internal force to lead them in their natural state to act badly; on the other hand Posidonius accepts both the existence of external and internal forces, that

wisdom through the elucidation of myths, which are supposed to carry traces of this wisdom. The originality of myths had been corrupted in time and the Stoics accuse the poets of filling up human life with superstition, as stated in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* 2.63 above, but nevertheless they think that the nature of god may be embedded in myths (2.71).

In this context, Cornutus, a Stoic philosopher of the first century C.E., flourishing in the period of Nero, is a significant figure in the history of allegorical interpretation, whom Porphyry mentions as a teacher of the allegorical method of interpreting Greek mysteries in his *Against the Christians* (F 39.30-5 Harnack = Eus. *Hist. Ecc.* 6.19.5-8).¹¹⁴ Like the early Stoics, Cornutus agrees that there were intellectually superior people, who had the capability of understanding the true nature of the universe, in the early stage of human history. Furthermore, he thinks that they self-consciously transmitted their philosophy encoded in allegorical form, using the language of symbols and enigmas, and that the poets embellished these allegorical narratives when they took them as the basis of their stories. In his view, the elements of ancient thoughts can be discovered within the poetic tradition by those who would know how to separate these original allegories embedded in myths. In his *Compendium of Greek Theology*, a didactic work, Cornutus provides the necessary material and method for his students, by which they will understand the early traditions about gods, their cults, etc., and says that the complete account of these things will lead them to piety, not superstitions (75.17-76.16).¹¹⁵ On the basis of the etymological analysis of divine names, starting from Prometheus to Hades, his methodology is to evaluate traditional divinities within the context of all the available sources including popular beliefs, cult practices and epithets, and the visual arts. Cornutus' methodology bears similarity to Porphyry's methodology in *De*

is to say that there are rational and irrational forces controlling human inclination, see Boys-Stones 2001: 44-9 for a detailed discussion on this subject.

¹¹⁴ Tate 1929b: 41-5; Most 1989: 2014-65; Long 1996: 71-4; Boys-Stones 2001: 49-59; Struck 2004: 143-151 for Cornutus.

¹¹⁵ On the originality of Cornutus' work, see Boys-Stones 2001: 58 n. 18; Struck 2004: 143 n. 2.

Antro, in which he examines symbols and images of Homer within almost all aspects.¹¹⁶

The Stoic Crates of Mallos and his pupil, Herodicus of Babylon, are also influential figures in developing the Neoplatonic tradition of allegorical commentary. They are important in raising the status of Homer and Hesiod as divinely-inspired, and thus to the status of theological authorities. Crates and Herodicus strongly influenced the allegorical exegeses of Philo and Proclus, and also Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems*, where their views are reported in a number of Heraclitus' ethical and particularly physical interpretations.¹¹⁷ Crates, who was active as a philosopher, literary critic, and grammarian of the School of Pergamum in the second century B.C.E.,¹¹⁸ was the first advocate of fully pervasive metaphysical and cosmological allegory, arguing that Homer's intention was, in fact, to convey scientific or philosophical truths in the guise of poetry.¹¹⁹ For example, in his *Rectification of Homer*, Crates claims that Homer's description of Agamemnon's shield in *Iliad* 11.32-37 is a description of the world.¹²⁰ In accordance with Heraclitus' report in *Homeric Problem* 27, Crates ventured that when 'Zeus' hurls Hephaistos down from Olympos' (*Il.* 1.590-595), the intention is to measure the universe, since Helios and Hephaistos moved from the same point with the same speed and finished at the same time in the same place (an interpretation which the more restrained Heraclitus dismissed as 'a mere fantasy').¹²¹

While these and other Stoics specialised in the metaphysical and cosmological interpretation of traditional myths, others considered Homer a pioneer in the fields of history and geography. Strabo (c. 63 B.C.E.- c. 24 C.E.) especially argues that Homer's wisdom and authority extend to geographical

¹¹⁶ Struck 2010: 60-1.

¹¹⁷ Dillon 1997: 131.

¹¹⁸ See Wilson 2013: 191-2 for a brief account of Crates' life.

¹¹⁹ Brisson 2004: 47.

¹²⁰ Eustathius *ad Il.* 11.33, 828.39ff.

¹²¹ Trans. Russell 2005: 52-3.

subjects (*Geographica* 1.1-2). In *De Antro*, Porphyry maintains the fundamental structure of the Stoics' exegetical practices in the sense that he applies astrological allegoresis to the double gates of the Homeric cave, and he geographically proves its existence in Ithaca, as we will see later in this chapter.

1.4. Allegorical Interpretation in Later Platonism

During the first centuries of the Roman Empire, a new type of interpretation of myths developed.¹²² Platonic philosophers, particularly those strongly influenced by contemporary Pythagorean thought, became interested in analysing myths in terms of symbol and enigma and in searching for their hidden meanings. These philosophers no longer intended to forge a link between the gods and heroes of myth and the physical elements of a philosophical system, but rather to attain higher, abstract truths through interpreting myths. Thus, it can be concluded that their primary interest is no longer the physical and historical type of exegesis but metaphysical and mystical allegory.

As Lamberton observes, one of the important developments in the reading of Homer is the use of the Platonic myths to explain Homer's myths in the Platonic circle, and the idea is that their myths had similar structures in terms of meaning.¹²³ Numenius' exegesis of the myth of Er seems to develop from his commentary on the cave of nymphs of *Odyssey* 13.102-12, as Proclus connects them with each other in his commentary on the *Republic*. This intertextuality of Homer and Plato may also show a common exegetical treatment of their texts established by the interpreters of Homer, that is, attempting to explain a series of questions and problems about ambiguous passages.¹²⁴ Allegoresis, which, as we have seen, has its roots half a millennium earlier, gains fresh significance as a tool to connect the sensible world with higher truths, and Neoplatonic allegorical interpretation treats the texts of the

¹²² Brisson 2004: 56-63.

¹²³ Lamberton 1986: 37.

¹²⁴ Lamberton 1986: 62-4 n. 66; Dillon 1996: 364; see also Brisson 2004: 73.

poets, notably Homer, as worthy of philosophical reflection in themselves and in step with the dialogues of Plato at a fundamental, symbolical level.

1.4.1. Neopythagoreans' Influence on Neoplatonism

Although Neoplatonism is primarily a continuation of Plato's doctrines, it inevitably embraces numerous concepts and concerns from other philosophical schools, most importantly the Pythagoreans. Rappe says, 'Neoplatonism is an exegetical tradition, it remains a school that defines itself through its affinity to or even appropriation of privileged texts, that is, the dialogues of Plato.'¹²⁵ The Neoplatonists also seem to rely on some external authorities such as Pythagoras, Orpheus and Homer so as to justify equivocalities in the Platonic dialogues. Interpretative or exegetical tradition, therefore, becomes an important ally of dialectic and logic in the Neoplatonic mission to save the human soul.

The circumstances are opaque, but it seems that, in the late Hellenistic and Imperial period, Pythagoreanism experienced a revival. This is evident, for example from Cicero's comments at the beginning of his translation of Plato's *Timaeus*,¹²⁶ from the essays on Pythagoras and 'the Pythagorean way of life' composed by Diogenes Laertius, and from Porphyry and Iamblichus a number of centuries later, when Pythagoreanism was still going strong. From these works, Pythagoras emerges as a super-human figure: he is said to have had knowledge of the past through reincarnation, the ability to predict and influence future events, to bilocate, heal illnesses and dispel plagues, and so on (D.L. 8.11-12; Porph. *VP* 29; Iamb. *VP* 28, 92, 135, 140). Adopting 'the Pythagorean way of life' for all practical purposes meant joining a mystery cult, and this should be kept in mind in assessing the gradual absorption of Pythagorean ideas, approaches, imagery and practices into Platonism during the Empire.

¹²⁵ Rappe 2000: 119.

¹²⁶ Dillon 1996: 115-19.

One of the first Platonists to fully embrace Pythagoras was, it seems, Eudorus of Alexandria, who lived in the first century B.C.E. In his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Eudorus attempted to restate Platonic philosophy in Pythagorean terms, according to Plutarch's testimony in his treatise *On the Generation of the Soul in the Timaeus*. Plutarch may also have drawn on Eudorus as a main source for the ideas of early Academics such as Xenocrates and Crantor.¹²⁷

O'Meara observes that Pythagoreanism was very effective in the second and third centuries C.E. and that the deep influences of Pythagorean symbolism are found in Plotinus' *Enneads*.¹²⁸ As we shall see, two Neopythagorean philosophers, Cronius and Numenius, are the main sources of Porphyry in *On the Cave of the Nymphs*. The overall influence of these two Neopythagoreans on Plotinus and his school is found in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, where Porphyry reports that some contemporaries accused Plotinus of simply plagiarising Numenius and Cronius' ideas (*VPlot.* 17.1-2),¹²⁹ and that Longinus says that Plotinus sets out the principles of Pythagoras and Plato more clearly than Numenius, Cronius, Moderatus and Thrasyllus (*VPlot.* 20.74 and 21.5-9). The works of Numenius and Cronius were read in school seminars (*VPlot.* 14.12). Amelius, the most devoted disciple of Plotinus, collected and copied Numenius' works, learned most of them by heart (*VPlot.* 3.44-45), and wrote a treatise entitled *The Difference between the Doctrines of Plotinus and Numenius*, which he dedicated to Porphyry (*VPlot.* 17.5-6).

Another Neopythagorean influence at the birth of Neoplatonism is Ammonius Saccas, with whom Plotinus studied for more than a decade (*VPlot.* 3). Ammonius, like Socrates many centuries before him, wrote nothing and was not a member of any philosophical school. Following Pythagorean tradition, as Porphyry writes, Plotinus pledged not to reveal Ammonius' teachings, but despite the secrecy agreement, he drew on them in his lectures (*VPlot.* 14.16). However, we do not have

¹²⁷ Dillon 1996: 114-83; Brisson 2004: 57.

¹²⁸ O'Meara 1990.

¹²⁹ MacKenna 1991: cxiv n. 17 (Dillon's note on the content of the accusation).

any explicit information on Ammonius' specific teachings or secrets he shared with his close students.¹³⁰

Although the influence of Pythagoreanism on Platonism and Neoplatonism has many aspects, symbolism is clearly of essential importance to Pythagoras' oral doctrines. Since the Pythagoreans had trouble with local authorities, they used symbols as a secret language or code in order to identify each other. Symbolic language and gestures were used as proofs of identity or passwords for entry and for accessing different levels of Pythagorean wisdom. Iamblichus refers to these symbols as a sort of secret language or code (*VP* 227); they connected the group members with each other and separated them from the outside world.

A common feature of allegorical interpretation and the Pythagorean tradition is the fact that both see symbols and enigmas as gateways to wisdom.¹³¹ Ancient witnesses frequently associate allegory with Pythagoreanism. For example, Anaximander emerges as a significant interpreter of Pythagorean thought and as an exegete of the Homeric epics; the grammarian Tryphon (1st century C.E.) in his extant work explains enigmas and discusses Pythagorean symbols (*RhGr* 3.193f). He gives examples from Pythagoras, Homer and Hesiod without distinguishing between Pythagoras and the poets.¹³² Although the relationship between Pythagoreanism and literary criticism is not quite clear, it is unsurprising even on the basis of our limited evidence that the Neoplatonists' interests in allegorical interpretation go hand in hand with an interest in Pythagoreanism.

The Platonists follow two modes of their exegetical practices during the first centuries of the Empire. As mentioned earlier, Plato's *Phaedrus* leads them, through the concept of *enthousiasmos*, to establish a relationship between philosophy, on the one hand, and divination, mysteries and poetry, on the other. In the Pythagorean-Platonist context, they are fundamentally comparable, in the sense

¹³⁰ Dillon 1996: 380-3.

¹³¹ Struck 2004: 102-3.

¹³² Lamberton 1986: 31-43 for the Pythagoreans' interpretation of Homer.

that the same truth is revealed by the god to poets such as Homer and Hesiod, and to philosophers such as Pythagoras and Plato. However, the truth is conveyed in a coded form that prevents it from becoming publicly known and makes it exclusive to the very few persons who are competent enough to think like gods.¹³³ The Neoplatonists also continue the Stoic beliefs that myth is a treasure-house of profound truth and that the language of poetry has the power to reveal truths which cannot be expressed in ordinary speech.¹³⁴ Similar to the Stoics, they assume that every word may have a potential to reveal a deep understanding.

Two Pythagoreans, Cronius and Numenius, are of particular relevance to *On the Cave of the Nymphs* and its approach, as it is clear from Porphyry's quotations and references to them that their works were essential sources for his treatise. Cronius remains a very shadowy figure; we are better informed on Numenius, partly through Porphyry's own work. Numenius is thought to have lived in Apamea in Syria in the late second century C.E. Unfortunately his works are lost, except for sixty fragments mainly preserved in Eusebius and also in a dozen other authors, pagan and Christian, from Clement of Alexandria (C.E. 150-215) to Johannes Lydus (sixth century C.E.).

In his *On the Good*, Numenius associated Plato's and Pythagoras' doctrines with Indian, Jewish, Persian, and Egyptian wisdom.¹³⁵ In *On the Cave of the Nymphs* 10, Porphyry reports on Numenius linking a line from *Genesis* (1:2) with Egyptian iconography, Heraclitus and Homer to explain the association of the soul's descent into genesis with wetness.¹³⁶ Numenius' multidirectional approach in this example is quite compatible with Porphyry's 'polytheistic' (unity-in-plurality) approach, in the

¹³³ Hermann 2004.

¹³⁴ Struck 2010: 57-9.

¹³⁵ Numenius F 1a DP; Eus. *PE* 9.7.1; see also Brisson 2004: 71-4 and the detailed discussion of Numenius in Lambertson 1986: 54-77.

¹³⁶ Numenius F 39 DP; Heraclitus 22 B 62 and 77 DK; *Od.* 6.201.

sense that he claims that various religious and cultural traditions can lead us to the divine, and consequently to the salvation of the soul.¹³⁷

Furthermore, Numenius proposed allegorical readings of Plato. For example, he explained the battle between Atlantis and Athens in the *Timaeus* (23d ff.) as the battle of the irrational souls, who are under the process of genesis, and are the followers of Poseidon or 'water,' and rational or noble souls under the guidance of Athena or 'intellect.'¹³⁸ Numenius allegedly also wrote a work called *On Plato's Secrets* (Περὶ τῶν παρὰ Πλατῶνι ἀπορρήτων), which could have associated Plato with Pythagoras and held that Plato presented his 'true' doctrines only to a small inner circle of followers.¹³⁹ Moreover, he seems to have commented on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in order to show agreement between Homer and Plato, notably regarding the journey of the soul after death. To that purpose, he compared the cave of the nymphs in the *Odyssey* with the Platonic Cave in the *Republic*.¹⁴⁰ The general meaning of the preserved reports conforms to what is on view in Porphyry's *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, namely the collocation of Plato, Pythagoras, mystery cults and Homer and with the assumption that all are in fundamental agreement.

Numenius is a pivotal figure in the development of the idea that Homer, Pythagoras and Plato all communicated the same fundamental, unchangeable, deeper, 'divine' truth, which could also be found among the Egyptians, the Persians and the Jews, and was accessible only to the initiated, as in the mysteries. All of this indicates that Numenius was a pioneer of mystical allegory, a type of philosophical exegesis which we can trace more clearly in a different manifestation, namely in the development of allegorical exegesis of the Hebrew scriptures in Alexandria in late Hellenistic and early Imperial times. For example, Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.E.-50

¹³⁷ Clark 2007: 137; Addey 2014a: 49.

¹³⁸ Numenius F 37 DP; Procl. *In Tim.* 1.76.30-77.23; see Chapter 3.1.1 for Numenius F 30 DP and Chapter 3.1.2 for a discussion of his commentary on the story of Atlantis in comparison with Porphyry's.

¹³⁹ Numenius F 23 DP; Eus. *PE* 13.4.4-5.2.

¹⁴⁰ F 35 DP; Procl. *In Remp.* 2.128.26-130.14, 131.8-14 Kroll.

C.E.) in his *On Providence* (2.40-1) associates myths with mysteries, and considers Plato the mouthpiece of Pythagoras.¹⁴¹

1.5. Porphyry and *On the Cave of Nymphs*

In contrast to his master, Plotinus, who did not write any distinct work on poetry, Porphyry actively engaged in literary criticism with Longinus in Athens before he joined the circle of Plotinus in Rome. *On the Cave of the Nymphs* is not Porphyry's first work on the interpretation of Homer. We have also his *Homeric Questions*, which follows a more strictly philological approach and seems to have been composed before he went to Rome. The *Questions* fit into the genre of works that defend Homer against critics. It does not display Neoplatonic philosophical and mystical ideas but evaluates passages in Homer following the principle of Aristarchus of Samothrace (220-143 B.C.E.): 'clarifying Homer from Homer' (Ὅμηρον ἐξ Ὁμήρου σαφηνίζειν).

Porphyry considers the *Questions* as a preparatory exercise for his prospective task, greater treatises on Homer, which are deferred to a time appropriate to their examination (1.22-28). This announcement may be related to a kind of struggle he engages in *De Antro*,¹⁴² and prompts the question to mind to which period of Porphyry's career we may assign *De Antro*. Lamberton argues that Porphyry's different attitudes towards Homer's texts, his philological interpretation in the *Questions* and the mystical and metaphysical interpretation in *De Antro*, do not show that these two works belong to different periods of his career.¹⁴³ And he continues to point out that Porphyry hardly needs Plotinus to be introduced to the teachings of Numenius and Cronius, so he believes that *De Antro* may have been produced at any date between the mid-250s C.E. and Porphyry's death.

¹⁴¹ Brisson 2004: 61-3; Lamberton 1986: 44-54.

¹⁴² Lamberton 1986: 108-9 Struck 2004: 72, 159-60; MacPhail 2011: 2.

¹⁴³ Lamberton 1986: 109-11.

I tend to believe that *De Antro* belongs to the period between Porphyry's admission to Plotinus' school in Rome and his death.¹⁴⁴ This suggestion is based on the following reasons: despite Lamberton's remark quoted above, Porphyry seems to have been more intimately involved in the doctrines of Numenius and Cronius in Rome than in Athens because they were actively read in Plotinus' school, and because of the request of Amelius from Porphyry to read his treatise on a comparison of the doctrines of Plotinus and Numenius. The *Odyssey* is deemed to be a spiritual journey by Plotinus and his circle, as in the case of Numenius and his school. The Delphic oracle revealing the fate of Plotinus' soul after his death and quoted by Porphyry in his *Life of Plotinus* (VPlot. 22.13-63) reflects Homeric echoes similar to the theme of *De Antro*.¹⁴⁵ And so its close connection with *De Antro* also supports the idea that the treatise was produced after his joining of the circle of Plotinus.¹⁴⁶

The connection of *De Antro* with Porphyry's other works in specific subjects, particularly with his mature works such as *De Abstinencia* or the *Sententiae* assigned to the later period of his career, also strengthens the claim, as will be seen throughout the thesis; for example, the metaphor of victorious athletes and the soul liberated from their sufferings in *De Antro* 33 p. 32.4-7 and in *De Abstinencia* 1.31.13-17;¹⁴⁷ the similarities between the description of Kronos and Poros filled up with honey and nectar in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.4-5, and the consequences of excessive consumption in *De Abstinencia* 1.46.1-15;¹⁴⁸ the statement the divinities 'shed their powers,' like semen, ἀποσπερματίζειν in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.12-13 is explained in

¹⁴⁴ Bidez 1964 (1913): 32-3; Pfeiffer 1968: 226 likewise argues that it was written after Porphyry's arrival to Plotinus' school in 262 C.E. See also Simonini 2010 (1986): 30-1 also inclines to think that it was written after Porphyry's encounter with the philosophy of Plotinus, but not fully assimilated; Alt 1998: 487 claims that *De Antro* is an early work of Porphyry; Johnson 2013: 59 n. 23; Simmons 2015: 29.

¹⁴⁵ Lamberton 1986: 132-3; Edwards 1988: 509-21 for a detailed discussion of the similarities of the Homeric phrases in the oracle and *De Antro*.

¹⁴⁶ Edwards 1988: 515-16.

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter 4.2.1.

¹⁴⁸ See Chapter 3.4.

Sententia 37.36-49, and in both works Porphyry makes references to the *daimones*, Poros and Penia (*Symp.* 203b-c).

The treatise counted among ‘the first-fruits of his maturity’ by Edwards,¹⁴⁹ is a reflection of his interest in the union of the soul with the body, the interest which Porphyry specially displays in Plotinus’ school (*VPlot.* 13). Lastly, I believe that Plotinus’ and Porphyry’s common references to Empedocles and Plato are not a mere coincidence, in that the former refers to Empedocles 31 B 115 and 31 B 120 DK of *Purifications* and Plato in *Enneads* 4.8.1.17-23 and 4.8.1.33-34, as the latter juxtaposes both philosophers in *De Antro* 8.¹⁵⁰

We find evidence for Porphyry’s continued interest in poetry in his *Life of Plotinus* 15, where he speaks of composing and presenting a poem entitled ‘The Sacred Marriage’ in Plotinus’ school. Although we do not know the content of Porphyry’s poem, it seems a safe assumption that it was a mystical and philosophical work. We also learn from *Life of Plotinus* 15 that Plotinus identifies Porphyry as a poet, philosopher and hierophant and, as Addey has recently observed, this interestingly corresponds to the three types of divine madness distinguished in *Phaedrus* 244a-245a, namely poetic, prophetic, and initiatory.¹⁵¹ All in all, it is clear that during his time in Rome, Porphyry developed a philosophical strategy in which myths, rituals, oracles, poetry, and philosophy were complementary tools to attain the truth.

In *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, allegorical interpretation is used primarily to justify the doctrines of Neoplatonism as opposed to explaining the relevant lines in Homer, which are not in themselves problematic. Porphyry’s approach to Homer is based on the idea that texts by ‘inspired’ authors, regardless of their genre, contain

¹⁴⁹ Edwards 1996: 88-100; in this article he argues that *De Antro* was produced for the Gnostics and supports the idea by drawing analogies with *Enn.* 2.9, which Plotinus wrote against them between 263-268 C.E.

¹⁵⁰ See Chapter 2.2.

¹⁵¹ Addey 2014a: 55. The epicletic ‘hierophant’ is associated with the chief priest of the Eleusinian Mysteries; see Brisson 2004: 81-2.

messages about the realm of the intelligible, of superior beings and human souls, but that these messages are often encoded and concealed by the stamp of secrecy in symbols and riddles.¹⁵² The intervention of a specialist, in this case a philosopher, is required to reveal that the text's surface meaning is an indirect expression of a deeper meaning, reserved for those who can recognise and understand it. A deeper meaning is to be suspected, especially where the surface meaning is unclear or otherwise unsatisfactory.¹⁵³ The specialist's key to deciphering the riddle is a Pythagorean kind of Platonism of which the basic parameters are the differentiation between the realm of the intelligible and the sensible world; a set of rules that explain the intelligible; and the continuous, cyclical journey of the human soul from embodiment through separation to re-embodiment.

Here, I would like to give a short summary of the treatise, which will be helpful for comprehending its structure, including particular passages and concepts to be discussed and how Porphyry evaluates the cave and its elements in Homer's verses:

De Antro 1-4: at the beginning of the treatise Porphyry lists a number of questions to reveal all the obscurities in Homer's poem to be explained, which are also posed by Cronius: 'What does Homer hint at by the cave in Ithaca?' 'Which gate is for humans, which gate is for gods?' 'What does Homer mean by the cave with two entrances?' 'Why is the cave sacred to the nymphs?' 'Why is it lovely and dark?' 'Why is not said simply that the cave is sacred to the nymphs, but the specification "which are called naiads" is added?' 'Why does he use the mixing bowls and amphoras?' 'As no liquid is poured into them, why do bees store up honey in them as in beehives?' 'Why are the high looms not made out of wood or some other substance, but of stone, like the amphoras and mixing-bowls?' 'Who would believe that goddesses weave sea-purple clothes in a dark cave at stone looms, and who would believe it when he hears someone say that these clothes woven by goddesses

¹⁵² Brisson 2004: 85-6.

¹⁵³ Struck 2010: 60-2.

are visible and sea-purple?’ ‘Why does Homer allocate the direction of the North to humans, and the direction of the South to gods, rather than using the East and West for this, since the statues and entrances in almost all temples face the East, and those who enter face the West when they stand in front of the statues to offer prayers and honour the gods?’ ‘Why is an olive tree added near the cave?’

De Antro 5-9: before explaining the meaning of the elements of the cave, Porphyry shows that the cave itself represents the material world, while his survey includes the Presocratics’ and Plato’s treatments of the cave in the philosophical tradition and its link with rituals by Greeks and Persians in the religious tradition. The cave appears lovely when perceived by the senses, but the discovery of its darkness by intellect is the initial stage for enlightenment of the soul. Here, it is evident that Porphyry has the liberated prisoner in Plato’s allegory of the cave in *Republic* in mind. In contrast to the Platonic cave, he presents the Mithraic cave as a place where the soul is liberated from the material world. Porphyry also identifies Mithras with the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*, as Mithras is, not only called the Maker and Father of all, but also the Master of genesis.

De Antro 10-19: as regards the meaning of the elements, each of which also supports the idea that the cave is a place where the union of the soul with the body occurs, the naiad nymphs, to whom the cave is dedicated, have different symbolic interpretations: they are water divinities, and souls descending into genesis, and *dunameis* as female principles having generative power in the process of body-creation; Homer describes them as weaving garments of sea-purple. The union of the soul with the body is explained through the concept of *pneuma*: the soul is attracted to a corporeal substance and becomes thick, dark and moist during the process of embodiment.

The rest of the elements in the cave are connected either to water divinities or souls. Accordingly, the mixing bowls and amphoras are appropriate to water that comes out of stone, and the high stone looms, a symbol of bones, to the souls

descending into genesis because stone and water belong to the material world. Homer's image of the naiad nymphs weaving garments of sea-purple on the high stone looms is the description of the body-creation process, as the sea-purple garments are flesh woven from blood. The souls' descent into genesis is the pleasure, which they experience in the process of embodiment, just as honey, as the product of bees, is a symbol of pleasure. Porphyry draws an analogy between Poros and Kronos, the former getting drunk on nectar in Plato's *Symposium* 203b5-7 and the latter on honey by Zeus' trap in an Orphic poem. The descent of Cronus into genesis signifies the union of the soul with the body, which shows the soul's propensity to passions and pleasure and its loss of intellect. Bees can also be deemed to be the just and sober souls, who are fond of returning to their origin.

De Antro 20-35: for Homer's double-gated cave, the northern entrance allocated to humans, the southern to the immortals, Porphyry offers different astrological exegeses, variously named, such as the gates of Cancer and Capricorn or the solstitial gates associated with the cosmological and astrological representation in a *mithraeum* and tauroctony in the mysteries of Mithras, the gates of the Sun in *Odyssey* 24.12, and the gates of the Sun and the Moon. The gates of the Sun and the Moon can be identified both with the two celestial openings in *Republic* 10 and with Intellect and Life, respectively, in the noetic triad (Being-Life-Intellect) at the celestial level. The souls descending into genesis aren't pure souls anymore, and, for this reason, Homer describes them as humans. After their death, since these souls are separated from their bodies, they can be considered as the immortals.

The olive tree situated near the cave signifies Athena, a symbol of practical wisdom, through which Homer hints that cosmos is the product of the god's mind and intelligent nature, not created by chance. Odysseus sitting under the olive tree leaves all his precious goods and clothes in the cave under the guidance of Athena; the hero represents the soul descending into genesis, but will return back to its fatherland. Odysseus' long journey is, in fact, the exile of the soul in the material

world, a theme found in Plato (*Polit.* 273d-e),¹⁵⁴ and the soul gets rid of all the toils and passions of the material world when it arrives in a world completely foreign to Matter.

1.5.1. On the Cave of the Nymphs

In this section, I will attempt to establish what might have been the aim of Porphyry in writing a sophisticated allegorical interpretation of the specific passage he singled out for his treatise, *Odyssey* 13.102-112, and how he interprets this passage in order to fulfil this aim by showing the prominent features of the text. In analysing the composition of the text, I will argue that Porphyry's exegesis follows a deliberate and clearly defined path, guided by interests that also pervade many of his other works, the relationship between the soul and the body, and the salvation of the soul. Furthermore, I will examine how Porphyry uses the two significant concepts of Neoplatonic allegory, symbol and image, in the text.¹⁵⁵ In addition, my analysis will deal with Porphyry's identification of Homer as theologian, a term used eight times throughout the text, including how Homer and his verses reveal the truth.

Porphyry's *On the Cave of The Nymphs* (*Περὶ τοῦ ἐν Ὀδυσσεΐᾳ τῶν νυμφῶν ἄντρου* in Greek, *De Antro Nympharum* in Latin) is an elaborate exegesis of a single passage in the *Odyssey*, 13.102-112, in which Homer describes the cave by the harbour of Phorcys in Ithaca where Odysseus is dropped by the Phaeacians and in which, on the instructions of Athena, he stores the Phaeacians' gifts. As we have already seen in the Introduction, Porphyry starts his exegesis with a quotation of Homer's description, as follows:

(1.1-14) Ὅτι ποτὲ Ὀμήρῳ αἰνίττεται τὸ ἐν Ἰθάκῃ ἄντρον, ὃ διὰ τῶν ἐπῶν τούτων διαγράφει λέγων.
‘αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ κρατὸς λιμένος τανύφυλλος ἐλαίη,

¹⁵⁴ Brisson 2004: 85.

¹⁵⁵ Dillon 1975 (1990): 247.

ἀγχόθι δ' αὐτῆς ἄντρον ἐπήρατον ἥεροειδές,
ἱρὸν νυμφάων αἱ νηϊάδες καλέονται.
ἐν δὲ κρητῆρές τε καὶ ἀμφιφορῆες ἔασιν
λάϊνοι· ἔνθα δ' ἔπειτα τιθαιβώσσουσι μέλισσαι.
ἐν δ' ἱστοὶ λίθιοι περιμήκεες, ἔνθα τε νύμφαι
φάρε' ὑφαίνουσιν ἀλιπόρφυρα, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι·
ἐν δ' ὕδατ' ἀενάοντα. δύω δέ τέ οἱ θύραι εἰσίν,
αἱ μὲν πρὸς Βορέας καταβῆται ἀνθρώποισιν,
αἱ δ' αὖ πρὸς Νότου εἰσὶ θεώτεραι· οὐδέ τι κείνη
ἄνδρες ἐσέρχονται, ἀλλ' ἀθανάτων ὁδός ἐστιν.'

(1.1.-14) One wonders what the cave in Ithaca symbolises for Homer, the one which he describes in the following verses:

'At the head of harbour there is an olive tree with acuminate leaves,
and near it, a lovely and dark cave,
consecrated to the nymphs called Naiads.
In the cave are mixing bowls and amphoras,
made of stone. There, bees store up honey.
In the cave, there are very high stone looms, where the nymphs
weave garments of sea-purple, a wonder to be seen,
and in it there are ever-flowing waters. It has two entrances:
one is northerly for humans to descend,
the other, southerly, is more divine; through that entrance
men do not enter, but it is the way of immortals.'

Similarly to opening Matryoshka dolls, he unfolds, to his audience, the various layers of meaning of these Homeric images and symbols within a wide range of disciplines, such as history, mythology, etymology, religion, astrology, cosmology and philosophy. For the purpose of discussing the above issues, which are clearly interconnected, I will analyse two important symbols in Homer's verses, the cave and Odysseus.

The two central entities in the Homeric passage and context, and in Porphyry's exegesis, are the cave and Odysseus. It is significant, I believe, that both also appear in the myths of Plato's *Republic*. The Allegory of the Cave is one of the main subjects of *Republic* 7, where the cave appears as an image and symbol of the world of 'everyday' consciousness, and Porphyry assigns the same significance to Homer's cave in *De Antro*. Odysseus, the protagonist of the *Odyssey* at large and of the passage Porphyry has selected for exegesis, appears in the myth of Er in *Republic* 10 as an example of the 'experienced soul' choosing to lead a secluded life free from all toils endured in his previous life. In *De Antro* 34, where Porphyry analyses Homer's image of Odysseus and the goddess Athena sitting under the olive tree near the cave of the nymphs, Porphyry deems Odysseus to be the soul on the verge of ascending to the intelligible realm after undergoing laborious stages of genesis. The Platonic myth and Porphyry's allegorical interpretation of Homer's Odysseus depict the hero as striving to do away with all materialistic possessions, the one difference between the two texts being that the Platonic Odysseus is in the process of descending into genesis, and the Porphyrian in the process of ascending to the intelligible realm.

These similarities suggest that Porphyry may have written *De Antro* as a complementary or preliminary allegorical exegesis to his commentary on the myth of Er, in which, according to Proclus, he showed himself 'a perfect interpreter in particular of all the hidden material in the myth' (F 181 Smith = *In Remp.* 2.96.5-6). Even if this is not the case, it is nonetheless obvious that there are strong connections between the commentary on the myth of Er and *De Antro*. In the latter, Porphyry draws an analogy between the two gates of Homer's cave and the two entrances in Plato's myth within the context of an analysis of the gates of heaven (to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). Thus, it would not be wrong to say that Porphyry in *De Antro* has the same ethical concerns as Plato in the myth of Er. In a part of his commentary on the myth of Er which is preserved in Proclus' commentary on the *Republic*, Porphyry's emphasis on 'being just' suggests that he deems the aim

of the myth of Er to be ethical, which means that the soul's choices in this life and the afterlife represent the deciding factor in its descent into genesis (F 182 Smith = *In Remp.* 2.106.23-2.107.5):¹⁵⁶

καὶ ὅτι Πλάτων οὐ πᾶσαν ἐκποδὼν ἐποίησεν μυθολογίαν, ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ τῶν αἰσχροῶν καὶ ἀθέσμων πλασμάτων χωροῦσαν, οἷαν Ὅμηρός τε καὶ Ἡσίοδος ἐγραψάτην, καὶ οὐδὲ τὰ δείματα ταῦτα <τὰ> ἐν Αἰδου γυμνά τέθεικεν, τὰς ψυχὰς δεδιττόμενος καὶ πρὸς θάνατον περιφόβους ἀποτελῶν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀδίκους αὐτὰ προτείνων πρὸς τὴν ἀδικίαν ἀπεργάζεται τοὺς ἀκούοντας εὐλαβεῖς, μονονουχὶ συνημμένον πλέκων· εἰ τὸ ἀδικεῖν ὑμῖν αἰρετόν, τὰ φρικωδέστατα τῶν κολαστηρίων ὑμῖν ἐστὶν αἰρετά· ταῦτα δὲ φεύγετε παντὶ σθένει· φευκτέον ἄρα ὑμῖν καὶ τὴν ἀδικίαν·

And note that Plato did not oppose every form of story-telling but the form that proceeds through shameful and unlawful images, such as Homer and Hesiod composed. Nor does (Plato) frighten the souls and render them fearful of death by setting up these objects of fear in Hades without provisions. Rather, by presenting these (events) to the unjust, (Plato) makes his listeners hesitant to commit injustice, and he all but draws the conclusion: 'if being unjust is choice-worthy for you, then the most horrible places of punishment are choice-worthy for you. But you flee these with all your might; therefore, you must also flee injustice.'

Not only in his interpretation of the myth of Er but also in his other interpretations, as we will see, Porphyry tends to give priority to ethical concerns about the soul, a tendency which is also criticised by Proclus in his commentary on the story of Atlantis (F 13 Sodano = 116.26-117.18).¹⁵⁷ In *De Antro*, Porphyry demonstrates towards the end of the text, particularly in sections 34 to 36, that his ultimate aim in this treatise has also been an ethical concern about the soul, symbolised by Odysseus and the liberated prisoner in *Republic 7*, both of whom escape from all the toils of the material world.

¹⁵⁶ Trans. Wilberding 2011: 135-6.

¹⁵⁷ See Chapter 3.1.2.

Regarding scholarship on *De Antro*, Dillon affirms the close connection of the exegesis of the cave of the nymphs and the myth of Er through Numenius.¹⁵⁸ Edwards also considers the *Odyssey* and the myth of Er as the prooftexts for Porphyry's account of the ascent and descent of souls.¹⁵⁹ He also argues that Porphyry's aim of writing *De Antro* is to attack the Gnostics, seeing as he titled *Enneads* 2.9 'Against the Gnostics' (or 'Against those Declaring the Creator of the World, and the World itself, to be evil'), but if not, the treatise has a protreptic function, a handbook for interpreters. Edwards' emphasis on the view that the grasp of truth is not a sudden but a gradual process from the lowest to the highest grades of virtue through the text is compatible with the association of the Odyssean spiritual journey and the soul turning the eyes upwards through dialectic (*Rep.* 533d). Porphyry reveals this process by showing how to read the treatise and to interpret Homer's symbols and images. The attainment of higher truths is represented by the image of 'Odysseus and the goddess Athena sitting under the olive tree near the cave' in *De Antro* 34. With emphasis on Porphyry's ethical concerns, Edwards says, 'Porphyry implies that moral progress is required to achieve the insight represented by the olive, for the suppliant must make his peace with the gods of the sea before he wins the favour of Athena.'¹⁶⁰ His remark agrees with my suggestion that Porphyry's identification of the goddess Athena with *phronesis* is a reference to the cathartic virtues in *Sententia* 32, one of the four stages of Porphyry's doctrine of virtues, which gradually lead the soul to arrive at human excellence through distinct mental endeavours.¹⁶¹

Porphyry bases his exegesis in *De Antro* on Numenius' identification of Homer's cave as an image of the cosmos (*De Antro* 6.16; 8.18-19; 12.21-22; 21.1-2, 32.22-23) and of Odysseus as an image (εἰκὼν) of the soul passing through

¹⁵⁸ Dillon 1996: 375-6; see also Lambertson 1986: 130 on Porphyry's enhancement of Numenius' interpretation of Odysseus' spiritual journey.

¹⁵⁹ Edwards 1996: 88-100.

¹⁶⁰ Edwards 1996: 99.

¹⁶¹ See Chapter 4.2.2 for a detailed discussion for Porphyry's identification of the goddess Athena with *phronesis*.

successive stages of genesis and returning to the place where it is free from all the toils and passions of the material world (*De Antro* 34.13-16, 35.4-7). Numenius' exegesis seems tailor-made for Porphyry, as it provided him with an opportunity to reconcile Homer and Plato through the concept of the cave. More importantly, perhaps, it provided an opportunity to use Homer's verses to satisfy his particular interest in how the soul is associated with the body, an interest which also emerges from his *Life of Plotinus* (VPlot 13).

Not only Numenius, but also Plotinus in *Enneads* 1.6.8 interprets the journey of Odysseus,¹⁶² who flees from the pleasures offered by Circe and Calypso and eventually reaches his homeland, symbolising the successful journey of the human soul to return to the 'fatherland' that is the realm of the intelligible, while contrasting him with Narcissus, who loses himself in his own reflection in the water and 'drowns in material beauty.' In following Numenius' treatment of Odysseus, Porphyry's text was, therefore, clearly not idiosyncratic but followed a path that was, to some extent, familiar to his Neoplatonic audience and carried the seal of approval of the master. This is corroborated by Porphyry's reference to another Odyssean image in his *Life of Plotinus* (VPlot. 22.27), of the hero eagerly swimming to the coast of the Phaeacians (νήχε' ἐπειγόμενος, *Od.* 5.399):¹⁶³

δαῖμον, ἄνερ τὸ πάροιθεν, ἀτὰρ νῦν δαίμονος αἴση
θειοτέρῃ πελάων, ὅτ' ἐλύσαο δεσμὸν ἀνάγκης
ἀνδρομέης, ῥεθέων δὲ πολυφλοίσβοιο κυδοιμοῦ
ῥωσάμενος πρᾶπίδεσσιν ἐς ἥονα νηχύτου ἀκτῆς
νήχε' ἐπειγόμενος δήμου ἄπο νόσφιν ἀλιτρῶν
στηρίξαι καθαρῆς ψυχῆς εὐκαμπέα οἶμην,
ἧχι θεοῖο σέλας περιλάμπεται, ἧχι θέμιστες
ἐν καθαρῷ ἀπάτερθεν ἀλιτροσύνης ἀθεμίστου.
Καὶ τότε μὲν σκαίροντι πικρὸν κύμ' ἐξυπαλύξαι

¹⁶² Lamberton 1986: 132-3; Edwards 1988: 509-10.

¹⁶³ Trans. Armstrong 1995: 66-7. I am grateful to Prof. J. M. Dillon for drawing my attention to this passage.

αἰμοβότου βιότοιο καὶ ἀσηρῶν εἰλίγγων
ἐν μεσάτοισι κλύδωνος ἀνωίστου τε κυδοιμοῦ
πολλάκις ἐκ μακάρων φάνθη σκοπὸς ἐγγύθι ναίων.

Spirit, man once, but now nearing the diviner lot of a spirit, as the bond of human necessity has been loosed for you, and strong in heart, you swam swiftly from the roaring surge of the body to that coast where the stream flows strong, far apart from the crowd of the wicked there to set your steps firm in the easy path of the pure soul, where the splendour of God shines round you and the divine law abides in purity far from lawless wickedness. Then too, when you were struggling to escape from the bitter wave of blood-feeding life, from its sickening whirlpools in the midst of its billows and sudden surges, often the Blessed Ones showed you the goal ever near.

The above passage (*VPlot.* 22.23-34), as part of a lengthy Delphic oracle, reports on an enquiry by Amelius, who consulted the oracle of Apollo in Delphi, wondering where Plotinus' soul had gone. In revealing the fate of Plotinus' soul to him, the oracle borrowed Homeric phrases relating to Odysseus, pronouncing enigmatically that Plotinus had managed to 'escape from the bitter wave of blood-feeding life' (πικρὸν κύμ' ἐξυπαλύξαι αἰμοβότου βιότοιο, 22.31-32; cf. 23.6), that is to say, from life entrapped in the body, just like Porphyry's interpretation of Odysseus in *De Antro*, and his soul escaping from all toils of the material world.

One of the prominent features of Porphyry's allegorical interpretation is the appreciation of ancient wisdom. Porphyry also shares this attitude with his Neoplatonic colleagues in general and, in particular, with Plotinus. In *Enneads* 5.1.8.10-14, Plotinus explicitly states that his doctrine is not a novelty of his time but an exegesis of Plato's dialogues that contain ancient views:¹⁶⁴

Καὶ εἶναι τοὺς λόγους τούσδε μὴ καινοὺς μηδὲ νῦν, ἀλλὰ πάλαι μὲν εἰρῆσθαι μὴ ἀναπεπταμένως, τοὺς δὲ νῦν λόγους ἐξηγητὰς ἐκείνων γεγονέναι μαρτυρίοις

¹⁶⁴ Trans. MacKenna 1991: 357.

πιστωσαμένους τὰς δόξας ταύτας παλαιὰς εἶναι τοῖς αὐτοῦ τοῦ Πλάτωνος γράμμασιν.

These teachings are, therefore, no novelties, no inventions of today, but long since stated, if not stressed; our doctrine here is the explanation of an earlier and can show the antiquity of these opinions on the testimony of Plato himself.

Although Plotinus' emphasis here is on Plato, his 'decipherment' of ancient texts extends well beyond the exegesis of Platonic dialogues, which, although they are the final authority for Neoplatonic metaphysical and cosmological doctrines, are deemed to be repositories and conduits of ancient wisdom.

Other Neoplatonists followed the same principle, prioritising Plato but, at the same time, embracing other sources of wisdom as different expressions of the same fundamental truth. For instance, in his *Commentary on Timaeus* 2.246.4-7 Proclus defends his own appropriation, in addition to Platonism, of Pythagoreanism and the theologians, particularly the Orphics, along these lines,¹⁶⁵ explaining that the Pythagoreans use symbols, Plato mathematical language and the theologians myths, but that this is merely a matter of approach and not of essence. In a similar way, Proclus claims, in his *Platonic Theology* (PT 1.25.26-26.4), that the origin of Greek theology is Orphic mystagogy; that Pythagoras was the first to be initiated in these mysteries; and that through the doctrines of the Pythagoreans and Orphics, perfect knowledge about the gods was passed on to Plato. Many more testimonies of this sort could be cited, for Proclus and for others, all confirming that Neoplatonists felt strongly about the ultimate unity of wisdom and fundamental compatibility of Neoplatonic doctrine with earlier wisdom texts – including the Homeric epics.

Another preliminary question which requires discussion with regard to *De Antro* is how Porphyry uses the two significant terms of Neoplatonic allegorical

¹⁶⁵ Rappe 2000: 117-18.

interpretation, symbol (σύμβολον) and image (εἰκών), in his discussion of Homer's cave. A helpful introduction to Neoplatonic/Neopythagorean methodologies in, and approaches to, allegoresis is provided by a passage in Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus* (1.29.31-30.18). Here, he discusses differences in Porphyry's and Iamblichus' approaches to the context of Socrates' recapitulation of the *Republic* at the beginning of the *Timaeus* (17b-c). As Porphyry sees the recapitulation from an ethical perspective, Iamblichus draws a parallel between the Pythagoreans' teaching method and Plato's composition of the dialogue:¹⁶⁶

Οἱ μὲν τὴν ἐπάνοδον τῆς Πολιτείας ἠθικώτερον λέγοντες ἐνδείκνυσθαι φασιν ἡμῖν, ὅτι δεῖ τὰ ἦθη κεκοσμημένους ἄπτεσθαι τῆς θεωρίας τῶν ὄλων· οἱ δὲ ἀξιοῦσιν ὡς εἰκόνα τῆς τοῦ παντὸς διακοσμήσεως προκεῖσθαι τῆς συμπάσης φυσιολογίας· εἶναι γὰρ τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις ἔθος πρὸ τῆς ἐπιστημονικῆς διδασκαλίας προτιθέναι τὴν διὰ τῶν ὁμοίων καὶ τῶν εἰκόνων τῶν ζητουμένων σκεμμάτων δῆλωσιν καὶ μετὰ ταύτην ἐπάγειν τὴν διὰ τῶν συμβόλων ἀπόρρητον περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἔνδειξιν, ἔπειθ' οὕτως μετὰ τὴν ἀνακίνησιν τῆς ψυχικῆς νοήσεως καὶ τὴν τοῦ ὄμματος διακάθαρσιν προσφέρειν τὴν ὅλην τῶν προκειμένων σκεμμάτων ἐπιστήμην. κἀνταῦθα τοίνυν ἡ μὲν τῆς πολιτείας πρὸ τῆς φυσιολογίας ἐπιτετμημένη παράδοσις εἰκονικῶς ἡμᾶς ἐφίστησι τῇ δημιουργίᾳ τοῦ παντός, ἡ δὲ περὶ τῶν Ἀτλαντίνων ἱστορία συμβολικῶς· καὶ γὰρ οἱ μῦθοι τὰ πολλὰ διὰ τῶν συμβόλων εἰώθασιν τὰ πράγματα ἐνδείκνυσθαι· ὥστε εἶναι τὸ φυσιολογικὸν διὰ παντὸς τοῦ διαλόγου διῆκον, ἀλλ' οὗ μὲν ἄλλως, οὗ δὲ ἄλλως κατὰ τοὺς διαφόρους τρόπους τῆς παραδόσεως.

Some (sc. Porphyry), taking the recapitulation of the *Republic* in an ethical sense, say that it reveals to us that we must enter upon the contemplation of the Universe in an ethically ordered frame of mind; others (sc. Iamblichus) consider that it has been placed before the whole enquiry into Nature as an image of the organisation of the Universe; for the Pythagoreans had the habit of placing before their scientific instruction the revelation of the subjects under enquiry through similitudes and images, and after this of introducing the secret revelation of the same subjects

¹⁶⁶ Trans. Dillon 1975 (1990): 248-9.

through symbols, and then in this way, after the reactivation of the soul's ability to comprehend the intelligible realm and the purging of its vision, to bring on the complete knowledge of the subjects laid down for investigation. And here too the relating in summary of the *Republic* before the enquiry into Nature prepares us to understand the orderly creation of the Universe through the medium of an image, while the story of the Atlantids acts as a symbol; for indeed myths in general tend to reveal the principles of reality through symbols. So the discussion of Nature in fact runs through the whole dialogue, but appears in different forms according to the different methods of revelation.

As Dillon states,¹⁶⁷ it was Iamblichus who systematised the Neoplatonic theory of allegory based upon the Pythagoreans' examination of subjects through symbol and image, taking his cue from Neopythagorean authors such as Numenius, Nicomachus of Gerasa, or Apollonius of Tyana. According to this passage, the Pythagoreans use an image to show a natural reality perceived by the senses, whereas a symbol is a sign of an abstract principle, which can be comprehended by the mind. A symbol requires a higher level of education to be understood and conveys concealed truths. I believe that Porphyry's usages of symbol and image in his exegesis of the Homeric cave with its elements in *De Antro* may be linked to the Pythagoreans' use of these notions in their pedagogy.

Throughout the text, Porphyry uses the term 'image' eight times. In six instances, it refers to the cave as an 'image of the cosmos': with reference to the Mithraic cave in *De Antro* 6.18; to the Platonic cave of *Republic* 7 in *De Antro* 8.21 (twice); and with reference to the Homeric cave in *De Antro* 12.21-2, 21.2 and 32.22-23. Additionally, he considers Odysseus an 'image' of the soul passing through the different stages of genesis in *De Antro* 34.14. Porphyry's final instance refers to his own statement in *De Antro* 36.11 that Homer hints at the divine images. The term 'symbol' is considerably more frequent, occurring, in total, twenty-six times to refer

¹⁶⁷ Dillon 1975 (1990): 249-50 (XXVIII); see also Rappe 2000: 12-14, Tarrant 2006: 124 n. 156.

to either the cave or all the mystical elements in the Homeric cave such as Naiad nymphs, mixing bowls and amphoras, high stone looms, honey, bees, the gates of the cave, and the olive tree at the head of the harbour.

At first glance, there does not seem to be a precise rationale behind Porphyry's use of 'symbol' and 'image' in *De Antro*, as there was in the Pythagoreans' pedagogy. On closer inspection, however, it emerges that Porphyry, like the Pythagoreans, chooses to use 'image' when he is talking about a natural reality – the cave as a physical entity, which is grasped by the senses. For example, in *De Antro* 4 p. 6.1-10, he even refers to Artemidorus of Ephesus in order to prove the geographical existence of the cave dedicated to Naiad nymphs in Ithaca. The reason for Porphyry's use of 'image' for Odysseus is that, as can clearly be seen from an ethical perspective, the Homeric hero is a good example of the soul dealing with painful experiences of the material world, just like Plotinus, as described in the above Delphic oracle in *Life of Plotinus* 22.

When Porphyry uses 'symbol' for Homer's cave, I contend that he has in mind, not only the cave as a natural reality, but also the cave with its mystical elements, which are grasped by the mind. The mystical elements of the cave function as its complementary factors so that it is those elements that make the conception of the cave an abstract and mysterious reality, and apart from physical reality. In *De Antro* 32.20, Porphyry uses the phrase 'the cave's riddle' (αὐτοῦ τὸ αἴνιγμα) in order to imply that all the elements in the cave with the olive tree provide the mysteriousness of the cave, which requires to be deciphered like an oracle.

An image provided by Dillon neatly illustrates the Neoplatonic (and Neopythagorean) conception of the difference between image and symbol: the statue of Sir Winston Churchill with his cigar.¹⁶⁸ The statue of Churchill is an image, which is a physical object and a one-to-one replica of Churchill, and we may apply the relationship between Churchill and the statue of Churchill to the relationship

¹⁶⁸ Dillon 1975 (1990): 250.

between the cosmos and the cave, a one-to-one replica of the cosmos in the mysteries of Mithras or in Plato's *Republic* 7. On the other hand, his cigar is a symbol that functions as an intermediary. The cigar reminds us of Churchill, itself having its own identity. Likewise, all the elements in the Homeric cave are symbols: intermediaries and complementary parts of the cave. They remind us of the cave, but at the same time each element can also be interpreted independently according to various cultural and religious traditions, as Porphyry does throughout the text. The same process of deduction can be applied to Odysseus, since, not only the mystical elements of the cave are reminiscent of the hero, but also the Homeric cave, the olive tree and the goddess Athena are ways through which Porphyry depicts Odysseus in the treatise.

As stated above, following the Neoplatonic tradition, Porphyry has recourse to knowledge and wisdom of the ancients in order to explain the cave and its elements by referring to a plethora of sources, not all explicitly identified. Porphyry draws on Orphic poems, the mysteries of Mithras and the Eleusinian Mysteries, and Presocratics such as Empedocles, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Pherecydes of Syros, as well as, of course, Plato, and the Neopythagoreans Numenius and Cronius. Porphyry generally composes his treatment of each of his selected topics in such a way that the discussion begins with explicit or implicit references, in a brief statement or relatively detailed account, to either the ancients or the Presocratics or mystery cults and so on, and ends by referring to one of the dialogues of Plato.

When discussing the subject of the cave as an image of the cosmos (*De Antro* 5-9), Porphyry begins with 'the ancients' (οἱ παλαιοί) who dedicated caves to the cosmos. He then proceeds to cite the *mithraeum* of the mysteries of Mithras, a replica of the Universe (*De Antro* 6.13-23); temples, altars, shrines dedicated to the divinities of Greek religion (*De Antro* 6.23-8); a hymn to Apollo referring to caves dedicated to the nymphs (*De Antro* 8.3-12); and a quotation from Empedocles (*De Antro* 8.13-16 = 31 B 120 DK). Porphyry ends this discussion with Plato's Allegory of the Cave in *Republic* 7 (*De Antro* 8.17-24). Additionally, Mithras is equated, as the

Master of genesis and 'Maker and Father of the Universe,' with Plato's demiurge (*De Antro* 6.19; *Tim.* 28c). The discussion now proceeds from non-textual sources via 'traditional' poetry and the Presocratics to Plato.

Elsewhere in *De Antro*, Porphyry begins his analysis of the honey stored in the mixing bowls and amphoras with the question of why the amphoras are filled with honeycombs but not water (*De Antro* 15.17-18). With reference to the theologians, the extended analysis covers many traditional features of honey, such as that it is the food of the gods as primeval nourishment, and its cathartic and preservative powers. In *De Antro* 16 p. 18.3-10, Porphyry then quotes an Orphic poem (*OF* 154 Kern), showing the seductive and intoxicating powers of honey, like wine, and comparing Kronos inebriated with honey and Poros filled with nectar in Plato's *Symposium* (203b5-7). Honey's protective and purifying attributes lead Porphyry to discuss its use of the mysteries of Mithras, in which initiates use honey to purify their hands from all that is painful, harmful and loathsome, and their tongues from saying bad things. The mixing bowls, Porphyry explains, symbolise springs just like the mixing bowl which is placed next to Mithras (*De Antro* 17.25), but a mixing bowl is also the place where Plato's Soul of the Universe is blended and mixed in *Timaeus* 41d. Here, it should be said that Porphyry does not, in fact, make an explicit reference to the mixing bowls of the *Timaeus*; however, given his use of the *Timaeus* earlier in *De Antro* and its general relevance to the topic, there can be little doubt that he had the dialogue in mind and expected the same from his audience. This is confirmed when he, belatedly, makes the association with Plato's mixing bowls more explicitly in *De Antro* 31.5-6.

In his detailed analysis of the meaning of the two gates of the cave, Porphyry firstly quotes Numenius and Cronius (*De Antro* 21-24), referring to the different astrological meanings of the gates. He then discusses the gates of the Sun in *Odyssey* 24.12, the gates of the Sun and the Moon associated with the two entrances of the myth of Er in *Republic* 615d5, e2, the solstitial gates associated with the astrological significance of the *mithraeum* and tauroctony in the mysteries of Mithras,

Parmenides' two gates in his *Physics* (28 B 1, 11 DK), and the Pythagoreans' Milky Way, and the Roman festival of Saturnalia, which was celebrated when the Sun is in Capricorn, with the ascent of the soul through the southern gate of the cave. As can be seen, Porphyry's detailed discussion ostensibly makes this part somewhat convoluted, but I believe that the underlying reason for this elaborate and extended discussion is his particular concern to show the different ways of salvation of the soul and, ultimately, to associate all those cosmological and astrological interpretations of the gates with the myth of Er in *Republic* 10. In his conclusion to this part of the treatise, Porphyry implies that Plato's knowledge has its source in the wisdom of the ancestors, illustrating this by saying that Plato knows of mixing bowls (*Tim.* 41d) and speaks of wine jars (*Gorg.* 493d-494a), instead of amphoras, and two entrances, instead of two gates (*Rep.* 614c-d, 615d-e).

Porphyry no longer continues to refer to Plato towards the end of the text; instead, sections 34-5 are full of references to Homer, which are related to images from the *Odyssey*. The last passage, in which Porphyry mentions Homer's wisdom, along with the wisdom of antiquity, is of great importance because he confirms that such allegorical exegeses are based on the assumption that the poet could speak of higher truths through divine images even if the subject seems to be a fairy-tale:

(36.8-13) Οὐ δεῖ δὲ τὰς τοιαύτας ἐξηγήσεις βεβιασμένας ἡγεῖσθαι καὶ εὐρεσιλογούντων πιθανότηας, λογιζόμενον δὲ τὴν παλαιὰν σοφίαν καὶ τὴν Ὀμήρου ὅση τις φρόνησις γέγονε καὶ πάσης ἀρετῆς ἀκρίβειαν μὴ ἀπογινώσκειν ὥς ἐν μυθαρίου πλάσματι εἰκόνας τῶν θειοτέρων ἠνίσσετο. οὐ γὰρ ἐνῆν ἐπιτυχῶς πλάσσειν ὅλην ὑπόθεσιν μὴ ἀπὸ τινων ἀληθῶν μεταποιοῦντα τὸ πλάσμα.

(36.8-13) One should not think that these types of exegeses are forced, nor a case of concocting ingenious arguments to invent persuasiveness. If one takes into consideration the ancient wisdom and the wisdom of Homer, how his great *phronesis* was the product of precision of every virtue, one should not reject the idea that he hinted at images through the medium of the concoction of a

myth. For it would not be possible to successfully compose an entire subject-matter without modelling one's fiction on some truths.

In connection with Homer's wisdom in this passage, in *De Antro* 32.25, Porphyry calls the poet *theologos*,¹⁶⁹ a term which is generally employed to allude to Orpheus. In spite of not using exactly the same word, Herodotus, for instance, believes that Homer and Hesiod were the creators and sources of Greek religion (*Hist.* 2.53-4). The term *theologos* refers to poets, especially Orphic and mantic poets and possibly Hesiod, and their interpreters from the fifth century B.C.E. onwards.¹⁷⁰ In *De Antro* Porphyry employs the term eight times; six of them are in the plural and are generally allusions to the poetic, religious and philosophical tradition. The term is once used for Orpheus (*De Antro* 16 p. 18.11) and applied to Homer (*De Antro* 32.25). Porphyry's reference to Homer as *theologos* seems to be quite influential on later Neoplatonists, particularly on Proclus, as they include Homer in the group of theologians with Orpheus, the Orphics, Hesiod and Plato, and value him as a privileged sage.

The opening passage of Porphyry's *On Images*, as quoted below (F 351.15-24 Smith = Eus. *PE* 3.7.1.2-8), is particularly significant in understanding how Porphyry defines the concept of *theologos*. It also provides evidence that a reading of an image, a text, or an oracle, according to Porphyry, functions in the same way as they are all intermediaries conveying higher truths originated from gods.¹⁷¹ However, what matters to Porphyry is to know how to read the invisible embedded within the visible. In order to reveal these concealed truths, Porphyry undertakes the task of explaining true meanings of images and symbols, and considers himself

¹⁶⁹ Pl. *Rep.* 379a; Arist. *Met.* 1000a9, 1071b27; Philodemus *Pietas* 48; Philolaus F 14 Huffman; Plut. *De defectu oraculorum* 409e-438d; Plot. *Enn.* 3.5.8; Burkert 1972: 248 n. 47.

¹⁷⁰ Lambertson 1986: 27-31.

¹⁷¹ See Addey 2014a: 43-82 for parallelism between oracles, allegory and mystery cult in Neoplatonism.

qualified to understand them, just as in *De Antro* 4 p. 4.31-33, in which he discusses how he tries to explain Homer's verses:

σοφίας θεολόγου νοήματα δεικνύς, οἷς τὸν θεὸν καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰς δυνάμεις διὰ εἰκόνων συμφύλων αἰσθήσει ἐμήνυσαν ἄνδρες τὰ ἀφανῆ φανεροῖς ἀποτυπώσαντες πλάσμασι, τοῖς καθάπερ ἐκ βιβλίων τῶν ἀγαλμάτων ἀναλέγειν τὰ περὶ θεῶν μεμαθηκόσι γράμματα. Θαυμαστὸν δὲ οὐδὲν ξύλα καὶ λίθους ἡγεῖσθαι τὰ ξόανα τοὺς ἀμαθεστάτους, καθὰ δὴ καὶ τῶν γραμμάτων οἱ ἀνόητοι λίθους μὲν ὀρῶσι τὰς στήλας, ξύλα δὲ τὰς δέλτους, ἐξυφασμένην δὲ πάπυρον τὰς βίβλους.

I show the concepts of theological wisdom, in which men revealed the god and the powers of the god through images akin to sense-perception, and expressed invisible things with visible forms, to those who have learned to read the writings on gods from statues as from books. It is not surprising that the most ignorant consider images as mere pieces of wood and stone, even as those who do not understand letters perceive monuments as stones, and writing-tablets as pieces of wood, and books as woven papyrus.

In this passage, the striking point is that Porphyry declines to reveal the hidden meanings of images to the most ignorant who consider them as simple material, by which he also means those who do not respect divine things. In *De Antro*, I suggest that Porphyry also targets the same type of audiences as in the passage of *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων*, those who respect the divine things, and have learned the writings of Homer. Thus, he provides his audiences with a way of gradually training their minds through ancient texts,¹⁷² which are not easily grasped since they reveal other things beyond the surface meanings.

I will now analyse in what way Porphyry starts and constructs various discussions; in other words, his methodology in *De Antro*. At the beginning of the

¹⁷² See Rappe 2000: 17-18 for Porphyry's use of *Sententiae* 32 for training purposes; Edwards 1996: 89 suggests: 'he (Porphyry) meant to write, not only a work of interpretation, but a manual for interpreters, and one that might be construed as a tacit reprimand to teachers who purported, like the Gnostics, to arrive at truth without the aid of other men's endeavours.'

essay, Porphyry begins by quoting Cronius, according to whom the description of the cave is not based on the actual facts, since such a cave does not exist in the geographical records of the island.¹⁷³ On the other hand, it is also hard to believe that, for the sake of poetic licence, *poetica licentia* (κατὰ ποιητικὴν ἐξουσίαν, *De Antro* 2.18), Homer would fabricate such a double-gated cave, one for the men to descend, the other for the immortals to ascend. For this reason, Homer must have ‘narrated allegorically and hinted at something else’ (ἀλληγορεῖν τι καὶ αἰνίττεσθαι, *De Antro* 3.2). Porphyry criticises Cronius’ rejection of a real cave in *De Antro*, as is also found in his *On the Styx* (F 374- 376 Smith), in which Porphyry historically and geographically attempts to prove that the Styx is a river on the surface of the earth in Greece and India, opposing the suggestion that it is a fabrication of Homer as a product of the poetic licence.¹⁷⁴

Poetic licence enables poets to have a sort of freedom of speech (schol. AT *Il.* 1.1d ex.), such as at the beginning of the *Iliad*, when Homer orders the Muses, rather than praying for their help, or changes and invents myths for various reasons, for instance, for political purposes (schol. Pi. *N.* 9.20), honouring their home towns (schol. S. *OC* 712).¹⁷⁵ In the scholia, freedom of speech is generally used to defend poets’ inconsistencies against criticism. Aristarchus suggests that poets like Homer should not be examined carefully, even if there are hypothetical contradictions in their works, because they are there by virtue of poetic licence. According to him, each text should be commented by itself (schol. D *Il.* 5.385) and the reader should not seek any other external criteria to interpret the text.¹⁷⁶ In contrast to Aristarchus, Porphyry rejects the idea that Homer’s description of the cave is ‘a product of poetic imagination or simply an ordinary and random piece of fiction written to amuse the readers’ (ὄντος τοῦ διηγήματος πλάσμα μὲν ὡς ἔτυχεν εἰς

¹⁷³ Porphyry’s geographical interest and knowledge might be rooted in the fact that Tyre, his native country, had a reputation for teaching geography, see Grainger 1991: 185; Simmons 2015: 6.

¹⁷⁴ See Johnson 2013: 31-7 for a detailed discussion of *On the Styx*.

¹⁷⁵ Nünlist 2009: 174-84.

¹⁷⁶ Struck 2004: 22-3.

ψυχαγωγίαν πεποιημένον μὴ εἶναι, *De Antro* 4 p. 4.28). Instead, ‘obscurities’ in the text (ἄσαφειῶν, *De Antro* 4 p. 4.27) are a challenging factor for the interpreter. Porphyry’s stance on this subject is not unusual because he attempts to rationalise Homer’s verses according to certain philosophical principles, apart from reconciling Homer with the Platonists, who believe that the cosmos did not exist at random or by chance, but was the product of the god’s mind and intelligent nature (*De Antro* 32.20-22). As a result of this theory, any argument about the randomness of Homer’s verses should be rejected.

Although Porphyry ‘proves’ with apparent pleasure that the cave in question actually exists on Ithaca by referring to the work of Artemidorus of Ephesus, it does not prevent him from asking the question as to what the ‘intention’ (βούλησιν, *De Antro* 4 p. 6.13) of the poet may have been in providing this description.¹⁷⁷ The historicity of the cave is a clear reference to its association with the physical world as we have stated above. However, its physical existence is not the decisive factor for the allegorical interpretation, but rather the mystical symbolism of the cave as interpreted by the ancients and Homer. Porphyry’s exegesis is grounded on the fact that Homer suggests the ‘images of higher truths’ (εἰκόνας τῶν θειοτέρων) in the form of a story (*De Antro* 36.9-13). This assumption cannot be ruled out if ‘the wisdom of antiquity’ (τὴν παλαιὰν σοφίαν) and the ‘whole excellence’ (πάσης ἀρετῆς) of Homer are considered. It is not accidental that the divine images conveyed by Homer are perfectly compatible with the higher truths offered by the philosophers, and with the visual and physical expression of cults, particularly Persian and Egyptian.

At first glance, Porphyry’s potpourri of associations confuses more than it elucidates. He says repeatedly that Homer ‘speaks in riddles,’ but, in fact, Porphyry himself seems to be the one speaking in riddles. On closer inspection, however, his interpretations prove to be not random but reciprocally connected – just as he

¹⁷⁷ Plato’s discussion on the purpose or meaning of a poem in *Prot.* 344b and on signification of a word in *Crat.* 421b.

persistently emphasises that Homer does not speak at random. Even so, Porphyry's method raises many questions, which have so far not been satisfactorily answered, and many of his associations remain to be properly elucidated and contextualised. For example, why is the cave sacred not to nymphs but to Naiad nymphs? Why is it lovely and dark at the same time? What is the meaning of the cave with double gates? Why are the looms made of stone but not any other substance? Porphyry raises those issues at length, particularly in Section 3.2, 4 p. 4.27-33, but surely we have run through all these before in Chapter 1.5:

(3.2, 4 p. 4.27-33) ἀλληγορεῖν τι καὶ αἰνίττεσθαι διὰ τούτων τὸν ποιητὴν, πολυπραγμονεῖν ἀναγκάζοντα τίς μὲν ἀνθρώπων πύλη, τίς δὲ θεῶν, καὶ τί βούλεται τὸ ἄντρον τοῦτο τὸ δίθυρον, <ιερὸν> μὲν νυμφῶν εἰρημένον, τὸ δ' αὐτὸ καὶ ἐπήρατον καὶ ἡεροειδές, οὐδαμῶς τοῦ σκοτεινοῦ ἐπηράτου ὄντος, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον φοβεροῦ· διὰ τί δὲ οὐχ ἀπλῶς νυμφῶν λέγεται ἱερὸν, ἀλλὰ πρόσκειται εἰς ἀκρίβειαν τὸ 'αἰ νηιάδες καλέονται' τίς δὲ καὶ ἡ τῶν κρατήρων καὶ ἀμφιφορέων παράληψις, οὐδενὸς τῶν ἐγχεομένων αὐτοῖς παρελημμένου, ἀλλ' ὅτι ἐν αὐτοῖς ὡς ἐν σμήνεσι τιθαβύσσουσι μέλισσαι. οἱ τε περιμήκεις ἱστοὶ ἔστωσαν ἀναθήματα ταῖς νύμφαις· ἀλλὰ τί μὴ ἐκ ξύλων ἢ ἄλλης ὕλης, λίθινοι δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ ὡς οἱ ἀμφιφορεῖς καὶ οἱ κρατῆρες; καὶ τοῦτο μὲν ἦττον ἀσαφές· τὸ δ' ἐν τοῖς λιθίνοις ἱστοῖς τούτοις τὰς νύμφας ὑφαίνειν ἀλιπόρφυρα φάρη, οὐκ ἰδέσθαι θαῦμα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀκοῦσαι. τίς γὰρ ἂν πιστεύσαι θεὰς ἀλιπόρφυρα ἱμάτια ὑφαίνειν <ἐν> σκοτεινῷ ἄνθρωπῳ ἐπὶ λιθίνων ἱστῶν, καὶ ταῦτα ὁρατὰ φάσκοντος εἶναι ἀκούων τὰ θεῶν ὑφάσματα καὶ ἀλουργῇ; ἐφ' οἷς καὶ τὸ δίθυρον εἶναι τὸ ἄντρον θαυμαστόν, τῶν μὲν τινων ἀνθρώποις εἰς κατὰβασιν πεποιημένων, τῶν δ' αὖ πάλιν θεοῖς· καὶ ὅτι αἱ μὲν ἀνθρώποις πορεύσιμοι πρὸς βορρᾶν ἄνεμον τετράφθαι λέγονται, αἱ δὲ τοῖς θεοῖς πρὸς νότον, οὐ μικρᾶς οὔσης ἀπορίας δι' ἣν αἰτίαν ἀνθρώποις μὲν τὰ βόρεια μέρη προσένειμε, τοῖς δ' αὖ θεοῖς τὰ νότια, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀνατολῇ καὶ δύσει πρὸς τοῦτο μᾶλλον κέχρηται, ὡς ἂν σχεδὸν πάντων τῶν ἱερῶν τὰ μὲν ἀγάλματα καὶ τὰς εἰσόδους ἐχόντων πρὸς ἀνατολὴν τετραμμένας, τῶν δὲ εἰσιόντων πρὸς δύσιν ἀφορώντων, ὅταν ἀντιπρόσωποι τῶν ἀγαλμάτων ἐστῶτες τοῖς θεοῖς τὰς λιτὰς καὶ θεραπείας προσάγωσι. Τοιούτων ἀσαφειῶν πλήρους ὄντος τοῦ διηγήματος πλάσμα μὲν ὡς ἔτυχεν εἰς ψυχαγωγίαν πεποιημένον μὴ εἶναι, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἱστορίας

τοπικῆς περιήγησιν ἔχειν, ἀλληγορεῖν δέ τι δι' αὐτοῦ τὸν ποιητὴν, προσθέντα μυστικῶς καὶ ἐλαίας φυτὸν πλησίον. ἃ δὴ πάντα ἀνιχνεύσαι καὶ ἀναπτύξαι ἔργον καὶ τοὺς παλαιοὺς νομίσαι καὶ ἡμᾶς μετ' ἐκείνων τε καὶ τὰ καθ' ἑαυτοὺς πειρᾶσθαι νῦν ἀνευρίσκειν.

(3.2, 4 p. 4.27-33) The poet allegorises in some way and speaks in riddles through these verses; Homer compels us to inquire which gate is for humans, which gate is for gods, and what he means by the cave with two entrances, why the cave is sacred to the nymphs, and why it is also both lovely and dark, since darkness is in no way lovely, but rather fearful; why it is not simply said that the cave is sacred to the nymphs, but the specification “which are called naiads” is added; also what is the meaning of his use of the mixing bowls and amphoras, as no liquid is poured into them, <but he says> that in them bees store up honey as in beehives. Let us assume that the high looms are votive offerings for the nymphs; but are they not made out of wood or some other substance, but are they also of stone, like the amphoras and mixing-bowls? And even this is not that obscure: but that the nymphs weave sea-purple clothes at these stone looms is a wonder not merely to be seen, but also to hear of. Because who would believe that goddesses weave sea-purple clothes in a dark cave at stone looms, and who would believe it when he hears someone say that these clothes woven by goddesses are visible and sea-purple? In addition, it is a wonder that the cave has two entrances, the one made as a path for the descent of humans, the other, in contrast, for gods; and that the entrance accessible to humans is said to be north-facing, the other, however, the one for gods, south-facing – it being not a simple question why Homer allocates the direction of the North to humans, the direction of the South to gods, rather than using the East and West for this, since the statues and entrances in almost all temples face the East, and those who enter face the West when they stand in front of the statues to offer prayers and honour the gods. Since Homer’s narration is full of such kind of obscurities, he (Cronius) says that it is not a fiction made for amusement, nor a geographical description of an actual place, but that the poet conveys some allegorical message through it, having mysteriously added an olive tree nearby. The ancients already thought that it was a hard task to track down and explain all of this, and now we shall attempt to figure it out with their help and by our own effort.

In this passage, Porphyry does not raise all of those issues haphazardly. In order to demonstrate a path for salvation of the soul as his ultimate aim, Porphyry follows a steady and deliberate course in *De Antro*. In this regard, Edwards says that in *De Antro* Porphyry divides the history of Odysseus into three chapters: 'his expiatory wanderings as a sinner, his illumination in Ithaca and his journey, under the discipline of reason, to his last home.'¹⁷⁸ So, the journey of the hero is a progress from the darkness of the cave to the light, under the guidance of Athena.

As the allegorical questions in the passage belong to a subject, I divide the text into four major topics. As seen in this chapter, Porphyry builds up all the arguments necessary to launch into the interpretation of Homeric verses in Section 1-5 in *De Antro*. In line with Porphyry's composition of the text, the enquiries into the double-gated cave and its loveliness and darkness represent the first main subject. Then, all the questions on nymphs, Naiad nymphs, mixing bowls and amphoras, bees, honey, high looms and their substance, sea-purple garments woven by the Naiad nymphs and their colour will be collected under the topic of the process of the embodiment of the soul identified with wetness, meaning its descent into the material world. Finally, Homer's division of the cave's entrances into one for the mortals and the other for the immortals belongs to the enquiry into the various heavenly paths for the soul to descend and to ascend to the god. The part of the gates of heaven and Porphyry's interpretations of the olive tree and Odyssean images such as Odysseus and the goddess Athena sitting under the tree, his stripping off the garments, and his leaving all valuable gifts in the cave, belong to the concept of the salvation of the soul.

Accordingly, in the next chapter, under the title of 'The Cave as Symbol and Image of the Cosmos,' I will focus on the interpretation of Homer's cave as a symbol

¹⁷⁸ Edwards 1988: 520-1. See Lamberton 1986: 130-1 for a discussion about the possible connection between the blinding of Polyphemus, which is a metaphor of suicide and Porphyry's intention of suicide (*VPlot*. 11).

of the cosmos, which constitutes the first crucial part of the treatise (*De Antro* 5-9). In it, I will evaluate the concept of the cave as a symbol of the material world, from which human beings must escape to attain the intelligible realm. In the third chapter, under the title of 'Embodiment,' I will investigate the sections of *De Antro* that deal with the world of genesis and, in a narrower sense, the human body and the senses, against the background of Neoplatonic metaphysics, but also common Greek symbolic thinking, which underpins Porphyry's associations and identifications (*De Antro* 10-19). In the last chapter, under the title of 'The Path Towards the Immortality of the Soul,' I will discuss Porphyry's association of the journey of the soul and the two entrances of Homer's cave, the northern one for human beings and the southern one for immortals, along with Porphyry's overarching interpretation of Odysseus' travels as the journey of the soul and its salvation from the irrational to the rational through virtue, personified by the goddess Athena (*De Antro* 20-35).

Chapter 2

The Cave as Symbol and Image of the Cosmos

The interpretation of Homer's cave as symbol of the cosmos constitutes the first and crucial part of Porphyry's *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, which covers many different symbolic uses of caves in mystery cults, namely the cult of Mithras and the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries; in poetry, notably the *Hymn to Apollo*; and in philosophy, notably Plato's Allegory of the Cave in *Republic 7*, itself inspired by Pythagorean and Empedoclean thinking. Porphyry's examination starts exploring the real caves in the world, and extends to what the cave symbolises ontologically. Porphyry, in fact, follows Homer's dualistic description of the cave, lovely and dark, by presenting the Mithraic cave and Platonic cave in his exegesis:¹⁷⁹ the former is a place where the followers believe they will find the salvation of their souls, and the latter a place which one should avoid at all costs, should one wish to lead a philosophical life.

In this chapter, following Porphyry's extended interpretation, I will focus on the justification of the concept of the cave as a symbol of the cosmos and seek to explain the meaning of its features described as lovely and dark by Homer in Porphyry's thought, which, in fact, show the differences in its perception by the senses and the mind.

Having proved that Homer's cave is not a piece of fiction (πλάσμα, *De Antro* 4 p. 6.10), but that it is matched by an actual cave on Ithaca according to those 'who have written geographical descriptions,' in particular Artemidorus of Ephesus (*De*

¹⁷⁹ Struck 2004: 72-3.

Antro 4 p. 6.4), Porphyry states that the actual existence of the cave should not prevent us from asking what the intention was of those who consecrated this cave to the nymphs or of Homer. Because sanctuaries established by the ancients contain mystical symbols (μήτε ... ἄνευ συμβόλων μυστικῶν τὰ ιερά, *De Antro* 4 p. 6.14-15) and Homer does not describe them randomly, the cave's actual existence, in fact, supports Porphyry's claim that it is 'full of ancient wisdom' (τῆς παλαιᾶς σοφίας πλήρες, *De Antro* 4 p. 6.18), and, therefore, it must be investigated and the symbolism of its contents and attributes explained (*De Antro* 4 p. 6.18-20).

2.1. The Materialisation of the Cave

In this section, I will seek to explain how Porphyry examines the relationship between the cosmos and Matter, and the concept of the cave as a symbol of the cosmos from the Presocratic philosophers to the mysteries of Mithras, whose followers attempted to find the salvation of their souls. The analysis will also cover Neoplatonic reception of those concepts, particularly Plotinus, and their relationships with Neoplatonic doctrine when required. Porphyry follows a historical and chronological order as he examines every aspect of the cave and its association with Matter and the cosmos. He basically adheres to the doctrines of Plato and Plotinus, as he uses some philosophical concepts derived from the Presocratics in justification of the relation between the cosmos and Matter, perceived by the senses through the concept of the cave. As I will show later, the darkness of the cave perceived by intellect is nothing but a mystical and unique experience to attain higher truth at the intellectual level.

2.1.1. The Cave, Cosmos, and Matter

Porphyry begins the physical examination of Homer's cave by referring to philosophical concepts, which date back to the Presocratic philosophers such as Anaximander, Heraclitus and Xenophanes of Colophon, the last being identified as

the founder of Eleatic philosophy.¹⁸⁰ Here, Porphyry shares the common feature of allegorical readers, such as Cornutus and Numenius, as he uses various ancient sources in his analysis of the concept of the cave. The following passage (*De Antro* 5 p. 6.21- 8.6), as part of the wide-ranging discussion, shows that the cave, ontologically, symbolises the material world or cosmos:

(5 p. 6.21-8.7) Ἄντρα μὲν δὴ ἐπιεικῶς οἱ παλαιοὶ καὶ σπήλαια τῷ κόσμῳ καθιέρουν καθ' ὅλον τε αὐτὸν καὶ κατὰ μέρη λαμβάνοντες, σύμβολον μὲν τῆς ὕλης ἐξ ἧς ὁ κόσμος τὴν γῆν παραδιδόντες (διό τινες καὶ αὐτόθεν τὴν ὕλην τὴν γῆν εἶναι ἐτίθεντο), τὸν <δὲ> ἐκ τῆς ὕλης γινόμενον κόσμον διὰ τῶν ἄντρων παριστῶντες, ὅτι τε ὡς ἐπὶ πολὺ αὐτοφυῆ τὰ ἄντρα καὶ συμφυῆ τῇ γῇ ὑπὸ πέτρας περιεχόμενα μονοειδοῦς, ἧς τὰ μὲν ἔνδον κοῖλα, τὰ δ' ἔξω εἰς τὸ ἀπεριόριστον τῆς γῆς ἀνεῖται· αὐτοφυῆς δὲ ὁ κόσμος καὶ [αὐτοσυμφυῆς] προσπεφυκῶς τῇ ὕλῃ, ἣν λίθον καὶ πέτραν διὰ τὸ ἀργὸν καὶ ἀντίτυπον πρὸς τὸ εἶδος εἶναι ἡνίπτοντο, ἄπειρον κατὰ τὴν αὐτῆς ἀμορφίαν τιθέντες. ῥευστῆς δ' οὐσίας αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ εἶδους δι' οὗ μορφοῦται καὶ φαίνεται καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἐστερημένης, τὸ ἔνυδρον καὶ ἔνικμον τῶν ἄντρων καὶ σκοτεινὸν καὶ ὡς ὁ ποιητὴς ἔφη ἡεροειδὲς οἰκείως ἐδέξαντο εἰς σύμβολον τῶν προσόντων τῷ κόσμῳ διὰ τὴν ὕλην. Διὰ μὲν οὖν τὴν ὕλην ἡεροειδὲς καὶ σκοτεινὸς ὁ κόσμος.

(5 p. 6.21-8.7) The ancients fittingly dedicated caves and caverns to the cosmos, considering them either as a whole or in their individual parts. They interpreted earth as a symbol of the matter out of which the cosmos is formed (hence some even automatically assumed that matter equals earth), and they represented the cosmos, which is generated from matter, by means of caves, because caves, for the most part, are naturally formed and bound up with earth, encompassed by uniform rock, whose interior is hollow and whose exterior extends into earth without demarcation. The cosmos is naturally formed and is bound up with matter, which they signified through stone and rock because it is idle and resistant to form, making it indefinite in accordance with its formlessness. Since matter is in a state of flux and deprived of the form which provides particularity and makes it perceptible as an

¹⁸⁰ Pl. *Soph.* 242c-d and Arist. *Met.* 986b.

entity, they appropriately took the wetness and humidity of caves, and their darkness and (as the Poet says) ‘mistiness,’ as symbolic of the characteristics of the cosmos that are due to matter. Because of Matter the cosmos is, therefore, misty and dark.

In this passage, Porphyry postulates that there is an established relationship between caves or caverns, the cosmos, earth and Matter: the cosmos or the physical world is identified with caves and caverns in a microcosmic sense, and earth is the symbol of the matter of which the cosmos is comprised. At first sight, the statement ‘some even automatically assumed that matter equals earth’ appears to be Xenophanian (*De Antro* 5 p. 6.23-24), the idea that earth is the ‘first principle’ (ἀρχή) out of which the cosmos is generated, or a natural formation in which living creatures live.¹⁸¹ However, it was a common Greek belief that living beings were generated from earth and wetness, for example, the story of Hephaestus’ creation of Pandora by mixing earth and water in Hesiod (*Op.* 61).¹⁸²

In *De Antro* 5 p. 8.2, Porphyry refers to the concept of *apeiron*, meaning ‘boundless’ or ‘unlimited,’ which dates back to Anaximander (c. 610- c. 546 B.C.E.).¹⁸³ It is appropriate to assume that the *apeiron* is a mass of substance called boundless or limitless because of its lack of containment or its qualitative indetermination. In this sense, it recalls the neutrality of *chaos*, the pre-cosmic state of the universe, in Hesiod (*Th.* 116). Porphyry’s commentary on *apeiron* in his

¹⁸¹ Xenophanes 21 B 27 DK = Theodoretus *Graecarum Affectionum Curatio* 4.5; Arist. *Met.* 989a, 986b; *De Cael.* 303b; *Phys.* 187a for Aristotle’s claim that nobody assumed earth as primary substance. See Guthrie 1962: 383-7; Leshner 1992: 124-8; Graham 2006: 70-7 for the doxographical controversy about the fragment. Other fragments: Xenophanes 21 B 29 DK = Philoponus *Commentary on Aristotles’ Physics* 1.5.125 and 21 B 33 DK = Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 10.314 = *Against the Physicists* 2.314; see also Leshner 1992: 131-4; Simonini 2010: 95.

¹⁸² See Porphyry’s reference to the myth of Pandora (*Op.* 94-98) in *De Antro* 30 p. 28.31-33.

¹⁸³ Arist. *Phys.* 3.203b4-15 affirms that Anaximander regarded the *apeiron* as the origin or source of the material principle (ἀρχή), and that it is temporally and spatially infinite because of its eternity (ἀίδιον, 12 B 2 DK) and immortality (ἄθάνατον, 12 B 3 DK). In addition to its temporal and spatial infinity, the *apeiron* covers all things and rules them (*Phys.* 203b11-12 = 12 A 15 DK). The *apeiron* is a distinctive principle, being neither air, nor water, nor earth (12 B 1 DK; D.L. 2.1 = 12 A 1 DK). See also Barnes 1982: 28-37; Kahn 1985: 231-9; Naddaf 2005: 67-70; Graham 2006: 28-34.

Homeric Questions (ad Il. 14.200) may be helpful in elucidating his understanding of this controversial term. Porphyry, there, examines three Homeric lines referring to the 'boundlessness' of earth, which seem to be contradictory: Homer calls the earth 'boundless' in *Iliad* 20.58 and *Odyssey* 1.98, whereas in *Iliad* 14.200 he lets Hera say 'for I am going to visit the *limits*' of all-nurturing earth.' In his attempt to reconcile these Homeric lines, Porphyry presents its various definitions, of which one example is particularly useful as he also explains it with respect to magnitude related to size or number in other examples. In this example, he states that *apeiron* is used for what is circular and spherical in shape. The circumference of a circle or sphere does not have a beginning or an end, that is to say, they do not have certain boundaries from somewhere to somewhere else. Thus, every point in them could be a beginning or an end. Although these geometrical figures are not infinite in terms of size, they are boundless because they cannot be said to have distinct boundaries.

When it comes to Plotinus' treatment of *apeiron*, his interpretation of *apeiron* in *Enneads* 2.4.7.13-20 refers obliquely to Anaximander.¹⁸⁴ Here Plotinus reasons that the *apeiron* can be regarded as a proper explanation of Matter if it means the indefinite substrate that is the basis of physical bodies (*Enn.* 2.4.15.8-17). Matter can neither be definite nor defined, but it is the indefinite itself. This indefiniteness represents imperfection which is inherent only in Matter (*Enn.* 2.4.5.28). Thus, Matter ought to be named *apeiron* in order to express its indefinite, unqualified, insubstantial and unintelligent nature. Although Porphyry's brief statement provides little explanation in *De Antro* 5 p. 8.1-2, his definition of Matter as indefinite or *apeiron* due to its formlessness is consistent with Plotinus' explanation of the relationship between the *apeiron* and Matter, a relationship which is intrinsic to non-being, which is perpetually indefinite and inadequate; an image of being and the possible source of the material world, and yet not containing any reality (*Enn.* 1.8.3, 3.6.7, 6.6.3). Matter can be conceived as infinity as opposed to measurability, boundlessness as opposed to limitedness, shapelessness as

¹⁸⁴ Stamatellos 2007: 139-42.

opposed to form, always inferior as opposed to sufficiency in itself, indeterminate, entirely passive (*Enn.* 1.8.3.12-15).

Porphyry continues to define Matter and states that Matter is in a state of flux (ῥευστῆς δ' οὐσης, *De Antro* 5 p. 8.3). Matter's state of flux is a reference to Heraclitus' flux theory.¹⁸⁵ Porphyry's reference to the flux theory is appropriate for the definition of the material realm where souls are embodied and which symbolises all pleasures, passions, emotions and toils from which a wise man should remove himself. This view is also found in Numenius' brief statement which describes Matter as inclined to 'desire' (ἐπιθυμητικόν) and 'being in flux' (ῥεούσης).¹⁸⁶ Like Aristotle, Plotinus refers to Heraclitus as one of the Presocratic philosophers and counts him among material monists (*Enn.* 5.1.9.3-5).¹⁸⁷ In order to explain the difference between the undivided, formless and transcendental principle and the material world of coming into existence found in Heraclitus, Plotinus discusses both the Heraclitean material world and the eternal flux of becoming.¹⁸⁸ Porphyry's mention of the Heraclitean flux theory in *De Antro*, with reference to the material world of 'becoming,' seems to be compatible with both Plotinus' distinction between the transcendental principle and the material world of genesis and Platonic intelligible being and perceptible 'becoming' in the *Timaeus*.

In *De Antro* 5 p. 6.27, Porphyry describes the inner part of 'caves' (ἄντρα) and 'caverns' (σπήλαια) as κοῖλα, a term associated with Plato: the geographical description of the earth as a hollow spherical body is found in *Phaedo* 108e.¹⁸⁹ Socrates claims that everywhere there are 'many hollows' (πολλὰ κοῖλα, *Phaedo*

¹⁸⁵ Heraclitus 22 B 12 DK; Pl. *Theaet.* 160d, *Crat.* 401d; Arist. *Met.* 1010a7-15; Barnes 1982 65-9; Robinson 1996: 81-2; Graham 2006: 129-30. Porphyry also defines the involvement of 'sense-perception with matter as always much-mixed and fluid' in his commentary on Ptolemy's *Harmonics* (18.12): ἡ δ' αἴσθησις μεθ' ὅλης πάντοτε πολυμιγοῦς τε καὶ ῥευστῆς.

¹⁸⁶ Numenius F 11 DP = F 20 L = Eus. *PE* 11.17.11-18, 5.

¹⁸⁷ Possible sources of Plotinus are Heraclitus 22 B 10, 12, 50 and 91 DK; D.L. 9.8; Pl. *Crat.* 402a8-10: the flux becoming; *Tim.*: the world of intelligible being and the world of perceptible becoming; Arist. *Met.* 987a33-34, 1078b12ff, *De Cael.* 298b29-33; see Stamatellos 2007: 44-8.

¹⁸⁸ Heraclitus 22 B 10 DK = Arist. *De Mundo* 5.396b20.

¹⁸⁹ The sphericity of the earth is ascribed to Pythagoras or to Parmenides (Theophrastus 28 A 44 DK).

109b5), different in appearance and size, in which water, mist and air have gathered. Water, mist and air are, in fact, the residue of the aether that always flows in the hollows of earth. Human beings dwell in the hollows of the earth, even if they are unaware of this (*Phaedo* 109b-c).¹⁹⁰ For hollows, Anaxagoras (c. 510-428 B.C.E) seems to have been one of Plato's sources,¹⁹¹ who reportedly claimed that the earth is hollow (κοίλη) and includes water 'in its hollow places' (ἐν τοῖς κοιλώμασιν).¹⁹² In his examination of the cave as a natural formation, to make a physical connection between caves and caverns, the cosmos, earth and Matter, Porphyry draws on the Presocratic philosophers, passionate observers of heaven and earth, who believed that the natural world was explicable in terms of fundamental material principles. All the concepts used for the definition of Matter justify Homer's description of the cave as dark and Porphyry's overall aim, that is, to demonstrate that the material world should be avoided, particularly if one seeks to attain the truth.

2.1.2. *The Cosmos: Beautiful and Dark*

(6.6-13) Διὰ δὲ τὴν τοῦ εἴδους συμπλοκὴν καὶ διακόσμησιν, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ κόσμος ἐκλήθη, καλὸς τέ ἐστι καὶ ἐπέραστος. ὅθεν οἰκείως ἐπ' αὐτοῦ ἂν ῥηθείη ἄντρον ἐπήρατον μὲν τῷ εὐθεὺς ἐντυγχάνοντι διὰ τὴν τῶν εἰδῶν μέθεξιν, ἡροειδὲς δὲ σκοποῦντι τὴν ὑποβάθραν αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὴν εἰσιόντι τῷ νῷ· ὥστε τὰ μὲν ἔξω καὶ ἐπιπολαίως ἐπήρατα, τὰ δ' ἔνδον καὶ ἐν βάθει ἡροειδῆ.

(6.6-13) But because of the combination of form and the orderly arrangement of brought about by form, from which the cosmos has also received its name, it is beautiful and lovely. Hence it [the cosmos] might be appropriately described as a cave that is lovely at first sight because of its participation in the forms but, on the

¹⁹⁰ Burnet 1911: 109-10; Hackforth 1955: 173-5; Dorter 1982: 164. It is ascribed to Pythagoras or to Parmenides (Theophrastus 28 A 44 DK).

¹⁹¹ Anaxagoras 59 A 42 DK = Hippolytus *Refutatio* 1.8, 1 (D. 561; W. 13).

¹⁹² Archelaus, a pupil of Anaxagoras and a possible teacher of Socrates (5th century B.C.E.), alternatively asserted that the earth was originally a lake, high at its circumference and concave (κοίλη) in the center, see Archelaus 60 A 4.14 DK = Hippolytus *Refutatio* 1.9 (D. 563; W. 15).

other hand, as one that is misty if one examines its substratum and enters into it with one's intellect; so it is lovely on the outside and on the surface but misty inside and in depth.

In this section, I will discuss the characteristics of the cave described by Homer as 'lovely and dark,' which Porphyry exhibits as a paradox in *De Antro* 3.5-7, in which he states that the darkness is not lovely but rather fearful. In *De Antro* 6.6-13, Porphyry rationalises this paradox by discussing its participation in the Forms and its perception through the mind, which are references to the loveliness and darkness of the cave, respectively, building on his identification of the cosmos as Matter in *De Antro* 5.

2.1.2.1. Participation in the Forms

In his justification of Homer's description of the cave as lovely, Porphyry states that its participation in the ideas or Forms (διὰ τὴν τῶν εἰδῶν μέθεξιν) is the reason why the cosmos appears lovely in *De Antro* 6.10-11. The phrase 'participation in the ideas' is mostly found in Plato's *Parmenides*, which is perhaps his most puzzling dialogue, featuring an imaginary discussion between an old and noble Parmenides and an inexperienced Socrates. Apart from this dialogue, I would like to offer some examples of how Plato uses 'partaking,' μετέχειν, and 'participating,' μεταλαμβάνειν, in his other dialogues.¹⁹³ In the *Protagoras*, his reference to humans 'partaking of justice' (δίκης μετέχειν, 322d5) is an implication of fairness, while it is not so certain that the 'human partaking of a divine portion' (θείας μετέσχε μοίρας, 322a3) implies that the human becomes, to any extent, divine. In the *Euthydemus*, Socrates says that Dionysodorus also 'partakes of discussions,' along with his brother Euthydemus (μετέχει δὲ καὶ οὗτος τῶν λόγων, 271b8). Also, in the *Phaedo* (100d4-8) Socrates briefly remarks that what makes something beautiful is the Form

¹⁹³ Dancy 2004: 13, 186-8.

of Beauty itself through participation, without giving any explanation as to what the nature of the relation between participation and the thing is.

In my analysis of the loveliness of Homer's cave (or the cosmos), I will begin by discussing the relevant passages of Plato's *Timaeus* and of Porphyry's commentaries on this dialogue in order to elucidate how Porphyry evaluates the loveliness of the cosmos. The dialogue is mainly an account of the formation of the cosmos and its order and beauty and I think that it is a complementary text to Porphyry's claim on the loveliness of the cosmos in *De Antro*. I will later turn to Porphyry's *Commentary on the Parmenides* in order to explain how the strata in the Neoplatonic cosmology and metaphysics interact with each other.

In the *Timaeus*, two main reasons for the beauty of the cosmos are presented: it is the most beautiful of all the things that have come to be (ὁ μὲν γὰρ κάλλιστος τῶν γεγονότων, *Tim.* 29a4) because the Demiurge fashions it according to an eternal Paradigm, which Proclus deems the most divine (τὸ θειότατον, *In Tim.* 1.335.6-7); and the Demiurge himself is also the best cause of all (ὁ δ' ἄριστος τῶν αἰτίων, *Tim.* 29a6). Proclus examines how Plato composes the terms beautiful and most beautiful, and good and best in *Timaeus* 29a5-8, and, according to his report, Porphyry interprets the beauty of the cosmos and the Demiurge as the best cause of all, as follows:¹⁹⁴

Προστίθῃσι δὲ ὁ Πορφύριος, ὅτι οὔτε, εἰ ἄριστος ὁ δημιουργός, ἔπεται τὸ βλέπειν αὐτὸν πρὸς τὸ αἰδῖον, εἰ μὴ καλὰ δημιουργοῖ, οὔτε, εἰ καλὰ δημιουργοί [τις], τὸ βλέπειν πρὸς τὸ αἰδῖον, εἰ μὴ ὡς ἄριστος δημιουργὸς τὰ καλὰ ποιεῖ, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τύχην—διὸ συνέπλεξεν ἀμφότερα ὁ Πλάτων.

Porphyry adds that, if the Demiurge is the best, it does not follow that he looks to that which is everlasting [as paradigm] if he does not create beautiful products, and that, if he were to create beautiful products, it does not follow that he looks to that

¹⁹⁴ Trans. Runia 2008: 187-88 n. 772; F 44.6-10 Sodano = Procl. *In Tim.* 1.332.9-14.

which is everlasting if he does not as the best craftsman make beautiful objects, but he could do this by chance, and this was the reason that Plato interwove both terms.

In this passage, the connection between the eternal model and the Demiurge ensures the beauty of the cosmos and indicates that the cosmos was not created by chance. The latter idea is also found in *De Antro* 32.20-22, in which Porphyry says that the cosmos did not exist at random or by chance, but was the finished product of the god's (the Demiurge) mind and intelligent nature (ὁ κόσμος οὐκ εἰκῇ οὐδ' ὡς ἔτυχε γέγονεν, ἀλλ' ἔστι φρονήσεως θεοῦ καὶ νοερᾶς φύσεως ἀποτέλεσμα).¹⁹⁵

Elsewhere, according to Proclus' report in his commentary on undgrudging character of the Demiurge in *Timaeus* 29e2-3, Porphyry thinks that generated things having acquired 'harmony' (ἡ ἁρμονία), 'proportion or symmetry' (ἡ συμμετρία),¹⁹⁶ and 'order' (ἡ τάξις) are beautiful and good (F 46 Sodano = *In Tim.* 1.366 13-27).¹⁹⁷ Regarding Plato's statement in *Timaeus* 30c5, where he says that nothing that bears a resemblance to anything imperfect could ever become beautiful, Proclus claims that Plato does not assign any of 'the particular things' (τῶν μερικῶν) perfection or completeness, since each of them is imperfect in comparison with the universe (πρὸς τὸ ὅλον).¹⁹⁸ Proclus illustrates the proposition that becoming whole through participation makes any particular living thing beautiful and perfect, and later particular things might be beautiful but not 'most beautiful' as is the cosmos (*In Tim.* 1.422.5-423.7). Proclus' quotation from Porphyry also supports the idea that the beauty of the cosmos derives from having a share of the whole, that is, the intelligible realm (F 52 Sodano).¹⁹⁹

αἴτιον δέ, φησὶν ὁ Πορφύριος, ὅτι ἐν ἐκείνοις τὸ μέρος ὅλον ἐστί· πάντα γάρ ἐστιν ἐν ἐκάστῳ μερικῶς ὅσα τῷ ὅλῳ παντελῶς διὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν τῶν νοητῶν εἰδῶν. καὶ

¹⁹⁵ See also Chapter 4.2.2.

¹⁹⁶ See Chapter 2.1.3.2 for discussion of συμμετρου, which Porphyry uses in *De Antro* 6.14

¹⁹⁷ Sodano 1964: 29-30; Runia 2008: 228.

¹⁹⁸ See *In Tim.* 1.421.7-422.5 for Proclus' elaborate discussion of Plato's statement.

¹⁹⁹ Trans. Runia 2008: 305-6; F 52.12-17 (Sodano) = Procl. *In Tim.* 1.422.14-20; Sodano 1964: 39-40, according to Sodano the citation goes from 1.422.5 to 1.422.26 in Proclus' commentary.

ἔστι μὲν ἀληθὴς ὁ λόγος, ὅτι καὶ τῶν μερῶν ἐν ἐκείνοις ἕκαστον ὅλον πῃ διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὰ πάντα κοινωνίαν ὁλούμενον, ἐν μὲν ὄν κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν, πάντα δὲ κατὰ μετουσίαν.

The reason is, Porphyry says, that in them the part is a whole. For all things are present in each partially just as they are in the whole completely on account of the union of the intelligible forms. And it is true to say that each of the parts in them is, in some way, whole, being constituted a whole in consequence of its association with all, and it is one or unity in essence, but all things according to participation.

In line with Proclus' and Porphyry's statement quoted above, we can conclude that the seven planets and the fixed stars which compose the physical universe are beautiful only when they are involved in the whole, for wholeness displays beauty appropriate to it. Thus, beauty and perfection, which belong to each heavenly body, are due to the fact that each is a part of the whole, and this participation enables them to be whole. As Plato's Form of Good is the source of everything, in accordance with the eternal model of the Forms, the Demiurge fashions the cosmos, which has a share in the Form of Beauty and Good. In the hierarchical model of the Neoplatonists, the cosmos has a lower kind of beauty because it is situated in the remotest substrate from the supreme principles and its participation in the Forms occurs by means of the Demiurge or the demiurgic cause, which has a dominant influence on the cosmos in comparison with the paradigmatic cause because the former has a lower position than the latter.

For the purpose of understanding how the cosmos (or the material world) participates in the Forms, I would like now to turn to Plato's *Parmenides*, where all the arguments in the dialogue concern the relationship between the Forms and physical objects. It is difficult to say which argument(s) Porphyry has in mind or whether any of those arguments is in his mind, because the dialogue seems to contain Plato's preliminary analysis on the subject, whereas Proclus considers the

dialogue as maieutic.²⁰⁰ The fourth argument, ‘paradigm and image’ (*Parm.* 132d) seems consistent with the context of *De Antro* in the sense that the argument implies an asymmetrical relation of beings and compares the superiority of the Forms with these beings which are ‘images’ (εἰκόνες), like shadows and reflections in water and surfaces, as in the case of *De Antro* in which Porphyry refers to the cave as the ‘image of the cosmos’ in *De Antro* 6.18 (εἰκόνα for the Mithraic cave), *De Antro* 8.21 (εἰκόνα, twice for the Platonic cave), *De Antro* 12.22 (εἰκόνα τοῦ κόσμου), *De Antro* 21 p. 22.2 (ἄντρου εἰκόνα ... τοῦ κόσμου), *De Antro* 32.22 (τῇ εἰκόνι τοῦ κόσμου τῷ ἄντρῳ). I will later seek to show that the asymmetrical relation between the Forms and the material world reflects the mistiness of the cave when it is perceived by the mind. However, the argument may be appropriate because of its indication of the inferiority of the material world, which supports Porphyry’s aim throughout the treatise.

In his commentary on the *Parmenides*, Proclus refers to criticism from a certain predecessor who might be Amelius or Iamblichus according to Dillon,²⁰¹ but possibly not Porphyry. Amelius or Iamblichus defends the three Middle Platonic analogies of participation and considers them as representations of the way of participation in various levels of Form: the seal in wax (*In Parm.* 841.1ff), the reflection in water (*In Parm.* 839.20ff), which appears as a reflection in the mirror in Plotinus (*Enn.* 3.6.7.24-25, 3.6.9.18-19), and portraits and figurines (*Enn.* 3.8.2; *In Parm.* 841.18ff). Proclus rejects these three analogies because of their drawbacks. Nevertheless, he accepts the originality of these analogies and claims that sense-objects receive reflections of the Forms at the level of Soul, and they are images of intellectual forms. It is likely that Porphyry might have adopted an analogy similar to those Middle Platonic analogies concerning the reference to the cosmos’ participation in the Forms in *De Antro* 6.10.

²⁰⁰ Dillon 1987: 199.

²⁰¹ *In Parm.* 846.22ff, 847.30ff; Dillon 1987: 197.

At this point, it will be appropriate to look at the notion of participation in the anonymous commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*. Concerning the disputed issue of Porphyry's authorship of the commentary, Hadot identifies it as Porphyrian²⁰² and Dillon agrees with him, taking into account the basic tenets and the Porphyrian terminology in the commentary.²⁰³ Bechtle, on the other hand, suspects that its origin is pre-Plotinian and Middle Platonic.²⁰⁴

In F 5 (p. 11, Fol. 93^r) of the commentary, Porphyry addresses the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* (142b-143a2),²⁰⁵ whose subject is the intelligible realm, associated with νοῦς. He grounds his thought on the assumption that the first One in the first hypothesis, ἓν, is beyond being and does not participate in substance (οὐσία); on the other hand, the one in the second hypothesis, τὸ ὄν, is different from the primal. The second hypothesis participates in substance because it is not pure, and it is a new hypostasis generated from the first One and from being, that is, it is integrated. Participation is a mutual and horizontal process of mixing the One with being. This kind of participation, which can also be found in Plato's *Sophist*,²⁰⁶ is an implication of the relation of the Forms participating in each other or of the high level of genesis. The second type of participation, however, called vertical or hierarchical by Bechtle (F 5, p.12, Fol. 93^v)²⁰⁷ is that the second or inferior One participates in the first or superior One. Accordingly, the second One receives unity, which is why it is called whole in all parts (τὸ ὅλον). Although Porphyry's commentary on the *Parmenides* is hardly helpful in clarifying the relation between Forms and Matter through participation and although it raises some significant problems in itself, the second type of participation in the commentary ensures that the material realm's participation in the Forms is vertical.

²⁰² Hadot 1968: 104; cf. Edwards 1990a 14-25.

²⁰³ Dillon 2007a: 54 n.10 and 2010: 28.

²⁰⁴ Bechtle 1999: 90-1 for his remarks on Hadot's position.

²⁰⁵ Bechtle 1999: 58-60 (translation) and 170-2 (commentary).

²⁰⁶ *Soph.* 254d: τὸ δέ γε ὄν μεικτὸν ἀμφοῖν: ἐστὸν γὰρ ἅμφω που.

²⁰⁷ Bechtle 1999: 60-2 (translation) and 172-4 (commentary).

In the commentary, Porphyry introduces a triad to explain the relation between the One and Being. This relation shows similarities with the First and Second Gods of Numenius and the Plotinian One: The First God or the Good, called 'Father,' in his own place, is absolute and indivisible, and isolated from all activities.²⁰⁸ He is also called Intellect (F 16 DP = F 25 L) and Primal Intellect is equal to Essential Being (F 17 DP = F 26 L).²⁰⁹ The Second God is 'Creator,' used by the First God so as to generate and produce, in the sense that the Second God contains demiurgic activities and is related to the intelligible and to the sensible. Numenius' First God is compatible with the first One in Porphyry's commentary on the *Parmenides*, while the Second God is reminiscent of the second One which is reproduced from the first One.²¹⁰

In F 6, addressing the first hypothesis, Porphyry expresses the negative aspect of the One, which is the Plotinian One described as entirely transcendent. However, the subject of the second hypothesis has the positive feature of the Plotinian One in terms of its emanative aspect, opening itself into a trinity by means of mingling with Being.²¹¹ It is no longer the first One on the level of existence and life and intelligence: An 'activity' (ἐνέργεια) on the level of existence is an activity at rest (ἐστῶσα) because everything forms a single unity, and thinking and thought are the same. An activity on the level of thinking is an activity turning to itself, that is to say that intellect moves towards the providence of νοῦς, and it becomes life and infinite. Thirdly, an activity on the level of life is the one 'falling headlong' from existence (ἐκνεῦσασα). On the level of life, the subject and object (thinking and thought) are no longer in unity, as Porphyry states the reason that intellect is in the state of 'indeterminacy' (ἀόριστος).

²⁰⁸ Procl. *In Tim.* 1.303= F 21 DP, F 11, 12, 16 and 19 DP.

²⁰⁹ Dillon 1996: 371-2.

²¹⁰ See Bechtel 1999: 78-86 for a detailed discussion.

²¹¹ Dillon 2007a: 58. This trinity or triad is called Father, Potency or Life, and Intellect in the *Chaldean Theology*; see also Bechtel 1999: 179.

At this stage, I believe that Porphyry's commentary on the *Parmenides* has some significant aspects for our theme. In line with the relation between the Plotinian One and Being as a third element, we may conclude that the cosmos (or the material world) is the object of the mind on the level of life where the connection between subject and object is loosened. Having in his mind this weakness which also seems to signify the dominance of sense-perception over the mind, Porphyry justifies Homer's description of the cave as lovely, only when it is perceived by the senses. At the macrocosmic level, the material world may be characterised as lovely because it is a part of the whole due to the positive features of the One in its lower aspect.²¹²

2.1.2.2. The Cave Perceived Through Intellect

Despite his reference to the loveliness of the cave due to its participation in the Forms, Porphyry states that the cave is misty for the one who contemplates its base and enters into it with 'intellect or mind' (τῷ νῷ). His statement is reminiscent of Plato's *Phaedo* (65d-66a), whereby reality is not grasped by sense-perception but with intellect alone (αὐτῇ τῇ διανοίᾳ). Porphyry's comparison of the features of the cave through different perception indicates that he draws our attention to the negative aspect of the material realm or 'Matter' (ἡ ὕλη) symbolised by the cave, where it is situated opposite the intelligible realm in the Neoplatonic cosmology. Porphyry uses Matter in *De Antro* 6.6-7 and briefly mentions that it is the cause of the darkness and mistiness of the cosmos (διὰ μὲν οὖν τὴν ὕλην ἡεροειδὴς καὶ σκοτεινὸς ὁ κόσμος). At this point, I will focus on Plotinus' thought on Matter and its participation in the Forms, and Porphyry's *Sententiae* 20 and 30, and a relevant passage of his *History of Philosophy* (F 221 Smith), as I believe that he follows Plotinus in this particular subject.

Plotinus proposes a universe generated from a single, incorporeal, transcendent entity, the One engendering the strata below itself through the

²¹² Dillon 2007a: 58 n.18 and 2010: 28.

process of emanation.²¹³ The One is unable to be either described by discourse or to be comprehended by thought and is purely a self-contained entity. Everything is subjected to multiplicity. The first one is the realm of Intellect in which all intellectual realities and Plato's Forms dwell. In Plato, the Forms are objects of the thought of a divine mind and Plotinus considers them to be involved in Intellect.²¹⁴ Plotinus does not separate the Forms from their participants with respect to its relationship with them, which also protects the unity and the singularity through its relationships with other Forms. Every Form internally includes all the Forms (*Enn.* 5.8.4.6-10); for example, Goodness is just, and Justice is good. At the same time, because all connections in intellect have their own integrity, some part of goodness may not be attributed to Justice as some part of Justice cannot be attributed to goodness.

The realm of the Soul is where life begins, and the realm of Matter is a shadowy world which is nearly identical to evil and truly non-being. Plotinus identifies Matter (ὕλη), a term rarely used by Plato, with the receptacle²¹⁵ in the *Timaeus* (52a8-b1, *Enn.* 3.6.13.19). He agrees with Aristotle's interpretation of the receptacle of becoming as being Matter.²¹⁶ Even so, the 'receptacle' (ὑποδοχή or τὸ δεχόμενον) is questionable and uncertain as to whether it is Matter, 'space' χώρα or 'place' τόπος (*Tim.* 48e-53b). It is even called the 'nurse or the mother' (τιθήνη; τροφος, *Tim.* 88d7). In *Enneads* 3.6.7.14, Plotinus refers to Plato's statement whereby the receptacle is the base where all things are formed, moved and shaped according to what enters it (ὑπὸ τῶν εἰσιόντων, *Tim.* 50c2).²¹⁷ Matter has stability since it remains as itself (*Tim.* 50b6). However, Matter also has no stability because of its destitution of determination and its various appearances at different times (*Tim.* 50c3) and it is presented as having an invisible nature (*Tim.* 51a7). As a third kind, the lack of order and of characters in the receptacle (ἄμορφος) is an echo of

²¹³ Wilberding 2012: 217-18.

²¹⁴ Cf. *Tim.* 28a; see Emilsson 1988: 10-22 on Plotinus' *Metaphysics*.

²¹⁵ For Matter: *Polit.* 272a4; *Phil.* 54c2; *Crit.* 107c3, 111c3, 114e6, 118b7, 118e1; *Leg.* 704c8, 705c1, 761c7, 843e2, 849d5. Reydam-Schils 1999: 28-32.

²¹⁶ See *Enn.* 2.4.1.1-2, 3.6.13.12-18, 3.6.14.29-32, 3.6.19.15-18; Gerson 1996: 109.

²¹⁷ Fleet 1995: 172.

the precosmic state of the universe, as in the case of Porphyry's description of Matter as 'indefinite because of its formlessness' in *De Antro* 5 p. 8.2 (ἄπειρον κατὰ τὴν αὐτῆς ἀμορφίαν).²¹⁸

Plotinus discusses the connection between Forms and Matter, that is, participation, in various places in the *Enneads*. In *On the Descent of Soul into Bodies*, he asserts that the existence of Matter enables its participation (μετασχεῖν) in Goodness because it emanates from the One (*Enn.* 4.8.6.16-23). If the genesis of Matter is the result of the necessity (ἐξ ἀνάγκης), it cannot directly have a share in goodness. However, Matter does not need to be separate as if it were totally inaccessible to the One, since Matter is in debt to the kindness of the One for its existence. The matter of the sensible world, ²¹⁹ which is generated because of necessity (*Enn.* 2.4.5.28-30), is unable to participate in goodness because it is unable to unite with the Forms (*Enn.* 3.6.14.21-22).

Indeed, the question for Plotinus is how the Forms, which are present in Matter, have an effect on each other without affecting Matter, since it is still what it was at the beginning (*Enn.* 3.6.1.18 and 3.6.11.18). In *On the Impassivity of the Bodiless* (*Enn.* 3.6.8.27-28 and 3.6.11.2-3), he directly quotes from Plato's *Timaeus* 50c4: 'τὰ δ' εἰσιόντα καὶ ἐξιόντα τῶν ὄντων μιμήματα: the imitations of beings entering and leaving.' In other words, Matter and things that enter and move out are merely images. In *Enneads* 3.6.7.13, Plotinus also reiterates Plato's *Timaeus* 52c2 concerning 'τὰ εἰσιόντα: what enters,' expressing in an image that the thing having come into being is not part of itself, but it is always formed as the phantasm of something else.²²⁰ Proceeding from Plato's and Plotinus' views that Matter and things that enter and move out are merely images, Porphyry confirms that the material world is an image through its darkness, particularly for one who examines

²¹⁸ See 2.1.1 for the concept 'apeiron.'

²¹⁹ O'Brien 1991: 15-25.

²²⁰ Fleet 1995: 171.

‘its substratum and enters into it by the mind’ (ἡεροιδὲς δὲ σκοποῦντι τὴν ὑποβάθραν αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὴν εἰσιόντι τῷ νῷ, *De Antro* 6.10-12).

Plotinus defines Matter as truly non-being, that is an image and a phantasm of mass (ὄγκος), bereft of substantial existence (*Enn.* 3.6.7).²²¹ Matter itself, as only an image and phantasm, takes place in the lowest level of Being. First and foremost, Matter does not accept strength from the mind and hence its becoming is entirely deficient in all being. Since Matter is ugly or base in the sense of being ugliness or baseness, it does not participate in order (οὐδ’ ἂν μεταλάβοι κόσμου, *Enn.* 3.6.11.28). Likewise, in *Sententia* 20, Porphyry defines Matter in a negative way - it is incorporeal, lifeless, formless, irrational, ‘indefinite’ (ἄπειρος), impotent, truly not being, an image and apparition of mass; because what is primarily in mass is what is impotent. As the desire for existence and standing but not in fact standing, it always appears to be great and small, less and more, lack and excessive. It is always becoming and neither remaining nor able to flee; it is a defect of every being.²²²

Plotinus does not fully dismiss the potentiality of Matter’s participation in the Forms, and he claims that it is a different kind of participation, only an image of affection. Matter is not deprived of its original character, but it is not excluded from the hierarchical organisation. He explains the connection of the lower stratum with the higher stratum in such a way that the former longs to participate in the higher stratum which is always a model for the lower.²²³ The ascending order of substrata, World Body, World Soul, Intellect, One, is found in *Sententia* 30.1-10, in which

²²¹ In *Parm.* 164d-e Plato uses the term mass to designate quantitateness in which there is indefinite quality; on the other hand, Plotinus places mass with magnitude (μέγεθος) above Matter in the order of Being.

²²² Simonini 2010: 97-101 also refers to *Sententia* 20 and associates the definition of Matter as formless, invisible, dark and idle in the *Chaldaean Oracles* (F 163 DP) with Tim. 50c-d, 51a for the denial of Matter as a cosmological principle.

²²³ Emilsson 1988: 19.

Porphyry states that they direct themselves towards their generators, the First or God.²²⁴

Τῶν μὲν ὅλων καὶ τελείων ὑποστάσεων οὐδεμία πρὸς τὸ ἑαυτῆς γέννημα ἐπέστραπται, πᾶσαι δὲ πρὸς τὰ γεννήσαντά εἰσιν ἀνηγμένοι ἄχρι καὶ τοῦ κοσμικοῦ σώματος· τέλειον γὰρ ὄν ἀνήκται πρὸς τὴν ψυχὴν νοερὰν οὔσαν, κύκλῳ διὰ τοῦτο κινούμενον, ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν νοῦν, νοῦς δὲ πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον. διήκει τοίνυν ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐσχάτου ἀρξάμενον καθ' ὃ δύναται ἕκαστον· ἡ πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον ἀναγωγὴ προσεχῶς μέντοι ἢ πόρρωθεν. διὸ ταῦτα οὐκ ἐφίεσθαι μόνον τοῦ θεοῦ λέγοιτ' ἄν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπολαύειν κατὰ δύναμιν.

Of those hypostases which are universal and perfect, none has its attention turned towards its own off spring, but all direct themselves upwards towards their generators, even down to the body of the cosmos; for it, in its perfection, directs itself towards its soul, which is intellectual, and for this reason performs a circular motion, while its soul directs itself towards the Intellect, and the Intellect towards the First. Each of these entities, then, penetrates as far as this (sc. the First), beginning from the lowest, according to its capacities. The ascent to the First, however, is either immediate or mediated. Hence, these might be said not only to strive for God, but also to enjoy him according to their capacities.

Here, according to the order of the hypostases, Porphyry's statement that the process of ascending to the One is immediate or mediated confirms that the ascent of the material realm towards the One is not direct but mediated. Because of the lowest position of the material world, we may conclude that it is the fact that its participation in the Forms is weak that precludes it from being perceived by the mind. In his *History of Philosophy*, Porphyry goes further and claims that Plato said that the divine substance advances as far as three hypostases, and the divine advances as far as the soul, then matter, which is lower than soul, must, therefore, be 'godless' (ἄθεος), as Chase states that in the time of his studies under Plotinus,

²²⁴ Trans. Dillon 2010: 32-5 for a discussion of Porphyry's designation of the One as the First or God and his agreement with Plotinus.

Porphyry came close to the Middle Platonic belief that matter is an ungenerated principle, which he rejected before.²²⁵

Regarding the hierarchical relations of the substrata, the loveliness of the cave appears to be an indication of the relationship between the substrata from bottom to top, from the material world towards the intelligible realm, while its darkness is the one from top to bottom, from the intelligible realm towards the material world. In order to clarify what I have meant by a potential connection between the substrata from bottom to top and from top to bottom concerning the loveliness and the darkness of the cave, I will now look through Plotinus' significant account of the intelligible world. In the treatise, *On the Intellectual Beauty*, Plotinus describes the intelligible world as follows (*Enn.* 5.8.4.3-8):²²⁶

Διαφανῇ γὰρ πάντα καὶ σκοτεινὸν οὐδὲ ἀντίτυπον οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ πᾶς παντὶ φανερός
εἰς τὸ εἶσω καὶ πάντα φῶς γὰρ φωτί. Καὶ γὰρ ἔχει πᾶς πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ, καὶ αὖ ὁρᾷ
ἐν ἄλλῳ πάντα, ὥστε πανταχοῦ πάντα καὶ πᾶν πᾶν καὶ ἕκαστον πᾶν καὶ ἀπειρος ἡ
αἴγλη.

Transparent, nothing dark, nothing resistant; every being is clear to every other in all parts; light goes through light. And each of them contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere there is all, and all is all and each all, and infinite the glory.

In *Enneads* 5.8.10.35-44, Plotinus says that those who have gained insight into beauty are no longer external spectators, but their identities are also unified with it. On the other hand, to see the divine as something external is to be outside of it, while to become divine is to be exactly in beauty. According to Plotinus, we cannot have vision, if sight deals with the external but not the divine, and if there is no sense of identification with the object (*Enn.* 5.8.10.19-24). These passages offer us a model

²²⁵ F 221 Smith = Cyrillus *Contra Iulianum* VIII 271a, 916 b3-5. Chase (forthcoming): 13-5, I am grateful to Dr. M. Chase for sharing this paper, 'Porphyry on Matter,' which was also presented at the conference, 'Understanding of Matter,' in Palermo, April 11 2014.

²²⁶ Trans. MacKenna 1991: 414 with some minor changes.

from the intelligible world of how perception occurs in the sensible world.²²⁷ It is unlikely that Matter is unified with beauty through Intellect and, thus, for the one penetrating into the divine, or the intelligible realm, Matter, with all its negative features, symbolically Homer's cave, remains the external object of vision and the thing seen.

In reply to Plotinus' question of how the Forms, which are present in Matter, have an effect on each other without affecting Matter, as stated above, Porphyry's description of matter may be helpful: Plotinus states that the Forms are 'non-resistant' within themselves (ἀντίτυπον οὐδέν, *Enn.* 5.8.4.5); in contrast to this positive aspect of the Forms, Porphyry describes matter as 'resistant to form' in *De Antro* 5 p. 8.1-2 (ἀντίτυπον πρὸς τὸ εἶδος). And, again, he concludes that the cave symbolises the sensible world because it is dark, stone and moist because of Matter, with which it associates, it is 'resistant and fluid' (ἀντίτυπον καὶ ῥευστὸν, *De Antro* 9 p. 10.30).²²⁸

The connection between the intelligible world and Matter through emanation that shows the ontological flows from top to bottom also bears a resemblance to Plotinus' spiritual and personal experiences on the microcosmic level: he identifies himself with the divine, and he would have been disappointed to drop down from light to dark. Plotinus describes emanation by likening the One to the Sun and the other substrata to the rays emanating from it. The power of the Sun's rays seems to decrease whenever they meet Matter. Plotinus' analogy of the Sun and rays also echoes the relation between the One and Being on the level of life, a relation which we can define as a lack of self-identification wherever the subject-object division occurs, as Porphyry discusses in his commentary on the *Parmenides*. However, there are various reasons for the loveliness of the cave; the relationship between Matter and the intelligible world through the tendency of Matter towards

²²⁷ Schroeder 1992: 22-3.

²²⁸ *Enn.* 2.9.6.1-2 according to Plotinus, ἀντίτυπος is a catchword of the Gnostics, see Edwards 1996: 98.

Good shows a mode of Matter's participation in the Forms from bottom to top. The existence of Matter itself, because of either necessity or otherness in the hierarchical model also ensures that Matter participates in the Forms, even if this emerges as images of realities.

2.1.3. The Mithraic Cave and Mithras as the Maker and Father of All and Ruler of Genesis

Here, I will seek to explore the Mithraic cave to which Porphyry refers in *De Antro* 6.13-25.²²⁹ The discussion will embrace the parts which relate to the mysteries of Mithras in other texts, particularly Porphyry's *On Abstinence from Killing Animals* and Origen's *Against Celsus*, both of which I see as complementary texts to *De Antro*. I shall also provide iconographical evidence of the mysteries and give references to the other sections of the treatise as necessary. Beginning with the analysis of how mysteries and the doctrines of Pythagoreanism are intertwined, through the concept of transmigration of the soul and their dietary restrictions, I will discuss Porphyry's possible sources for the mysteries in *De Antro* and examine their rituals, which are closely related to the genesis and apogenesis of the soul.

In the second part, I will discuss the concept of the Demiurge, whom Porphyry identifies with Mithras as the Maker and Father of the cosmos in the context of Plato's *Timaeus* and of Numenius' doctrine and the *Chaldaean Oracles*.²³⁰ Numenius is, not only the main source of Porphyry, but there are also close connections between the fragments of Numenius and the *Oracles*. It is quite possible that Numenius and the authors of the *Oracles*, the Julians belonged to same social circle in Apamea²³¹ and they were almost contemporary. We know Porphyry's interest in the *Oracles* because Porphyry was the first to comment on it, and

²²⁹ See Edwards 1996: 91-4 for a discussion of reasons why Porphyry introduces Mithras here; for example, Porphyry's commending Zoroaster in *De Antro* against the Gnostics who fooled many into using the book of Zoroaster which is spurious (*VPlot* 16), or fathered their belief upon the cult of Mithras. Also Edwards 1990c: 71.

²³⁰ It is a poem of the second century C.E. in Greek dactylic hexameters believed to have written by a certain Julian the Theurgist and his son, Julian the Chaldaean. See Finamore 2010: 161-2.

²³¹ Athanassiadi 1999: 153-6; Finamore 2010: 163 n. 9.

Mithraism and the *Oracles* have some similarities through the Persian religion and the mysteries.²³²

Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* will be of assistance in distinguishing between the 'Maker' and the 'Father,' since Porphyry's statement on the identification of Mithras raises the questions of the difference between these two epithets and their association with Mithras. Then, I will seek to show that these epithets assigned to Mithras by Porphyry can be interpreted from a different cosmological perspective. In order to strengthen my argument, I will also include Porphyry's appellation of Mithras as the Master of genesis in *De Antro* 24 p. 24.12.

2.1.3.1. Preliminary Remarks on Porphyry's Mithraic Cave and the Cult of Mithras

Porphyry presents Zoroaster as a prophet of the cult of Mithras,²³³ and also an inspirational figure for others to worship the gods dwelling in heaven, earth and in sanctuaries of the underworld:

(6.13-25) Οὕτω καὶ Πέρσαι τὴν εἰς κάτω κάθοδον τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ πάλιν ἔξοδον μυσταγωγοῦντες τελοῦσι τὸν μύστην, ἐπονομάσαντες σπήλαιον \leq τόν \geq τόπον· πρώτου μὲν, ὡς ἔφη Εὐβουλος, Ζωροάστρου αὐτοφυῆς σπήλαιον ἐν τοῖς πλησίον ὄρεσι τῆς Περσίδος ἀνθηρὸν καὶ πηγὰς ἔχον ἀνιερώσαντος εἰς τιμὴν τοῦ πάντων ποιητοῦ καὶ πατρὸς Μίθρου, εἰκόνα φέροντος αὐτῷ τοῦ σπηλαίου τοῦ κόσμου, ὃν ὁ Μίθρας ἐδημιούργησε, τῶν δ' ἐντὸς κατὰ συμμετρους ἀποστάσεις σύμβολα φερόντων τῶν κοσμικῶν στοιχείων καὶ κλιμάτων· μετὰ δὲ τοῦτον τὸν Ζωροάστρεν κρατήσαντος καὶ παρὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις, δι' ἄντρων καὶ σπηλαίων εἴτ' οὖν αὐτοφυῶν εἴτε χειροποιήτων τὰς τελετὰς ἀποδιδόναι. ὡς γὰρ τοῖς μὲν Ὀλυμπίοις θεοῖς ναοὺς τε καὶ ἔδη καὶ βωμοὺς ἰδρύσαντο, χθονίοις δὲ καὶ ἥρωσιν ἐσχάρας, ὑποχθονίοις δὲ βόθρους καὶ μέγαρα, οὕτω καὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἄντρα τε καὶ σπήλαια.

²³² Lewy 1956: 399-441.

²³³ Mitra (Sanskrit, *Mitrá-*, *Mitráḥ*), a deity who appears frequently in the ancient Indian text of the *Rigveda*. Mithra (Avestan, *Miθra-*, *Miθrō*), a *yazata* (one of a group of divinities in Mazdaism and Zoroastrianism) mentioned in the Zoroastrian sacred scripture of the Avesta, whose modern Persian equivalent is Mehr. Mithras, the principal deity of the religion of Mithraism, was derived from a form of Mithra that had been reinterpreted and considerably changed in Greco-Roman culture.

(6.13-25) In this way the Persians also perfect the initiate by initiating him into the mystery of the descent of the souls and their return, calling the place a cave.²³⁴ As Eubulus says, Zoroaster was the first to dedicate a natural cavern in the nearby mountains of Persia, having flowers and streams, in honour of Mithras, the maker and father of all. The cavern represented for him an image of the cosmos which Mithras created; the things in the cave were in accordance with symmetrical distances, conveying secret codes of elements and seven astrological zones of the cosmos. Then, after this Zoroaster, there also took hold among others the tradition of expounding the mystic rites through caves and caverns, either naturally formed or human-made. Just as they dedicated shrines, statues and altars to the Olympian gods, sacrificial hearths to chthonic deities and heroes, trenches and sacred pits to subterranean gods, in such a way they dedicated both caves and caverns to the cosmos.

In various passages of the treatise (*De Antro* 15-19, 20, 21-9), Porphyry makes direct references to Mithras, which has drawn the attention of scholars of Mithraism as one of the rare relevant literary texts other than some inscriptions. Most authors who mention the cult are Christians, belittling it; pagan sources tend to be late and ill-informed; both provide much misleading information about the cult when compared with the iconographical evidence.

The earliest ancient literary text, Statius' *Thebaid*, which is a Latin epic poem, dates back to the first century C.E., alluding to Mithras as twisting the horns of a disobedient bull beneath the rocks of a Persian cave (1.719-20). Statius' source of information is not known, but Mithras was mainly depicted in the tauroctony, the bull-slaying scene, as holding the bull by its nostrils.²³⁵ It is generally accepted that Plutarch's *Life of Pompey* 24 is a more significant text; it provides a clue for the possible diffusion of the cult in the West, stating that the Cilician pirates practised secret rites for Mithras at the Lycian Mount Olympus in c. 68 B.C.E.²³⁶ However,

²³⁴ Beck 2006: 41-2 discusses the translation of μυσταγωγοῦντες.

²³⁵ Beck 1998: 119 n. 29.

²³⁶ Beck 1998: 121 n. 38.

Plutarch does not say that the Cilician pirates conveyed their rites to foreign lands; on the contrary, they maintained their worship in Cilicia.

De Antro fills the lack of ancient literary texts to a certain extent. As we read it, thanks to the Neopythagoreans, Numenius and Cronius, we can conclude that Porphyry has been well informed about the cult of Mithras, its cosmology and the symbols in the tauroctony, which is a celestial map. Porphyry rightly states that all *mithraea* are caves, which also signify the image of the universe in accordance with the ancient figure of the 'cave as universe'.²³⁷ In light of the evidence provided by Porphyry and his sources, we are assured that their information on the *mithraeum* is credible, although the iconography shows varieties.²³⁸ Indeed, some *mithraea* were located in natural caves and some were built similar to natural caves, as Porphyry informs us (ἄντρων καὶ σπηλαίων εἴτ' οὖν αὐτοφυῶν εἴτε χειροποιήτων, *De Antro* 6.22). We also learn from Porphyry that the prototypical *mithraeum* was situated in the mountains in Persia and had flowers and streams, but we have no adequate evidence for its actual location (*De Antro* 6.16-7).²³⁹ There is a relief showing Mithras riding a horse as cypresses and other trees cover the background of the relief (*CIMRM* 1289). In another relief (*CIMRM* 1247), there are three branches ending in heads, with Phrygian caps, and Mithras is shown as climbing a tree.

In *De Antro* 6, Porphyry interprets the *mithraeum* as an image of the cosmos, with symbols of elements and astrological zones of the universe, and he also mentions the signs of the zodiacs, planetary houses, solstices and equinoxes in the subsequent sections of the treatise. He refers to an astrological and cosmological model of Mithraism that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

²³⁷ Beck 2006: 105-6.

²³⁸ Clauss 2000: 42; Beck 1994: 106-7; 2000a: 158-9, 177-9; 2006: 45, 103-16. Particularly the *Sette Sfere mithraeum* (The Mithraeum of Seven Spheres) in Ostia, V239-49 which Beck calls the 'ideal *mithraeum*.'

²³⁹ Clauss 2000: 68 fig. 28= V2280

Eubulus, one of Porphyry's main sources, was possibly a Mithraist and the author of a history of Mithras in voluminous books, the lost *περὶ τοῦ Μίθρα*;²⁴⁰ he assigned the 'institutionalisation' of Mithraism to Zoroaster (*De Antro* 6.15-6). In his *De Abstinencia* (4.16), basing himself on Eubulus, Porphyry speaks of the division of Magi into three categories: the members of the first group, who are also the 'most learned' (λογιώτατοι), do not eat and kill any animal (ἔμψυχον) and are faithful to the ancient abstinence from eating animals.²⁴¹ Those of the second group use animals, but do not kill any of the tame animals; those of the last group do not, like other men, lay their violent hands upon any animal. Porphyry states that this is because of their belief that the 'transmigration of souls' (μετεμψύχωσις) was of the first importance, and this seemed to be demonstrated in the mysteries of Mithras.²⁴²

Porphyry also uses the term μεταμόρφωσις in *De Abstinencia* 1.6.14, which implies a transformation of shape while maintaining consciousness as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.²⁴³ Porphyry does not offer a comprehensive explanation²⁴⁴ of the transmigration of souls, and this seems to be particularly important in the mysteries, as well as in the doctrine of the Pythagoreans. In his *Life of Pythagoras* (19.8-12), Porphyry enunciates the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration of souls, saying that Pythagoras taught that the soul is immortal. Through transmigrating, it changes (μεταβάλλουσιν) into other kinds of animated lives. He proposes that, after a period of time, whoever once lived and died is born again, and so nothing is absolutely new.

²⁴⁰ *De Abstinencia* 4.16; Dillon 1977: 81 suggests that Porphyry might be quoting Eubulus through another source that is not Numenius as Turcan claims. Cf. Simonini 2010: 101-3 follows Turcan.

²⁴¹ Jerome *Against Jovinianus* 2.14; see also Clark 2002: 112 n. 635.

²⁴² Pherecydes of Syros, the teacher of Pythagoras, was thought to be the first to have given an account of metempsychosis, F 2 Suda = A 2; see also Schibli 1990: 104-5 and 140-1. Porphyry refers to Pherecydes in *De Antro* 31.

²⁴³ In 31 B 117 DK Empedocles says: 'for I have already been a boy and a girl and a bush and a bird and a fish leaping out of the sea.' See also Clark 2002: 125 n. 29.

²⁴⁴ Olympiodorus of Alexandria (c. 500-70), in his *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* (9.6.3-6), says that μετενσωμάτωσις is correct word for transmigration of souls, which signifies that only one soul is covered with different bodies. Burkert 1985: 299-301 on the Orphic and Pythagorean doctrines of metempsychosis.

Iamblichus (c. 250-330 C.E.), a pupil of Porphyry, uses the term transmigration of souls (μετεμψυχώσεις, 52.12) once in *the Theology of Arithmetic*²⁴⁵ and refers to the Pythagoreans such as Androcydes (possibly late fourth century B.C.E.), who wrote on Pythagorean symbols,²⁴⁶ Eubulides, Aristoxenus (fourth century B.C.E.), Hippobotus (late third century B.C.E.) and Neanthes (third century B.C.E.). All these recorded Pythagoras' deeds, saying that the transmigrations of souls, such as those experienced by Pythagoras, occurred at 216-year intervals. Albeit rather rarely, Porphyry, Iamblichus and Proclus²⁴⁷ do refer to the Pythagoreans in their doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and this transmigration implies the immortality of soul.²⁴⁸

If we accept Porphyry's assertions that, according to Eubulus' classification, the Magi did not kill or eat animals, except possibly in sacrifices, and, if we accept that they believed in the transmigration of souls and divulged it to the initiates in the mysteries of Mithras, it is plausible to infer that Porphyry associates Pythagoreanism with the mysteries of Mithras. At least we may conclude that the Mithraists adopted one of the characteristics of the Pythagorean way of life.²⁴⁹ On the other hand, it is unsafe to trace the emphasis on dietary restrictions generated from the teachings of Pythagoras through the Magi or Pythagoras himself. Regarding those assertions, we can find a connection between the Magi and Pythagoras in Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* (41.1-5) in which he writes that Pythagoras learned from the Magi:

²⁴⁵ See also Waterfield 1988: 84 (trans.).

²⁴⁶ Iamb. VP 28.145; Burkert 1972: 167-75; Struck 2004: 98.

²⁴⁷ *In Remp.* 2.340.21-3.

²⁴⁸ Plotinus, on the other hand, uses μετενσωμάτωσης in *Enn.* 2.9.6.13 for 'changing from body to body' and μετενσωματόομαι in *Enn.* 1.1.12.4 for passing from body to body and in *Enn.* 4.3.9.5 for 'soul present in body by change from one frame to another,' (trans. MacKenna). See also Empedocles 31 B 31.6 DK (= Hippolytus *Refutatio* 1.3.6; D. 558, W. 9), where 'μετενσωματώσει' shows belief in transmigration of souls into animals and 31 B 137 DK (Orig. *Cont. Cels.* 5.49) 'ψυχῆς μετενσωματουμένης.'

²⁴⁹ Burkert 1985: 301-4.

Τοιαῦτα παρήνει· μάλιστα δ' ἀληθεύειν· τοῦτο γὰρ μόνον δύνασθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ποιεῖν θεῶ παραπλησίους. ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς παρὰ τῶν μάγων ἐπυνθάνετο, ὃν Ὡρομάζην καλοῦσιν ἐκεῖνοι, εἰκέναι τὸ μὲν σῶμα φωτί, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἀληθείᾳ.

He used to recommend such things, but first and foremost to speak the truth; for this alone is able to make men nearly equal to god. Since as he learned from the Magi that the body of the God, whom they call the god Horomazes,²⁵⁰ resembles light, but his soul truth.

In his *Life of Pythagoras* (4.19), Iamblichus, likewise, mentions that Pythagoras spent time with the Magi in Babylon and was thoroughly trained in the divine things there, obtained the most perfect knowledge of the ritual of gods and reached the highest level of knowledge about their numbers, music and other mathematical sciences. Porphyry and Iamblichus present the Magi as Pythagoras' masters, and their rituals and disciplines as primary sources for Pythagoreanism.

Elsewhere in his *Life of Pythagoras*, however, Porphyry also claims that Pythagoras learned the mathematical sciences from the Egyptians, Chaldeans and Phoenicians. The ancient Egyptians are engaged in geometry, the Phoenicians in numbers and calculations, and the Chaldeans in theorems of astronomy; Pythagoras is said to have learned and received from the Magi the rituals of the gods and the ways of life (VP 6). Iamblichus says that Pythagoras synthesised his system of divine wisdom and worship with the knowledge that he learned from the Orphics, the Egyptian priests, the Chaldeans and the Magi, from observing the initiation rites at Eleusis; he was in Imbros, Samothrace and Lemnos, gained further knowledge from the common rites, from the Celts and from Iberia.²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ See Plut. *De Iside* 369e: 'Zoroaster the Magos used to call the one Horomazes and the other Areimanius, and also showed that the former was especially akin, among objects of perception, to light (φωτί), and the latter, on the contrary, to darkness and ignorance.' (trans. Griffiths).

²⁵¹ VP 28.151; Clark 1989: 66-7 n. 151.

Although there is not such an explicit association, I see *De Abstinencia* and *De Antro* as complementary to each other on the subject of the mysteries of Mithras with the assimilation of the mysteries of Mithras to Pythagoreanism (*De Abstinencia* 4.16). This association may be considered good evidence for the proposition that Porphyry quotes Eubulus through Numenius.²⁵² The basis of this proposal can be summarised as follows: Porphyry's statement in *De Antro* (6.15-6 and 6.20-1), whereby Zoroaster is the founder of the mysteries of Mithras, and, after him, his followers continued their mystic rites in caves, is compatible with his description of the Magi, who are wise about divinity and their worshippers among the Persians according to *De Abstinencia* (4.16.1-2). Porphyry's quotation from Eubulus' history of Mithras in *De Abstinencia*, whereby the Magi abstained from killing animals, refers to certain dietary restrictions of the Pythagoreans. According to the reports, both in Porphyry's and Iamblichus' *Life of Pythagoras*, as discussed above, Pythagoras can also be thought of as having learned from the Magi and having adapted certain rituals of theirs and their way of life. Finally, Numenius (F 1 Des Places)²⁵³ assures us of his engagement with the doctrines of Brahmins, Jews, Magi and Egyptians and of their agreement with the tenets of Pythagoras and Plato.²⁵⁴ Numenius' interest in associating different teachings with each other can also be observed in *De Antro* 10.15-24 in the fact that he linked a line from Genesis (1:2) with Egyptian iconography, and also quoted Heraclitus and Homer to explain the descent of the soul into genesis in connection with wetness.

The proposal that Porphyry quotes Eubulus through Numenius also dismisses any presumption that Eubulus, a successor of Plato of the third-century C.E. in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* 15, might have been a possible source. In his review of Turcan's *Mithras Platonicus, the Platonizing of Mithra*, Dillon suggests that this Platonizing of Mithra is not an invention of Numenius and that Porphyry seemingly

²⁵² Turcan 1975: 23-43; Dillon 1977: 80-1, 1988: 123-4; Clark 2000: 187-8 n. 634.

²⁵³ Eus. *PE* 9.7.1; Orig. *Cont. Cels.* 1.15, 4.51; Dillon 1996: 363.

²⁵⁴ See F 1c, 4b, 5.2 and 24.3 for Numenius being considered a Pythagorean and F 24.19-20, 57, 74-6 for his views on Pythagoras, Plato and Socrates; see also Edwards 2010: 115-16.

quotes Eubulus through another source. Dillon's reasoning is that the genitive Μίθρου is used in *De Antro* 6.18 while the title of Eubulus' work shows that he used Μίθρα as the genitive.²⁵⁵ I believe that Dillon's suggestion may be questioned, but should not be dismissed, because we have no evidence of Numenius' genitive usage of Mithras other than in *De Antro*.

In *De Antro* 6, Porphyry reveals a number of significant points on Mithraism.²⁵⁶ The *mithraeum*, either a naturally formed or human-made cave or cavern (ἄντρων καὶ σπηλαίων εἴτ' οὗν αὐτοφυῶν εἴτε χειροποιήτων, *De Antro* 6.22), represents the universe for the Mithraists, that is to say, the *mithraeum*/cave is a compact replica of the universe. In contrast to the image of the Platonic cave in *Republic* 7 as the inferior part of the world, the Mithraic cave is the entire image of the physical cosmos, with the vault of heaven. For the Mithraists, the cave is a place of salvation, whereas the Platonic cave symbolises a place of deception, slavery and ignorance, a place to be avoided. The Mithraic cave functions as a place where the neophytes are initiated into the mysteries of the god (*De Antro* 6.13-14). In his *De Corona Militis* (15.3), Tertullian (160-225 C.E.) also affirms that the follower is received in a *spelaeum in castra tenebrarum*, and so he calls the initiate *Mithrae miles*.

As he describes the 'initiation' (μυσταγωγοῦντες, *De Antro* 6.14) of the candidate into the mystery of the descent of the souls (κάτω κάθοδον, *De Antro* 6.13) and their return (πάλιν ἐξοδον, *De Antro* 6.14), Porphyry hints that, in the ritual of initiation, the initiates have received some verbal instructions, along with ritually re-enacting their death and rebirth.²⁵⁷ Porphyry further reports on the initiation ritual of the mysteries in *De Abstinencia* 4.16 and *De Antro* 15.25-30. In *De Abstinencia*, the male initiates who participate in secret rites are called lions, the 'women lionesses' (λέαιναι)²⁵⁸ and those who are servants, ravens. In order to relate

²⁵⁵ Dillon 1977: 81.

²⁵⁶ Beck 2006: 17 and 41-4.

²⁵⁷ Beck 2006: 42-3.

²⁵⁸ On the involvement of women in the mysteries see David 2000: 121-41; Clark 2000: 188 n. 637.

honey with at least one of the Mithraic grades, Porphyry states that, after the hands of the lion have been purged by honey, it is recommended that they keep the hands clean from everything painful, mischievous and defiled (*De Antro* 15.25-30). They also purify the tongue from everything erroneous with honey.

The *mithraeum* contains symbols and secret codes of elements and astrological zones of the universe (*De Antro* 6.19-20). Porphyry's particular stress on symbols shows that Mithraism had a certain symbolic system in which symbols were arranged at specific intervals. This was thought to be necessary for the members to complete their soul-journey of death and rebirth. It is apparent that the symbolic systems of the mysteries of both Mithras and the Pythagoreans underpin Porphyry's association between them in *De Abstinencia* 4.16, as the Pythagoreans conveyed the teachings of Pythagoras through the *akousmata*, which are also called *symbola*.²⁵⁹

The *mithraeum* itself is the replica of the physical cosmos, while the seven grades of initiation correspond to the seven planets in the mysteries.²⁶⁰ Cumont states that symbolism connected with the stars is the characteristic of Mithraism: 'the signs of the zodiac, the symbols of the planets, the emblems of elements, appear time after time on the bas-reliefs, mosaics, and paintings of their subterranean temples.'²⁶¹ In *De Antro* 6.19-29, the phrase 'symbols of elements and astrological zones of the cosmos' (σύμβολα τῶν κοσμικῶν στοιχείων καὶ κλιμάτων) refers to the Mithraic symbolic system, which is also found in Origen's *Contra Celsum* 6.22, a 'ladder with seven gates' (κλίμαξ ἑπτάπυλος) and an eighth gate at its top.²⁶²

Ἐξῆς δὲ τούτοις βουλόμενος ὁ Κέλσος πολυμάθειαν ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιδείξασθαι ἐν τῷ καθ' ἡμῶν λόγῳ ἐκτίθεται τινα καὶ περὶ μυστήρια ἐν οἷς φησιν· Αἰνίττεται ταῦτα καὶ ὁ Περσῶν λόγος, καὶ ἡ τοῦ Μίθρου τελετή, ἧς παρ' αὐτοῖς ἐστίν. Ἔστι γάρ τι

²⁵⁹ For a detailed analysis of the *akousmata* see Burkert 1972: 166-91.

²⁶⁰ Burkert 1987: 83-4.

²⁶¹ Cumont 1912: 51; Ulansey 1991: 16.

²⁶² Trans. Chadwick 1980: 334 with minor changes; see Edwards 1990c: 71, on the ladder, says, 'For Celsus (Origen, *Contra Celsum* VI. 22-3) it is both Mithraic and Gnostic, while Numenius may also have ascribed it to the mystagogues of Iran, (F 60 DP = *De Antro* 6.13-23).'

ἐν αὐτῇ σύμβολον τῶν δύο τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ περιόδων, τῆς τε ἀπλανοῦς καὶ τῆς εἰς τοὺς πλανήτας αὖ νενεμημένης, καὶ τῆς δι' αὐτῶν τῆς ψυχῆς διεξόδου. Τοιόνδε τὸ σύμβολον· κλῖμαξ ἐπτάπυλος, ἐπὶ δ' αὐτῇ πύλῃ ὀγδόη.

After this from a desire to parade his erudition in his attack on us Celsus also describes some Persian mysteries, where he says: These truths are obscurely represented by the teaching of the Persians and by the mysteries of Mithras which is of Persian origin. For in the latter there is a symbol of two orbits in heaven, the one being that of the fixed stars and the other that assigned to the planets, and of the soul's passage through these. The symbol is this. It is a ladder with seven gates with at its top an eighth gate.

In the above passage, there is also a clear reference to the Mithraic symbolic system connected with the astrological signs, representing the soul's passage through the planets. Celsus' two spheres refer to the seven planets, which are the counterparts of the seven grades of initiation into the mysteries and to the fixed stars as the eighth gate placed at the top of the ladder, which is a Platonic echo of the seven planets and fixed stars in *Timaeus* 34a (καὶ ἀπλανὲς [...] ἐπὶ δὲ τὴν περίοδον). The *Mithraeum of Felicissimus* at Ostia Antica, a second century floor mosaic (CIMRM 299) shows symbols of the seven planets and symbols of the seven initiatory grades of the mysteries.²⁶³

Origen does not explain the dichotomisation of the soul's journey, apart from mentioning a material object, a ladder, as symbol of the Mithraic ritual, but *De Anтро* 6 explicitly states that the soul's journey is dichotomous, a downward path of the souls and their return upwards.²⁶⁴ Porphyry associates the descent of the soul (γένεσις) and its ascent (ἀπογένεσις) with the spheres of the fixed stars and the planets (ἢ διὰ τῆς ἀπλανοῦς ἢ διὰ τῆς τῶν πεπλανημένων), particularly in *De Anτρο*

²⁶³ See also Jerome Letter 107 (*ad Laetam*); Ulansey 1991: 19; Turcan 1996: 229-30; Clauss 2000: 132-3. For Celsus' identification of the Mithraic sequence of the planets with Pythagorean musical theory, see Chadwick 1980: 335 n. 2.

²⁶⁴ Beck 2006: 83-4.

29. In this regard, the downward path signifies the way of genesis into mortality and the upward path is the way of apogenesis into immortality. In *De Abstinencia* 4.16, Porphyry continues to add some details on the mysteries through the voice of Pallas,²⁶⁵ who is another shadowy figure, when he states that the initiate who receives the rank of lion²⁶⁶ puts on every shape of animals (*De Abstinencia* 4.16.16-28):²⁶⁷

τὴν γὰρ κοινότητα ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς τὰ ζῷα αἰνιττόμενοι διὰ τῶν ζώων ἡμᾶς μηνύειν εἰώθασιν· ὥς τοὺς μὲν μετέχοντας τῶν αὐτῶν ὀργίων μύστας λέοντας καλεῖν, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας λεαίνας, τοὺς δὲ ὑπηρετοῦντας κόρακας. ἐπὶ τε τῶν πατέρων [...] ἀετοὶ γὰρ καὶ ἰέρακες οὗτοι προσαγορεύονται. ὃ τε τὰ λεοντικά παραλαμβάνων περιτίθεται παντοδαπὰς ζώων μορφάς· ὧν τὴν αἰτίαν ἀποδιδούς Πάλλας ἐν τοῖς περὶ τοῦ Μίθρα τὴν κοινὴν φησὶ φορὰν οἶεσθαι, ὥς πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ζωδιακοῦ κύκλου ἀποτείνειν· τὴν δὲ ἀληθινὴν ὑπόληψιν καὶ ἀκριβῆ περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν αἰνίττεσθαι, ἃς παντοδαποῖς περιέχεσθαι σώμασι λέγουσι.

They symbolise our community with animals by giving us the names of animals: thus initiates who take part in their rites are called lions, and women lionesses, and servants ravens. In the case of Fathers [lacuna] for they call them eagles and falcons. The man who attains leonine rank puts on all kinds of animal forms. Pallas, explaining the reason for this in his books on Mithras, says the general tendency of opinion is that it alludes to the circuit of the zodiac, but the true and exact explanation is an allegory of human souls which, they say, put on every kind of bodies.

This passage possibly suggests that the initiates were disguised as animal shapes, possibly as ravens for the first grade, lions for the male initiates, lionesses for the female ones. We also know from the iconography that the bull-slaying scene usually also includes a dog, a snake or serpent, a raven and a scorpion. For example, the tauroctony in Nida, Heddernheim (*CIMRM* 1083) has the scene of Mithras as a bull-

²⁶⁵ Pallas *De Abstinencia* 2.56.3; Clark 2000: 161 n. 360.

²⁶⁶ τὰ λεοντικά is also found in *De Antro* 15.25.

²⁶⁷ Trans. Clark 2000: 112 with minor changes.

killer, a raven sits on the cloak of Mithras, a dog with a collar jumps up at the bull and a scorpion grips the bull's genitals. Another example is the white marble relief in Walbrook, London (*CIMRM* 810), depicting Mithras as a bull-killer; the dog and the serpent are near the wound of the bull, the scorpion at its genitals, but part of the god's cloak with the raven is missing. Both tauroctonies, not only have the same elements, but are also surrounded by the zodiac, to which Pallas probably alluded.

Porphyry hints that the symbols of the animals, which are put on by the initiates in their secret rites, appear to symbolise the transmigration of souls into different bodies. It seems that the Mithraists would experience their bodily death and rebirth at every grade of the initiation. Moreover, the rank of lion must be a crucial grade for the initiates. *De Antro* 15.25 suggests that this rank may be the threshold of moving from the genesis associated with wetness through the apogenesis associated with dryness by means of honey, as Porphyry says that it is a fiery liquid inimical to water. Here, Porphyry, yet again, emphasises the symbolic language of the mysteries and proposes the association of Mithraic symbols with the zodiac in *De Antro* 24.

2.1.3.2. Mithras as the Maker and Father of All and as the Ruler of Genesis

The epithet of Mithras as 'the Maker and Father of all' (τοῦ πάντων ποιητοῦ καὶ πατρός Μίθρου, *De Antro* 6.17-8) comes from Porphyry's identification of Mithras as the demiurgic god (ὃν ὁ Μίθρας ἐδημιούργησε, *De Antro* 6.18-9). I will discuss this identification in relation to Plato's *Timaeus*, Porphyry's and Proclus' commentaries on the dialogue, Numenius, and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. In this context, Numenius F 17 DP and F 7 DP of the *Oracles* are important in validating Porphyry's identification of Mithras with the Demiurge.

Before beginning the discussion, it should be noted that, in *De Iside* 369e, Plutarch depicts Mithras as 'the mediator' (ὁ μεσίτης, 369.5e) between Horomazes or Ahura Mazda, the supreme deity, associated with light, and Areimanius, who is

the principle of darkness and ignorance.²⁶⁸ Plutarch includes Mithras in the old Persian religious system with its two opposite elements, as the god is seen by the Persians as a mediating power. Thus, while Plutarch presents Mithras as a deity within the Persian religious system, Porphyry further identifies him as the Maker and Father of all and the Demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* (28a). Timaeus uses the phrase 'the Maker and Father of this cosmos' (ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντός, *Tim.* 28c) for the Demiurge.²⁶⁹ Elsewhere in the *Timaeus*, Plato's Demiurge also says, 'I am Demiurge and Father of these works' (ἐγὼ δημιουργὸς πατήρ τε ἔργων, *Tim.* 41a) when he addresses the inferior gods. In *De Antro* 6, Porphyry does not directly use the epithet 'Demiurge' for Mithras; instead, he says that Mithras creates the cosmos. His use of the title 'Demiurge' with the epithet 'the master or the ruler of genesis' for Mithras is found in *De Antro* 24 p. 24.11-2 (δημιουργὸς δὲ ὢν ὁ Μίθρας καὶ γενέσεως δεσπότης). These identifications of Mithras by Porphyry are compatible with the Mithraic iconography, as Mithras is represented as the ruler of the cosmos, naked, carrying a globe and supporting a circle with six signs of the zodiac in his right hand (*CIMRM* 985), and he is also depicted as Atlas on bended knees and carrying a large globe on his shoulders (*CIMRM* 1283).

In his *Timaeus*, Plato is the first to introduce the concept of the Demiurge as the origin or the cause (τό αἴτιον) of the universe.²⁷⁰ The demiurge forms the universe according to 'a model' (τό παράδειγμα). This model of the universe is eternal and changeless, that is to say, it is always 'being,' and grasped through a rational account (*Tim.* 29a). On the other hand, the actual universe created by the Demiurge is 'an image of something' (τόνδε τὸν κόσμον εἰκόνα τινὸς εἶναι, *Tim.* 29b), that is to say, it is 'becoming,' grasped through opinions, including 'irrational

²⁶⁸ See Yt. 10.7,24,35,45,60,82,91,107,117,141 for the various functions of Mithra; Yt. 10.12-13,118,142 for worship of Mithra as a solar deity; Yt. 10.97 for Mithra as the enemy of long-handed procrastination; Yt. 10.26 for Mithra as a defender with the Sun against evil gods.

²⁶⁹ Father is used only once in *Tim.* 37c7.

²⁷⁰ Plato uses three main terms to refer to the universe, οὐρανός (heaven or heavens, *Tim.* 28b, 36e, 47b, etc.), κόσμος (world or world order, *Tim.* 31b, 27a, 29e, etc.) and τὸ πᾶν (the universe or the whole, *Tim.* 28c, 30b), see also Zeyl 2000: 14 n. 16.

sense-perceptions' (μετ' αἰσθήσεως ἀλόγου, *Tim.* 28a1-2). Plato uses the word ἡ εἰκών,²⁷¹ 'the image' for the cosmos formed after the eternal model. Porphyry also describes the cosmos created by Mithras as an 'image' (εἰκόνα, *De Antro* 6.18); in this instance, however, the Mithraic cave is the materialisation of the cosmos, the place where the Mithraists worshipped and sought the salvation of their souls. Thus, the cave could be considered as an actual and physical copy of the image of the cosmos.

In order to demonstrate how Numenius uses the concepts of Father and Maker in his cosmological model, I will now discuss the ontological principles in Numenius F 21 DP (= F 24 L), as preserved in Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus* (1. 303.27-304.5):²⁷²

Νουμήνιος μὲν γὰρ τρεῖς ἀνυμνήσας θεοὺς πατέρα μὲν καλεῖ τὸν πρῶτον, ποιητὴν δὲ τὸν δεύτερον, ποίημα δὲ τὸν τρίτον· ὁ γὰρ κόσμος κατ' αὐτὸν ὁ τρίτος ἐστὶ θεός· ὥστε ὁ κατ' αὐτὸν δημιουργὸς διττός, ὃ τε πρῶτος θεὸς καὶ ὁ δεύτερος, τὸ δὲ δημιουργούμενον ὁ τρίτος.

Numenius proclaims three gods: he calls the first 'Father' (πατέρα), the second 'Maker' (ποιητὴν), the third 'Work' (ποίημα); for the cosmos is, according to him the third god. And so, the Demiurge is double in his view, being both the first and the second god, the third god is the creation.

According to Proclus' report, Numenius assigns the demiurgic activity to the second and third gods as the Maker and the Work respectively, rather than the first and second god, as participating in the demiurgic activities. Numenius explains that the first god, dwelling in himself, is simple and undivisible because of its sufficiency in himself (F 11 DP = F 20 L).²⁷³ On the other hand, the second and third gods are actually one; the second god's or the Demiurge's engagement with matter results in

²⁷¹ Plato also uses it in *Tim.* 29b2-3, 29c2 and 37d7.

²⁷² On this fragment see Dillon 1996: 366-7, 2007b: 400; Runia 2008: 158-9 with n. 615.

²⁷³ Dillon 1996: 367-8.

giving unity to it in order to create the physical world.²⁷⁴ As a result of this activity, Matter divides the Demiurge, which ‘becomes unregarding’ (ἀπερίοπτος ἑαυτοῦ γίγνεται, F 11.18-9 DP) because the Demiurge is not in contact with the intelligible but looks at Matter. The third god emerges from the second after the interaction between the second god and Matter. According to Dillon, the third god is seemingly an immanent World Soul, although there is not a clear distinction between the second and third gods.²⁷⁵

The first god, in F 12 DP (= F 21 L), as the Father of the creating divinity or the second god (τὸν πρῶτον καὶ τοῦ δημιουργοῦντος δὲ θεοῦ [...] πατέρα τὸν πρῶτον θεόν) is free from all activities and is King, while the demiurgic god is in authority as he proceeds through the heaven. Numenius’ description of the demiurgic god reminds us of Zeus in the *Phaedrus* (246e), who is the great leader in heaven, driving a winged chariot, arranging and taking care of all things.²⁷⁶ In F 16 DP (= F 25 L), the first god is described as alone, ‘Good itself’ (αὐτοαγαθόν) and the principle of being as Intellect, while the demiurgic god is the principle of becoming and the imitator of Good. This demiurgic god is good through his participation of Good or the first god. Numenius’ first and second gods reflect the basic doctrines of the *Timaeus* and the doctrine of Good in *Republic* 6.²⁷⁷ In F 13 DP (= F 22 L), Numenius compares the first god and the demiurge to a ‘farmer’ (γεωργῶ) and ‘sower’ (φυτεύοντα). The first god sows (σπείρει)²⁷⁸ the seed of every soul into the whole thing which has a share of it. The second god, the demiurge, plants and distributes and transplants in each of us what has been sowed. Mithras simply takes the place of the second god in Numenius’ ontological system of principles.

Porphyry, however, follows Plato and uses the epithet ‘Maker and Father’ in the same way as Plato, as denoting the one who creates the cosmos, whereas the

²⁷⁴ Dillon 2007b: 400.

²⁷⁵ Dillon 1996: 367; 2000: 341 with n. 8.

²⁷⁶ Dillon 2007b: 399.

²⁷⁷ Dillon 1996: 369 and 2007b: 399.

²⁷⁸ *Tim.* 41e: the Demiurge has sown (σπαρείσας) each of the souls into instruments of time.

Father and the Maker are ontologically distinguished from each other in Numenius. Proclus explains how the Father and the Maker differ with respect to each other in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (*In Tim.* 1.299.23-300) and refers to Porphyry's commentary on the *Timaeus* (F 40 Sodano = *In Tim.* 1.300.1-6).²⁷⁹ Proclus' reference to Porphyry shows that this variation was an issue in his time (*In Tim.* 1.300.1-13):

Πορφύριος δέ φησιν, ὅτι πατήρ μὲν ἐστὶν ὁ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ γεννῶν τὸ ὅλον, ποιητὴς δὲ ὁ παρ' ἄλλου τὴν ὕλην λαμβάνων· ὅθεν καὶ πατήρ μὲν Ἀρίστων λέγεται Πλάτωνος ὡς ὅλου αἵτιος, ποιητὴς δὲ ὁ οἰκοδόμος τῆς οἰκίας ὡς οὐκ αὐτὸς τὴν ὕλην γεννῶν. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο ἀληθές, δῆλον ὡς οὐκ ἔδει πατέρα λέγειν τὸν δημιουργόν, οὐχ ὑφιστάντα κατὰ τὸν Τίμαιον τὴν ὕλην· οὐ γὰρ λέγει τοῦτο σαφῶς; μήποτε οὖν ὡς μὲν εἰδοποιὸς μᾶλλον ἐστὶ ποιητὴς· καὶ γὰρ ποιεῖν φάμεν πάντας τοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι τι παράγοντας· ὡς δὲ μετὰ ζωῆς παράγων ἃ παράγει, πατήρ· ζῶων γὰρ εἰσιν οἱ πατέρες αἵτιοι καὶ ζώντων τινῶν καὶ προετικοὶ σπερμάτων μετὰ ζωῆς. τοῦτο μὲν οὖν τοιοῦτον.

Porphyry says that Father is that which generates the whole from himself; Maker is he who receives the matter from someone else. Hence Ariston is called Plato's father as being the cause of the whole, on the other hand the builder of the house is called the maker because he himself does not generate the matter of it. If this is true, it is obvious that he (Plato) should not have called demiurge father, because he does not create the matter in *Timaeus*. For does he not clearly say this. Perhaps, then, maker is more shaper of form; because we also call 'makers' all people who bring something from not being into being. And by virtue of creating what he creates with life, he is father. For fathers are the origin of living beings and they are generators of the seeds which contain life. So much, then, for this subject.

In this passage, Proclus criticises Porphyry on the grounds that he should not have called the Demiurge the Father since the Demiurge is not the cause of the existence of Matter.²⁸⁰ Proclus' criticism is obviously based on the fact that the Demiurge does

²⁷⁹ Sodano 1964: 26.

²⁸⁰ See Chase (forthcoming): 11-4 for Porphyry's thought on the creation of Matter in his commentary on the *Timaeus*.

not create the cosmos out of nothing, but brings it from the state of chaos into the state of the best possible copy of the eternal and changeless model (*Tim.* 30a). Proclus then suggests that ‘Maker’ is considered as the creator of form (εἰδοποιός), while ‘Father’ is the cause of living things and of anything alive. I do not see an apparent contradiction between Porphyry’s definition of Father and Maker and Plato’s Demiurge because, here, Porphyry merely emphasises the Maker’s creation of a house (or the cosmos) from existent Matter. In accordance with Porphyry’s F 40 (Sodano), the Maker shows the demiurgic aspect of the god and the Father his other aspect as source of living beings, the life-giver. The Maker builds the house as the Demiurge shapes the cosmos; he is in charge of putting the cosmos in order in the *Timaeus*, whereas the Father, as the cause of the universe,²⁸¹ has the general sense of the Demiurge in Plato’s dialogue. Porphyry’s analogy recalls the analogy of Numenius in F 13 DP whereby the first god, the Father as the farmer, is a supplier or provider, while the second, the Demiurge as sower, is the user of what is provided to grow the products.

It is now time to look into Proclus’ commentary of the *Timaeus* in more detail and to discuss its basis for distinctions between ‘the Maker’ and ‘the Father’ (*In Tim.* 1.311.28-312.9).²⁸² Proclus argues that ‘Father’ and ‘Maker’ imply extremes because the former is located in the top position of the intelligibles and the latter at the lower limit of this position. In-between beings show varieties according to the dominance of their paternal and creative aspects so that the one who is ‘Father and Maker’ and the one who is ‘Maker and Father’ are different from each other, as, in the first case, the paternal aspect predominates and, in the second, the creative aspect predominates.

In *Timaeus* 1.312.16-26,²⁸³ Proclus classifies the divine beings according to what they cause: the one who is ‘Maker’ is only cause of the encosmic creatures;

²⁸¹ *LSJ* s.v. ὅλος implies here a definite order, see also Arist. *Met.* 1024a and Pl. *Theaet.* 204a.

²⁸² Trans. Runia 2008: 166-7.

²⁸³ Trans. Runia 2008: 167.

‘Maker and Father’ is cause of supramundane and encosmic creatures; ‘Father and Maker’ is cause of intellective, supramundane and encosmic creatures; and ‘Father’ is cause of intelligible, intellective, supramundane and encosmic creatures. Since Porphyry defines Mithras as the ‘Maker and Father’ of the cosmos in *De Antro* 6, we can, at least, conclude that Mithras is the demiurgic god whose creative aspect predominates, and he creates supramundane and encosmic creatures. According to Origen’s *Contra Celsum* 6.22, the latter seems to refer to the seven planets and the fixed stars and the former to the region beyond the fixed stars or the eighth gate.

I will now discuss how Mithras is fitted into the metaphysical and theological schema of the *Oracles* and how epithets of Mithras, the ‘Maker and Father’ and the Demiurge, are theologically treated by the Neoplatonists. This is a summary of the theological structure of the *Oracles*. The Father, Supreme Being, is ineffable,²⁸⁴ transcendent and exempt from any engagement with creative activities, dwelling in the intelligible or Empyrean world. He is in himself, without having confined his own fire in his intellectual power (F 3 DP). As Lewy states, his action discloses itself by means of his ‘power’ (δύναμις) and he uses intermediaries.²⁸⁵ The Father is also defined as ‘the supramundane paternal abyss’ (τὸν ὑπέρκοσμον πατρικὸν βυθὸν, F 18 DP). We learn from F 3 DP and F 4 DP that the Father uses his power through intellect (F 5 DP).

In F 5 DP, the intelligible realm is triadic, comprising the Father, the power or *dunamis*, which emerged from him, and the Demiurge or the second intellect. After the Father perfects all things, he delivers them to the second intellect which is erroneously known as the first among human beings (F 7 DP).²⁸⁶ According to F 8 DP and F 12 DP, the second intellect or the Demiurge has two functions and is dyadic in the same manner as Numenius’ second god. This intellect or Demiurge contains the Forms generated by the Father, as explained in the longest fragment of the *Oracles*

²⁸⁴ Psellus *Hypotyposis* 1.1.

²⁸⁵ Lewy 1956: 78-9.

²⁸⁶ An echo of Numenius F 17 DP.

(F 37 DP) and it brings sense-perception to the material world.²⁸⁷ In F 5 DP, the Demiurge is depicted as ‘the craftsman of the fiery cosmos’ (ὁ κόσμου τεχνίτης πυρίου) and ‘intellect of intellect’ (νοῦ νόος). In his commentary on F 5 DP (*In. Tim.* 2.57.26-58.3), Proclus says that the Father is ‘generative’ (ζωογονικόν), the second intellect connected with the Father, and the material realm (τὸ ὑλαῖον) is ‘demiurgic’ (δημιουργικόν). Ostensibly, the Demiurge, that is Mithras, equals the second intellect of the *Oracles*, the father of the aethereal region consisting of the zone of the fixed stars and the seven planets.²⁸⁸ Dillon traces this tripartite division of the Chaldaean doctrine back to Xenocrates, but it is also rooted in numerous Middle Platonic sources.²⁸⁹

One of the passages in Proclus’ Commentary on the *Timaeus* (*In Tim.* 1.316.12-18) is remarkable in showing how the ‘Maker and Father’ should be addressed by the Neoplatonists. The creation of the universe is the demiurgic decad, which describes the sensible world and includes the paternal monad and the tetrad:²⁹⁰

“Ὅτε τοίνυν σύμπασαν τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν θεολογίαν ἀπεφύναμεν τῷ Διὶ τὴν ὅλην δημιουργίαν ἀπονέμουσαν, τί χρὴ περὶ τῆσδε τῆς ῥήσεως τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐννοεῖν, ἢ ὅτι ποιητὴς αὐτῷ καὶ πατὴρ ἀνυμνεῖται ὁ αὐτὸς θεός, ὁ βασιλεὺς Ζεὺς, καὶ οὔτε πατὴρ μόνον οὔτε πατὴρ καὶ ποιητής; ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ἦν μονάς, ὁ δὲ ὁ πατὴρ καὶ ποιητὴς τετράς, ὁ δὲ, ὡς οἱ Πυθαγόρειοί φασι, δεκάς, καὶ αὕτη τῶν θεῶν ἡ τάξις.

Now that, therefore, we have made it plain that Hellenic theology in its entirety assigns the whole work of creation to Zeus, what should one think of the present statement of Plato that it is the same god, Zeus the King, who is celebrated as ‘Maker and Father,’ and not just as ‘Father’ only or as ‘Father and Maker’. For the

²⁸⁷ See Majercik 2013: 6 and Dillon 1996: 394 for the connection with Numenius.

²⁸⁸ This division into three realms is not clearly manifested in the extant fragments of the *Oracles* and is derived from the later Neoplatonists such as Proclus and Damascius (*Dubitaciones and Solutiones* 2.88.21-22).

²⁸⁹ Philo *De opificio mundi* 70-71, *Quaestiones in genesim* 4.8; Dillon 1996: 168-70.

²⁹⁰ Trans. Runia 2008: 170.

Father would be a monad, and the Father and Maker a tetrad, while he (sc. 'The Maker and Father') would be, as the Pythagoreans say, the decad, and this is the order of the divine realities.

According to this passage, the epithet of Mithras, 'the Maker and Father' refers to the perfect order of the cosmos. Porphyry might have considered this distinction in his assignment of these epithets to Mithras. However, it is difficult to come to a precise conclusion because we do not know if there was a myth of Mithras or a hierarchical and metaphysical structure of the mysteries like the *Oracles*. But, we can infer within these theological contexts that Mithras is a creative god, an embodiment of the properties of the Father, that is to say, of the preceding gods just as in the case of Zeus in the Orphic theogonies, or the primal intellect called the Father in the *Oracles*.

Mithras is not only the Maker and Father of the cosmos, but also the 'master of genesis' (γενέσεως δεσπότης, *De Antro* 24 p. 24.12), an astral figure in the tauroctony which requires clarification. I will now discuss what we should understand by the epithet 'the master,' and how we may apply it to Mithras in the context of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*. In this context, I propose that Mithras has another aspect as *dunamis* at the lower ontological level, just as Hecate has a similar aspect in the *Oracles*. Hecate, traditionally known as the goddess of the Underworld, is sprung from the Demiurge. In F 6 DP, Hecate is depicted as an intellectual membrane, and seems to have such an intermediary position that she is influenced by the powers of the Father and the second intellect, while, at the same time, she casts her powers on the material world:

Ὡς γὰρ ὑπεζωκῶς τις ὕμῃν νοερὸς διακρίνει,
πῦρ πρῶτον καὶ πῦρ ἕτερον σπεύδοντα μιγῆναι.

As a subtended intellectual membrane, (Hecate) separates
the first and second fires that are eagerly seeking to mingle.

According to F 50 DP (= Damascius *Dubitaciones et Solutiones* 2.164.19), Hecate is interpreted as the *dunamis*, if the Fathers are accepted as a reference to the Supreme Being in F 3 DP and the Demiurge, as Dillon states.²⁹¹ On the other hand, Lewy equates Hecate in F 50 DP with the Moon and the ruler of the Sun, since the centre of the Moon is identified with the midway of the three Fathers. These Fathers are the rulers of the three worlds: the Intelligible or Empyrean World, the Aethereal World, including the zone of the fixed stars, the seven planets and the Sun in the centre, and the sublunar region containing the Earth.²⁹²

Μέσσον τῶν πατέρων Ἑκάτης κέντρον πεφορῆσθαι.

Midway between the Fathers, the Centre of Hecate is borne along.

In a passage of his *On the Return of the Soul* preserved by Augustine (F 284 Smith = *Civ. Dei* 10.23.1-19), Porphyry seems to interpret the above verses of the *Oracles* as identifying the central hypostasis with Life, which is in accord with the noetic triad of Plotinian Being-Life-Intellect.²⁹³ Augustine says that Porphyry spoke of God the Father (deum patrem) and God the Son (deum filium), whom he called, in Greek, the paternal intellect (paternum intellectum) or paternal mind (paternam mentem). However, Augustine, perhaps disingenuously, does not identify what other entity Porphyry meant by the middle of these two.²⁹⁴

The *Oracles* employ the noetic triad of Existence, Life and Intelligence for the transcendent entities, and this is also found in Porphyry's *Commentary on the Parmenides*.²⁹⁵ This triad is called Father, Potency or Life, and Intellect: the Paternal

²⁹¹ Dillon 1996: 394.

²⁹² Procl. *In Tim.* 2.57.10 on the Chaldaean's tripartite division of the world; Lewy 1956: 139-44 for a detailed discussion of the fragment.

²⁹³ Lewy 1956: 455-6; Des Places 1971: 133.

²⁹⁴ Trans. Dods 2009: 293-4; Johnson 2013: 66-72 for a discussion of triads and Augustine's report on Porphyry's noetic triad.

²⁹⁵ See my discussion in Chapter 2.1.2.1; Procl. *In Tim.* 1.389.24-28 for the Chaldaean triad, πατήρ δύνάμις νοῦς. See Dillon 2010: 28: 'the One, in its 'positive' creative aspect, may be identified with

Monad or Father corresponds to Existence, the second intellect or the Demiurge to Intellect, and Life or Potency as the median principle is called Hecate, and she is placed between them.²⁹⁶ The hypostasis of life is also identical to Psyche, the ‘nourishing principle of the life-giving fire’ (ἐκδότις πυρὸς ζωοφόρου), who ‘fills the life-producing womb of Hecate’ (τὸν ζωογόνον πληροῖ τῆς Ἑκάτης κόλπον, F 32 DP = Procl. *In. Tim.* 1.420.13-16).²⁹⁷ In F 96 DP, Hecate is identified as the ‘mistress of life’ (ζωῆς δεσπότις), just as Porphyry calls Mithras the master of genesis in *De Antro* 24 p. 24.12.²⁹⁸

Ὅτι ψυχὴ, πῦρ δυνάμει πατρός οὔσα φαεινὸν,
ἀθάνατός τε μένει καὶ ζωῆς δεσπότις ἐστὶν
καὶ ἴσχει <κόσμου> πολλῶν πληρώματα κόλπων.

The soul, existing as a bright fire through the power
of the Father remains immortal, she is mistress of
life and comprehends the fullness of many folds in the world.

Mithras may then be identified with Hecate, as the former is called the master of genesis in *De Antro* 24 at the lower ontological level, the latter the master of life in F 96 DP. Considering that Hecate is ‘Life’ or *Dunamis* as median principle in F 50 DP, Mithras might also be identified as a deity from which the multiplicity in the sensible world arises. The important difference between Mithras and Hecate can be specified as being that Mithras is a male principle of the cosmos, who controls genesis, whereas Hecate as the female principle is a guarantee of the continuation of genesis. However, as stated above, because there is no known myth of Mithras, it is difficult to estimate to what extent Mithras participates in the continuation of genesis. At

the highest element of the intelligible realm, One-Being, or, in Chaldaean terms, the ‘Father’ of the triad of ‘Father—Life (or Power)—Intellect.’

²⁹⁶ Lewy 1956: 142 n. 283; Turner 1991: 221-32.

²⁹⁷ On Hecate-Psyche see Lewy 1956:83-98; Des Places 1971: 74 with n. 2.

²⁹⁸ According to Psellus in *P.G.* 122.1141 c7-9, Hecate refers to the World Soul and the World Soul sets in motion the sensible world and also Porphyry’s identification of Hecate as the World Soul in *On the Soul* F 438.9-10 (Smith = August. *Serm.* 241.7).

least, if we interpret Porphyry's description of the bull saddled by Mithras with the dagger of Ares in *De Antro* 24 p. 24.9-11, the bull or Taurus, which is assigned to Venus in *De Antro* 22.13-14, may be considered as the female principle whose sacrifice at Mithras' hands is the cause of the material creation.²⁹⁹

2.2. The Cave in Mind

(8.13-24) Ἀφ' ὧν οἴμαι ὀρμώμενοι καὶ οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι καὶ μετὰ τούτους Πλάτων ἄντρον καὶ σπήλαιον τὸν κόσμον ἀπεφήναντο. παρὰ τε γὰρ Ἐμπεδοκλεῖ αἱ ψυχοπομποὶ δυνάμεις λέγουσιν

‘ἠλύθομεν τόδ' ὑπ' ἄντρον ὑπόστεγον,’

Παρά τε Πλάτωνι ἐν τῷ ἐβδόμῳ τῆς Πολιτείας λέγεται ‘ιδεῖ γὰρ ἀνθρώπους οἷον ἐν κατωγείῳ ἄντρῳ καὶ οἰκῇσι σπηλαιώδει ἀναπεπταμένη πρὸς φῶς, τὴν εἴσοδον ἐχούσῃ μακρὰν παρ' ἅπαν τὸ σπήλαιον.’ εἴτα εἰπόντος τοῦ προσδιαλεγομένου ‘ἄτοπον λέγεις εἰκόνα,’ ἐπάγει ‘τὴν εἰκόνα, ᾧ φίλε Γλαύκων, προσαπτέον πᾶσι τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λεγομένοις, τὴν μὲν δι' ὅψεως φαινομένην ἔδραν τῇ τοῦ δεσμωτηρίου οἰκῇσι ἀφομοιοῦντα, τὸ δὲ τοῦ πυρὸς φῶς τῇ τοῦ ἡλίου δυνάμει.’

(8.13-24) Starting from these verses, I believe, both the Pythagoreans and Plato after them proclaimed the cosmos cave and cavern. For in Empedocles the powers that guide souls say:

‘We came to this covered cave,’

It is also said in the seventh book of the *Republic* of Plato: ‘Now picture to yourself men, so to speak, in a subterranean cave and in a cavern-like dwelling, being open to the light, having a long entrance along the entire cavern.’ Then, his interlocutor says: ‘you are speaking of a strange image,’ and he concludes: ‘my friend Glaukon, we must apply the image to all we said before, comparing the place (abode)

²⁹⁹ See Beck 2004 (1976): 129-32 (95-8) for a discussion on this theme and his emendation of the lacuna in *De Antro* 24 p. 24.10. See Chapter 3.2.1 for the difference of the female and male principles in Porphyry's *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων* (F 359.5-11 Smith). In his astrological exegesis of Mithraic symbols in the tauroctony, Beck also identifies the bull, Taurus, with Moon and ‘cattle-stealing god’ with Mithras in *De Antro* 18, 2006: 198-99. Cf. Edwards 1993 : 122-5 argues ‘cattle stealing god’ refers to Hermes.

apparent to vision to the dwelling of the prison, and the light of the fire to the power of the Sun.'

We learn from Porphyry's (*VP* 9) and Iamblichus' (*VP* 5.27) biographies of Pythagoras that he used to spend most of the night and day in 'a cave, a dwelling proper to his philosophy' (ἀντρον οἰκεῖον τῆς φιλοσοφίας), in search of useful knowledge.³⁰⁰ Elsewhere in Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* (17) Pythagoras is said to have descended into the Idaean cave in Crete, wrapped in black wool, and to have stayed there twenty-seven days, making offerings to Zeus. Although it is unclear what his exact purpose was, Pythagoras would, nonetheless, have sometimes secluded himself from the rest of his community in order to seek divine wisdom in the darkness of a cave. In this case, the cave to be discussed is not a place for union with the divine powers, as in the case of Pythagoras. It is not a *mithraeum*, according to Porphyry, an image of the cosmos where the followers of the mysteries of Mithras sought the salvation of their souls. Now, I will discuss what we may cosmologically understand by the cave of Empedocles in 31 B 120 DK, and of Plato in *Republic* 7, to which Porphyry refers in the above passage, from the perspective of the Neoplatonists, particularly Plotinus and Porphyry.

Porphyry traces the identification of the Empedoclean cave as a symbol of the cosmos back to the Pythagoreans and Plato. The particle (γὰρ) makes it quite plain that Porphyry counts Empedocles among the Pythagoreans and he broadly speaks of his followers as 'the Pythagoreans' in the preceding sentence of *De Antro*, although ancient sources are highly speculative as to which school Empedocles belonged or whose disciple he was.³⁰¹ In a passage of the *Enneads* (4.8.1.21-23),

³⁰⁰ See Simonini 2010: 95 for the references of Porphyry's *VP* 9 and Iamblichus *VP* 27; Ustinova (2009) *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind: Descending Underground in the Search for Ultimate Truth*.

³⁰¹ Timaeus (c. 345- c. 260 B.C.E.) reported in his *Histories* (F 14) that he was a pupil of Pythagoras and was disallowed from participating in discussions, like Plato, because of plagiarism (D.L. 8.54). Neanthes of Cyzicus (3rd century B.C.E.) accepted the information on Empedocles and Plato provided by Timaeus, except for the specification that Pythagoras was not the master of Empedocles but he was the disciple of an unknown Pythagorean (D.L. 8.55). Iamblichus lists Empedocles' name among the Pythagoreans, *VP* 36.267. See also Wright 1995: 4-5 for further discussion.

Plotinus links Empedocles with Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, saying that Pythagoras and those after him used to speak in riddles about the descent of the souls into the Earth and many other matters (ἤνιπτοντο περί τε τούτου περί τε πολλῶν ἄλλων).

In *De Anpro* 8.15, it is difficult to deduce what Empedocles meant by ‘the powers that guide souls’ (αἱ ψυχοπομποὶ δυνάμεις).³⁰² However, the meaning of the phrase was known by Porphyry, who must have had the complete text. If we look at the ancient sources, in the *Alcestis* (361), Euripides uses ψυχοπομπός for Charon, and Diodorus Siculus mentions Hermes as ψυχοπομπός in the *Bibliotheca Historica* (1.96.6.1). Likewise, Cornutus states that Hermes’ proper task is the guiding of souls as the Conductor of Souls in *Compendium of Greek Theology* 22.7-9. The common usage of the phrase is mostly in the singular, whereas Empedocles would have used it in the plural for a group of soul-guiding powers. This class of guiding entities might come to the earth so as to perform the role of Hermes in *Odyssey* 24.1-2. Moreover, it is difficult to estimate to whom these guides spoke, whether it was Zeus, the philosopher, or any other divinities.

In his treatise *On the Descent of the Soul into Bodies* (*Enn.* 4.8.1.17-23, 33-34), Plotinus also refers directly to Empedocles 31 B 115 and 31 B 120 DK of *Purifications*³⁰³ and Plato, just as Porphyry juxtaposes both philosophers in *De Anpro* 8. Furthermore, Porphyry’s quotations from Empedocles 31 B 120 DK and the passages of Plato’s *Republic* 7 (514a2-5, 515a4 and 517a8-b4) more or less overlap Plotinus’ allusions to Empedocles 31 B 120 DK and to Plato’s *Republic* 7.³⁰⁴ Plotinus refers to the first four lines of Empedocles 31 B 115 DK, saying that there is a ‘law for the sinful souls’ (ἁμαρτανούσαις νόμον, *Enn.* 4.8.1.18); ‘an exile from the gods’

³⁰² See Wright 1995: 280.

³⁰³ Empedocles’ *Purifications* is a work in which he explained the doctrine of rebirth and transmigration, has Orphic connotations in the sense that the Orphic sects conceived life as imprisonment in the body, a kind of expiation of the soul on Earth. See Wright 1906: 134-7; Burnet 1932: 71; Simonini 2010: 109-10.

³⁰⁴ MacKenna (1991: 335 n.93) and Fleet (2012: 54 n.21) make references to *Rep.* 514a, 515c and 517b along with other dialogues in *Enn.* 4.8.1.23-26.

in *Enneads* 4.8.1.19 (φυγὰς θεόθεν, 115.13) and ‘having put my trust in raving strife’ in *Enneads* 4.8.1.20 (νείκεϊ μαινομένωι πίσυνος, 115.14) are direct quotations from the fragment. Elsewhere in the same treatise (*Enn.* 4.8.5.5-6), Plotinus refers once again to 31 B 115 DK: ‘flight from the god’ (φυγή ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ), ‘wandering’ (πλάνη) and ‘the sin which the judgement brings’ (ἡ ἁμαρτία, ἐφ’ ἧ ἡ δίκη).

Empedocles considers the soul as a *daimon* who can fall into the material world due to a transgression, which is either participation in blood sacrifices (31 B 128 DK) or meat eating (31 B 130, B 136 DK). In the *Cratylus* (400c), one of Socrates’ suggestions for the etymology of ‘body’ (σῶμα) is reminiscent of Empedocles’ view of life on Earth as a kind of expiation. Socrates suggests that the Orphics possibly gave this name to the body because the soul is punished for something and covered in the body, as if it were in a prison to keep it safe until the punishment is expiated. In the *Gorgias* (493a), the phrase ‘the body is our tomb’ seems to have Orphic mystical tones, evoking Empedocles’ expiating soul on the earth.³⁰⁵

As previously said, Plotinus also mentions the cavern of Plato (τὸ σπήλαιον) and ‘the cave of Empedocles’ in 31 B 120 DK (Ἐμπεδοκλεῖ τὸ ἄντρον) in the same section of the *Enneads* (4.8.1.33-34), possibly to draw a parallel between them. He does not, however, elaborate on their similarities, possibly due to the obscurity of Empedocles’ language. Modern scholars generally do not find a consensus when discussing the cave of Empedocles. Guthrie says that ψυχοπομπὸς is indicative of souls being conducted to the underworld.³⁰⁶ Jaeger, for example, asserts that the Empedoclean cave refers to the terrestrial world and that the notion of the world as cave is Orphic.³⁰⁷ Guthrie, on the other hand, states that Empedocles considers the

³⁰⁵ Plotinus also refers to *Phaedo* 62b, ‘the secret saying which claims that the soul is in prison.’ Fleet 2012: 85-6 believes that Plotinus adapted a Pythagorean doctrine that the body is the prison-house of the soul.

³⁰⁶ Guthrie 1969: 254-5.

³⁰⁷ Burnet 1945: 223 n. 1; Jaeger 1947: 149; Dodds 1951: 174 with n. 114; Rohde 2000: 403 with n. 75.

life of the soul as being connected with a higher region and an exile in Earth as the equivalent of death.³⁰⁸

In *Enneads* 4.8.1.32-35, Plotinus suggests that the cavern of Plato represents this world in the same way as the cave of Empedocles. Thus, it can be concluded that both caves belong to the sublunar region.³⁰⁹ Plotinus' argument over the Empedoclean cave and the Platonic cavern conforms to Porphyry's own suggestion in *De Antro* because Porphyry aims to show that the caves actually belong to the material realm (*De Antro* 9 p.10.28-30), and to reconcile Plato's cavern with Homer's double-gated cave. The implication of the analogies of the divided line and the Sun in Porphyry's citations supports the idea that the cavern belongs to the material realm.

As regards the structure of Porphyry's citations of *Republic* 7 in the passage quoted, the first citation gives us a brief description of the place in which men dwell and occurs at the beginning of the analogy of the cave (*Rep.* 514a2-5). The second citation is Glaucon's short reaction to the geographical description of the cave which includes shackled human beings, the puppeteers, fire, and so on (*Rep.* 515a4). The last citation is the one in which Socrates clarifies that the analogy of the cave should be read within the context of the previous analogies (*Rep.* 517a8-b4): this means the analogy of the divided line in *Republic* 509c-511e and the analogy of the Sun in *Republic* 507b-509c. Porphyry's fragmentary citations from the *Republic* lead me to believe that, if *De Antro* was a course subject in his lecture curriculum, Porphyry's audience might have already known its missing parts by heart. I also presume that Porphyry only chooses those specific passages because the discussion is centred upon the cave, per se.

In *Republic* 514a-515c, Plato pictures a dystopic world, perhaps a cyber-world in the modern sense, where the only reality for the shackled prisoners is

³⁰⁸ Guthrie 1950: 311 n. 3.

³⁰⁹ Kingsley 1995: Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of the principal elements and their equation with gods and goddess in Empedocles.

represented by the 'shadows' (σκιᾶι) of the puppets that the puppeteers cast upon the wall by means of the light of a fire.³¹⁰ Perhaps Plato would describe us as prisoners who hypnotically look at our laptops, tablets and smartphones. The cave portrays a society in which the puppeteers are the manipulators and the shackled prisoners are manipulated by the puppeteers, who are doomed to lead a deceptive life since childhood. The manipulative puppeteers might be considered as a group of people such as politicians, legislators, poets, rhetoricians and so on, whereas the shackled prisoners represent the majority of people.

Our next analysis will, therefore, be life in the cave and the visible realm in the analogy of the divided line. In *Republic* 509d, Plato describes two unequal regions divided into horizontal lines: the region above the horizontal line symbolises the intelligible realm and has the greater portion, the other below the horizontal line symbolises the visible realm and has the smaller portion. The greater portion accorded to the intelligible realm shows the clarity of the intelligible realm, while the smaller portion of the visible realm shows its obscurity.³¹¹ These two main sections are, in turn, divided into two more sections so that we obtain four subsections, two on the side of the visible realm and two on that of the intelligible realm, and they are interrelated.

According to the divided line, the subterranean cave has two sections, one occupied by the majority of people, who can only see some shadows reflected on the wall, and the other behind the wall occupied by the ruling class of the city. The former section falls within the first subsection, identified as the visible realm in the analogy of the divided line, comprised of shadows and reflections of images of the second subsection. In terms of state of mind this section also corresponds to the lowest state which Plato calls 'conjecture,' εἰκασία (*Rep.* 511e2). People's ways of thinking and understanding life, their self-perception and world view, are based on

³¹⁰ See Dorter 2006: 203-4; Sheppard 2009: 116-19 for a detailed discussion of the analogy of the cave.

³¹¹ Sheppard 2009: 112.

acceptance in advance of what they have been told by the others without questioning. The latter section represents the second subsection of the visible realm, which consists of the images or likenesses of animals, plants and objects made by humans (*Rep.* 510a). As to state of mind, the region represents ‘belief’ or ‘persuasion,’ πίστις (*Rep.* 511e2).

The stage displayed by Plato, so to speak, shows the journey of a person from the shadows to the realities or from darkness to clarity, that is to say from εἰκασία and πίστις to διάνοια, ‘thought,’ which corresponds to the first subsection of the divided line in the intelligible realm. The perception of objects differs according to section: an animal object appears real in the second subsection of the visible realm while this object becomes its image in the first subsection of the visible realm. However, the image of the animal of the second subsection of the visible realm should be considered as the shadow of the image of the animal in the first subsection of the visible realm, when one looks through the first subsection of the intelligible realm. This is a sort of movement of the state of mind from the sense perception in the cave to ‘reasoning’ (διάνοια, *Rep.* 511d8-511e1) in the intelligible realm. The highest section of the state of mind is ‘understanding or intelligence’ (νόησις, *Rep.* 511d8). Plato’s analogy of the divided line is an allusion to the core idea of the analogy of the cave which represents the necessity of escaping from the world of becoming to the world of the brightest real beings and reality (*Rep.* 518c). From the perspective of the movement of the state of minds from the visible realm to the intelligible realm, Porphyry may have considered the Neoplatonic doctrine of virtues, the political, the cathartic, the theoretical and the paradigmatic virtues in *Sententia* 32, in which Porphyry formulates them. These virtues provide the rational and philosophical mode of thinking through stages in order to achieve human excellence, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. This claim is reflected in the realisation

of the darkness of the cave or the material realm, perceived through intellect in *De Antro* 6.10-11, which can be deemed to be the beginning stage of enlightenment.³¹²

Referring to the comparison of the light of fire with the power of the Sun, we have already learned that the light of fire is a kind of intermediary that helps in creating shadows and appearances of the objects in the visible realm. In *Republic* 508c4-d2, Plato states that anything under the 'night light or another light' (νυκτερινός φέγγος) instead of daylight cannot clearly be seen because night light or another light makes eyesight weak and the eyes become virtually blind. On the other hand, the eyes under the Sun see clearly since sunlight provides them with that faculty. Elsewhere in his *Republic* (508d), Plato applies the same comparison to the soul: if the soul is guided by a light, that is to say by truth and reality, it comprehends and perceives both truth and reality and gains intellect or reason. However, when the soul is mingled with darkness and with the world of becoming and decay, it will be subjected to conjecture, which is changeable and unstable as if it were deprived of reason.

The Sun is both a heavenly divinity (*Rep.* 508a5-9) and the offspring of the form of Good (*Rep.* 508b13). Moreover, the Sun is not the same as genesis but is the cause of genesis and beyond genesis, as in the case of the form of Good. The Sun enables us to obtain truth and knowledge, but it is the cause of truth and knowledge while being beyond truth and knowledge (*Rep.* 508e). Plato's presentation of the Sun in the *Republic* is strongly reminiscent of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*, who is the most excellent cause of the creation of the cosmos.³¹³ In this instance, the sphere of the Sun remains restricted to the visible world, whereas the Demiurge shapes the entire universe including the Sun. When the liberated prisoner goes outside the cave, he also moves from a deceptive world to the world of realities by means of the Sun which gives him the potentiality to see the real things very clearly.

³¹² Edwards 1996: 93 for the comparison of the myth of Sophia of the Gnostics with Porphyry's identification of Matter with the darkness.

³¹³ Dorter 2006: 189-90 for the emanationist interpretation of the Demiurge and the Sun.

The origin of the Sun stems from the form of Good and its participation in it. The fire in the cave might have been produced by the puppeteers in order to manipulate the majority of people. Another possibility is that the fire always exists within the cave and symbolises the world of generation and decay.

Consequently, the Platonic cave and its association with the divided line perfectly fits in with the overall context of *De Antro*, in which Porphyry, in great detail, seeks to prove that the philosophical life is the only way towards attaining truth and knowledge, and the cave, particularly the Platonic cave, is a place which one should absolutely avoid. I should add that the cave, to which both Plato and Porphyry refer, is not an actual place, but symbolises the fact that we knowingly or unknowingly put our minds in prison.

2.3. Epilogue

At the end of this chapter, I would like to examine a reason for Porphyry's extensive knowledge. I shall look at the possible connection between the (Neo)Platonists and Beck's hypothetical founding group of the mysteries in the city of Rome,³¹⁴ an historically real occurrence notwithstanding its speculative historical base.

Beck proposes that the Mysteries of Mithras were instituted by a small group of Commagenian soldiers and family servants, and conveyed by them to their peers in the Roman Empire.³¹⁵ Mithras had a prominent place in the royal cult, particularly at the time of Antiochus I of Commagene in the mid-first-century B.C.E. Antiochus I created his own cult, a syncretism of Greek and Persian gods, on Mount Nemrut. The kingdom ended more than a century later, and Antiochus IV abdicated the throne in favour of the Roman Empire in 72 C.E. After his abdication, the Commagenian military units must have been in close contact with Roman legions

³¹⁴ Beck 1998: 115-26; 2004: 32-42.

³¹⁵ See Merkelbach 1984: 75-7 suggests that the mysteries were created by a particular person of the empire court in Rome, who originally came from the East, Armenia or the Pontos.

during the Judaean and Civil Wars.³¹⁶ I believe that contacts between Commagenian and Roman forces are a convincing explanation for the widespread popularity of the mysteries among soldiers. As for the Commagenian royal family, they lived in Rome and were treated with great respect (Jos. *Judaean War* 7.243), and they also had contacts with the Roman aristocracy and the imperial family.

The mysteries were thus originally created in the Empire, that is to say, as Beck asserts,³¹⁷ the mysteries were indeed a novel creation using former traditions;³¹⁸ the Mysteries would have mixed two characteristics of the cult of Mithras, a Persian tradition in Mithra-worship and a Western tradition based on an astrological interpretation of the *mithraeum*. The major novelties of the mysteries were Mithras' bull-killing and its association of Mithras with the Sun.³¹⁹ The use of astrology in the construction of images of the cosmos (εἰκόνα τοῦ κόσμου, *De Antro* 6.18) is, on the other hand, the inheritance of the royal cult of Antiochus I. Mithras is named as Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes in the inscription at Mount Nemrut (ἱεροθέσιον, *CIMRM32= OGI383.36*).³²⁰ While the solar identification of Mithras shows that its descendance is inherited from the royal cult of Commagene, the bull-killing of Mithras in the tauroctony is a novel creation of the Commagenian descendants of Antiochus I a century later.³²¹

There is no need here to go into more detail; it would just be a rewriting of very well-known arguments on Mithras that Beck has already made. However, an eminent figure, Ti. Claudius Balbillus, might be of importance for shedding some light on Porphyry's interest in the mysteries of Mithras and on his sources of information about the mysteries. On the basis that Balbillus is a possible connection

³¹⁶ Tac. *Hist.* 2.25.2 for the Judaean War, and Tac. *Hist.* 5.1.2, Jos. *JW* 5.460-5 for the siege of Jerusalem; Tac. *Ann.* 13.7.1, 37.2 for most probable previous contacts between Commagenian and Roman soldiers in Corbulo's Armenian battles; see also Beck 1998: 122 n. 40.

³¹⁷ Beck 1998: 123.

³¹⁸ Beck 1998: 123.

³¹⁹ Hdt. 1.131; on this see also Edwards 1990b: 1-4; Strabo 15.3.13.6

³²⁰ Reliefs also show Mithras and the king in δειξίωσις, V30; Beck 1998: 124 n. 49 and 2006: 230-1.

³²¹ Beck 1998: 124n. 49.

of the Commagenian royal family in Rome, he seems to be the re-developer of astrology in the mysteries, which was related to an effective mode of Greek learning.³²²

Balbillus was a leading court astrologer during the reign of the Emperors Claudius, Nero, and Vespasian, and a famous equestrian. He was appointed the head of the museum and library in Alexandria and became Prefect of Egypt during the reign of Nero. He was also related by marriage to the Commagenian royal family, and perhaps also had some blood-relationship.³²³ Balbillus is thought to have been the father-in-law of C. Iulius Antiochus Epiphanes, the son of the last king of Commagene; scholars generally accept that he was the son of Ti. Claudius Thrasyllus, the court astrologer and philosopher of Tiberius (Tac. *Ann.* 6.22), who might also have married a Commagenian princess.

Thrasyllus published a new edition of Plato's dialogues in which he arranged them in groups of four books and added a double title to each of the books, one taken from the name of the interlocutor, the other from the subject (DL 3.57-6).³²⁴ In a paragraph in his *Life of Plotinus* (20, 21), in which Porphyry quotes from the work of Longinus entitled *On the End*, Thrasyllus is said to have written about the first principles of Pythagoras and Plato, along with Numenius, Cronius and Moderatus, all Neopythagoreans. In his *Ptolemy's Harmonics* (91.13, 96.16) Porphyry also refers to a work of Thrasyllus, *On the Seven Tones*, so that we may assume that Thrasyllus was a Platonist with Pythagorean inclinations. Porphyry's other references to Thrasyllus are also found in *Ptolemy's Harmonics* 12.21, 96.23 and in the *Introduction to Tetrabiblos* 5,4.203.5, 5,4.212.16.

From all these references to Thrasyllus, it is evident that philosophical and astrological works of Thrasyllus were very well known to Porphyry. It is not impossible that Porphyry might also have known of Balbillus and his works, from

³²² Beck 1998: 126-7 with n. 60 and 2004: 323.

³²³ Cichorius 1922: 390-8; Cramer 1954: 95; Tarrant 1993: 10.

³²⁴ Dillon 1996: 184-5; Brisson 2004: 57.

which only two fragments survive.³²⁵ I suggest that one of the sources of Porphyry could be Balbillus, along with Eubulus, Numenius and Cronius.³²⁶ This suggestion is thus based upon Beck's hypothesis that the mysteries were founded by a group of Commagenian people in Rome in the first century C.E., and Balbillus would be the royal family's connection.

³²⁵ Thirty-five and sixty lines in *CCAG* vol. 8.3, pp. 103-4; vol. 8.4, pp. 235-8.

³²⁶ Beck 2006: 16n. 1; For Eubulus see Turcan 1975: 23-43, for Numenius and Cronius 62-5.

Chapter 3

Embodiment

Having examined the Homeric cave as symbol of the cosmos, Porphyry offers an extensive interpretation of the elements of the cave in Sections 10-19 of *On the Cave of the Nymphs*. In this chapter, I will not deal with this interpretation in all of its details but, in line with my overarching argument, focus, instead, on those passages in *De Antro*, which relate to the soul's descent into genesis, which underlies Porphyry's associations and identifications with moisture and pleasure.

In the first two sections of the chapter, my analysis will be based on Porphyry's various interpretations of Naiad nymphs defined as *daimones*, as souls falling into genesis and as *dunameis*. Firstly, I will seek to elucidate what class of *daimones* or souls they may represent in Porphyry's demonology and what part of the individual soul they control or affect. Then, my analysis will deal with the body-soul relationship from the ethical perspective of the disposition of the soul and seek to explain the process of the creation of the body, which is related to Homer's description of the Naiad nymphs weaving sea-purple garments, in *De Antro* 14. I propose a different interpretation in the context of Porphyry's embryology.

Afterwards, I shall focus on the theory of *pneuma-ochema*, to which Porphyry attaches more importance than Plotinus, probably because of his great interest in the question as to 'how the soul is associated with the body.'³²⁷ Lastly, I will analyse the Orphic poem which Porphyry quotes in *De Antro* 16, focusing on the meaning of the deception of the divine principle.

³²⁷ *VPlot.* 13.

3.1. The Naiad Nymphs as Symbol of *Daimones* and Souls

In this section, I now examine the souls which descend into genesis due to their inclination to pleasure, identified with 'becoming moist.' Although the discussion is primarily based on *De Antro* 10.8-24, 11 p. 12.25, in which Porphyry refers to Numenius (F 30 Des Places = F 46 Leemans), this passage raises the question within the context of *De Antro* as a whole as to why Porphyry uses different symbolic interpretations of the Naiad nymphs, firstly, as both souls and *dunameis* in *De Antro* 10.12-13, and then as *daimon* of generation in *De Antro* 35 p. 32.27. This discrepancy in the text prompts me to examine, firstly, whether *daimones* can also be considered as souls falling into genesis, besides being divine powers and to discuss what type of *daimones* or souls they are in Porphyry's demonology and on what part of the individual soul they have control or effect.

The passage (*De Antro* 10.12-24, 11 p. 12.25) is important because it quotes from Heraclitus (22 B 77 DK) to support the idea of Porphyry's identification of 'becoming moist' with pleasure for the souls falling into genesis. However, he does not provide a detailed explanation, justifying the association of 'becoming moist' with pleasure and genesis. In order to elucidate this connection, my analysis will consider the relevant parts of *De Antro* and other texts by Porphyry on demonology and psychology, especially *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, whose content on demonology is the most elaborate among his other fragmentary writings, and his commentary on the *Timaeus*, particularly F 7 and 12 (Sodano).³²⁸ I intend to show that Porphyry's thoughts on demonology are consistent and to demonstrate that his works are complementary to each other for a coherent reading of the various identifications of the Naiad nymphs in *De Antro*.

³²⁸ Sodano 1964: 4, 7-8.

3.1.1. Preliminary Remarks on Numenius Fragment 30

(10.12-24, 11. p. 12.25) Νύμφας δὲ ναΐδας λέγομεν καὶ τὰς τῶν ὑδάτων προεστώσας δυνάμεις ἰδίως, ἔλεγον δὲ καὶ τὰς εἰς γένεσιν κατιούσας ψυχὰς κοινῶς ἀπάσας. Ἦγοῦντο γὰρ προσιζάνειν τῷ ὕδατι τὰς ψυχὰς θεοπνόω ὄντι, ὡς φησὶν ὁ Νουμήνιος, διὰ τοῦτο λέγων καὶ τὸν προφήτην εἰρηκέναι ἐμφέρεσθαι ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος θεοῦ πνεῦμα· τούς τε Αἰγυπτίους διὰ τοῦτο τοὺς δαίμονας ἅπαντας οὐχ ἰστάναι ἐπὶ στερεοῦ, ἀλλὰ πάντας ἐπὶ πλοίου, καὶ τὸν Ἥλιον καὶ ἀπλῶς πάντας οὐστίνας εἰδέναί χρεὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἐπιποτωμένας τῷ ὑγρῷ τὰς εἰς γένεσιν κατιούσας. Ὅθεν καὶ Ἡράκλειτον ψυχῇσι φάναι τέρψιν μὴ θάνατον ὑγρῇσι γενέσθαι, τέρψιν δὲ εἶναι αὐταῖς τὴν εἰς τὴν γένεσιν πτῶσιν, καὶ ἀλλαχοῦ δὲ φάναι ζῆν ἡμᾶς τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον καὶ ζῆν ἐκείνας τὸν ἡμέτερον θάνατον. Παρὸ καὶ διερούς τοὺς ἐν γενέσει ὄντας καλεῖν τὸν ποιητὴν τοὺς διύγρους τὰς ψυχὰς ἔχοντας. Αἶμά τε γὰρ ταύταις καὶ ὁ δίυγρος γόνος φίλος, ταῖς δὲ τῶν φυτῶν τροφή τὸ ὕδωρ.

(10.12-24, 11. p. 12.25) We specifically also call the powers that preside over water ‘Naiad nymphs’; however, they also used to speak in general of all souls descending into genesis as Naiad nymphs. For they deemed that the souls settled on water, as being infused with the inspiration of the god, as Numenius says; because of this, he claims, the prophet also says that the spirit of God is born upon the water, and for this reason the Egyptians make all divine beings stand not on solid ground but all on a floating vessel, both the Sun and all the others. These should be understood to be the souls hovering over the moist element as they descend into genesis. And it is for this reason (Numenius says) that Heraclitus says that ‘it is enjoyment, not death, for souls to become moist,’ that is to say, falling into genesis is a delight for them, and that he (Heraclitus) also says elsewhere that ‘we live the death of them, and they live the death of us.’ For this reason, the poet (Homer) calls those in genesis ‘wet’ because their souls are wet. For both blood and moist sperm are dear to them, just like the nourishment of the souls of plants is water.

This passage is a good example of how Numenius used various philosophical, religious and literary sources in order to show their fundamental agreement on a particular subject. In this instance, the passage discusses associations and identifications of genesis, into which the souls are falling, with moisture and pleasure. His first premise is that the souls settle on water because water is god-inspired. He draws on the Old Testament and Egyptian rituals to support this thought, whereas on the microcosmic level, he quotes from Heraclitus and Homer to say that any soul hovering over moisture is one which descends into genesis due to pleasure.

Numenius frequently makes references to the Old Testament, as in the case of *De Antro* 10.15-16, in which he refers to Genesis 1.2 (καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος). His propensity to refer to Jewish tradition is also evident in F 1a DP (= F 9a L), which is a direct quotation from Numenius preserved in Eusebius (*PE* 9.7.1), F 1b DP and F 1c DP (F 9b L and F 32 L = Orig. *Cont. Cels.* 1.15 and 4.51 respectively). Numenius' interest in the Jewish tradition must have derived from the view that Moses was believed to be the predecessor of Pythagoras and Plato.³²⁹ For example, Hermippus of Smyrna, a Peripatetic philosopher (c. 200 B.C.E.), traced the origins of Pythagoras' philosophy to the Jews.³³⁰ Clement of Alexandria quotes from Numenius with a reference to Aristobulus (2nd or 3rd century B.C.E.), who claims that, like most of the Greek philosophers, Pythagoras and Plato gained their wisdom from the tenets of the Jews.³³¹ Numenius apparently approves Aristobulus' claim with his well-known saying τί γάρ ἐστι Πλάτων ἢ Μωσῆς ἀττικίζων, 'what else is Plato than Moses in Attic Greek?'³³²

³²⁹ See Cook 2004: 36-41; Edwards 1990c: 64-75 for detailed discussions of Numenius' interest in the Jewish tradition.

³³⁰ Cook 2004: 9 n. 47.

³³¹ Aristobulus F 3a = Clement *Stromata* 1.22.150.1-3

³³² F 8 = Clement *Stromata* 1.22.150.4 = Eus. *PE* 11.10.12-14; Cook 2004: 36 n. 206; Petty 2012: 140-1.

In *De Antro* 10.15, it is clear that ‘the prophet’ is a reference to Moses, to whom Numenius also refers to in fragments 8 DP (= F 17 L)³³³ and 9 DP (F 18 L), in the former as Moses (Μωσῆς), according to reporting source, and in the latter as Musaeus (Μουσαῖος). Although there could be doubt about the identification of Moses as Musaeus, who was the master of Orpheus, we know that Artapanus (c. 2nd or 3rd century B.C.E.), a Jewish apologist and historian, said that the Greeks called Moses Musaeus,³³⁴ an identification established by the phonetic similarity of the names of these wisdom figures in the Jewish and Greek tradition.³³⁵ Also, in his *Contra Celsum*, Origen informs us that Numenius quoted the story of Moses, along with the story of Jesus (*Cont. Cels.* 4.51 = F 10a DP = F 19 L),³³⁶ using, again, the name Musaeus instead of Moses. Gager points out that the prefix ἐμ-, which is put before φέρεσθαι, is the only difference from the Septuagint and that Numenius use of θεοπνοῶ refers to ‘the effect of the divine breath on the water's surface,’³³⁷ a combination of the words θεοῦ and πνεῦμα in Genesis,³³⁸ which Numenius also used separately, as is apparent from *De Antro* 10.16.

The Egyptians’ representation of their deities, particularly the Sun, on a floating vessel is discussed in Plutarch’s *On Isis and Osiris* 364c8-d2.³³⁹

Ἡλιον δὲ καὶ Σελήνην οὐχ ἄρμασιν ἀλλὰ πλοίοις ὁχήμασι χρωμένους περιπολεῖν φασιν αἰνιττόμενοι τὴν ἀφ’ ὕγροῦ τροφήν αὐτῶν καὶ γένεσιν. οἴονται δὲ καὶ Ὅμηρον ὥσπερ Θαλῆν μαθόντα παρ’ Αἰγυπτίων ὕδωρ ἀρχὴν ἀπάντων καὶ γένεσιν τίθεσθαι.

³³³ Eus. *PE* 11.10.12-14 for F 8 and *PE* 9.8.1-2 for F 9. Chadwick 1980: 226 n.3 for Numenius’ use of Egyptian sacred scribes.

³³⁴ Apud Alexander Polyhistor, quoted by Eus. *PE* 9.27.3, *FGrH/BNJ* 726 F 3b; Des Places 1973: 52 n. 3; Lambertson 1986: 60 n. 50; Petty 2012: 143.

³³⁵ Gager 1972: 139.

³³⁶ It is the only fragment on Numenius knowledge of Christianity, see Petty 2012: 143 for the fragment, Edwards 1990c: 67-9; Chadwick 1980: 226.

³³⁷ Gager 1972: 65 n. 119, 66; cf. Cook 2004: 168; Petty 2012: 178.

³³⁸ Des Places 1973: 118; Petty 2012: 178.

³³⁹ Trans. Griffiths 1970: 170.

They (the Egyptians) say that Helios and Selene move around their orbits using as vehicles not chariots but boats, thus suggesting they were nurtured and born from moisture. They also believe that Homer (*Il.* 15.201) as well as Thales had relied on Egyptian knowledge when he stated that water was the first principle and origin of everything.

The Egyptians indeed envisaged that the Moon navigates in a barque and assigned not just one but two barques to the Sun, one for use during the day, the *M'andifet* barque, the other for use during the night, the *Mesketet* barque.³⁴⁰ This may be considered a religious reflection of the activities of daily life, as the Egyptians mostly employed ships for their own travels and transportation. The Greeks, on the contrary, used horse-drawn vehicles, and thus Greek poetry describes Helios and Selene represented as driving chariots at full speed.³⁴¹

Egyptian rituals are discussed also in Iamblichus' *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*, where at 7.2 he makes a reference to 'Osiris, who is in the divine bark.'³⁴² According to Iamblichus, 'the god's sailing in a ship symbolises the authority that guides the world' (ὁ δ' ἐπὶ πλοίου ναυτιλλόμενος τὴν διακυβερνῶσαν τὸν κόσμον ἐπικράτειαν παράστησιν). The solar barque was a customary Egyptian image of the seat of the god's dominion. It is evident that the Egyptian rituals were associated with the fertility of the soil and the Nile, and those barques were simply manifestations of divine seats of gods and goddesses. Numenius' account of *all* the Egyptian gods being represented on floating vessels, if Porphyry did not alter it, differs from the accounts provided by Plutarch and Iamblichus. The former includes the Moon along with the Sun, the latter emphasises the Egyptians' worshipping the Sun (*De Mysteriis* 7.2-3). It should not, however, matter whether Numenius included all gods or simply the Sun-god if his aim was to

³⁴⁰ See Griffiths 1970: 426-7 for a detailed discussion of the Plutarch passage.

³⁴¹ For example, Homeric Hymns 32.9-10.

³⁴² *PGM* 14.33-34, Clarke 2003: 293 n. 386.

demonstrate the common characteristics of religious rituals of different traditions in general.

3.1.2. *Daimones and Souls on the Descent into Genesis*

As we have seen, in *De Antro* 10.12-14, Porphyry states³⁴³ that Naiad nymphs are also deemed to be souls descending into genesis, apart from the fact that they are traditionally the divine powers associated with water. Porphyry corroborates this statement by referring to Egyptian rituals that represent all *daimones* on barques rather than solid ground. Porphyry's first statement seems to be a generalisation related to a group of individual souls, particularly in the process of descending into genesis. However, this does not include the Egyptian gods, for it is evident that symbolism in the Egyptian practices implies that *daimones* do not touch water but sit on barques. In his *De Mysteriis* (7.2.23-36), Iamblichus interprets 'being over the mud'³⁴⁴ as the correct representation of the transcendence, immateriality and incorporeality of the god. More precisely, Iamblichus interprets 'sitting on a lotus'³⁴⁵ over the mud without touching it' as a symbol of the 'intellectual and empyrean leadership of the god' and there would be no reason not to apply this interpretation to the divine powers on barques, which signify divine sovereignty, transcendence and incorporeality, in order to contrast them with the individual souls in *De Antro*:³⁴⁶

Συμμαρτυρεῖ δὲ τούτῳ καὶ τὸ ἐξῆς σύμβολον. Τὸ γὰρ ἐπὶ λωτῶ καθέζεσθαι ὑπεροχὴν τε ὑπὲρ τὴν ἰλὺν αἰνίττεται μὴ ψάουσας μηδαμῶς τῆς ἰλὺος, καὶ ἡγεμονίαν νοερὰν καὶ ἐμπύριον ἐπιδείκνυται· κυκλοτερῆ γὰρ πάντα ὁρᾶται τὰ τοῦ λωτοῦ, καὶ τὰ ἐν τοῖς φύλλοις εἶδη καὶ τὰ ἐν τοῖς καρποῖς φαινόμενα, ἥπερ δὴ μόνῃ κινήσει τῇ κατὰ κύκλον νοῦ ἐνέργειά ἐστι συγγενής, τὸ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως καὶ ἐν μιᾷ τάξει καὶ καθ' ἓνα λόγον ἐμφαίνουσα. Αὐτὸς δὲ δὴ ὁ θεὸς ἵδρυται καθ'

³⁴³ Hereafter, I will use Porphyry instead of Numenius even if the passage is quoted from him in order to prevent any confusion when I refer to Numenius' other texts.

³⁴⁴ See Clarke 2003: 291 n. 378 for the mud represents the primeval water of the Egyptian ritual.

³⁴⁵ Harpocrates *PGM* IV.1105; *PGM* II.106-107. See Clarke 2003: 293 n. 382: 'The cosmic lotus also signified the power of Re (or Ra), its opening bud representing the coming of light over darkness.'

³⁴⁶ *De Mysteriis* 7.2.23-36; trans. Clarke 2003: 292-3.

ἐαυτὸν καὶ ὑπὲρ τὴν τοιαύτην ἡγεμονίαν καὶ ἐνέργειαν, σεμνὸς καὶ ἅγιος ὑπερηπλωμένος καὶ μένων ἐν ἑαυτῷ, ὅπερ δὴ τὸ καθέζεσθαι βούλεται σημαίνειν. Ὁ δ' ἐπὶ πλοίου ναυτιλλόμενος τὴν διακυβερνῶσαν τὸν κόσμον ἐπικράτειαν παρίστησιν.

The following symbol also bears witness to this. For “sitting on a lotus” signifies transcendency over the “mud,” such as in no way touches the “mud,” and also indicates intellectual and empyrean leadership. For everything to do with the lotus is seen to be circular, both the forms of the leaves and the produce of the fruit, and it is the circular motion that is uniquely connatural with the activity of intellect, and which exhibits itself consistently in one order and according to one principle. And the god is established by himself, and beyond such leadership and activity, venerable and holy, entirely simple and abiding in himself, a fact which his seated position is intended to signify. And “sailing in a ship” represents the sovereignty that governs the world.

Here, Iamblichus’ interpretation of the Egyptian gods suggests that *daimones* are not corporeally in contact with the material world, in contrast to Naiad nymphs who are situated at the lower part of the material world, as will be seen, in the Neoplatonic cosmological model and invisible, unlike the Sun or the Moon. We need to clarify how Porphyry defines *daimones* in order to understand to which *daimones* he refers in different passages in *De Antro* (10.16-18, 12.18, 29.15 and 35 p. 32.27). Regarding Porphyry’s demonology, some relevant passages in *De Abstinencia* will aid us, along with information from Numenius and Porphyry’s commentaries on Plato’s story of Atlantis, which is preserved in Proclus’ *Commentary on the Timaeus*.

According to Iamblichus’ report in *De Mysteriis* 1.20 and 2.1, one of the issues that Porphyry discussed in his *Letter to Anebo* is ‘what it is that distinguishes the *daemons* from the visible and the invisible gods’ (τί τὸ διακρίνόν ἐστι τοὺς δαίμονας ἀπὸ τε τῶν ἐμφανῶν καὶ τῶν ἀφανῶν θεῶν).³⁴⁷ This shows us that, in

³⁴⁷ Trans. Clarke: 2003: 75 (1.20), 83 (2.1).

Porphry's time, as Dodds observes, demonology was a current subject of interest connected with the development of theurgy.³⁴⁸ I believe that analysis of the relevant parts of *De Antro* may contribute to understanding how Porphyry treated the subject.

We learn from *De Abstinencia* 2.37.10-2.38.1 that the region below the visible celestial bodies, that is, the sublunary region, including the cosmos,³⁴⁹ the fixed stars and the seven planets, is filled with *daimones*, who can be sub-divided into different ranks.³⁵⁰ The crowd of the invisible gods (or *daimones*) must be appeased by people's prayers and sacrifices. Some of *daimones* are well-known among people and carry names, others are anonymous and only prayed to by a limited number of people but also elsewhere in his works Porphyry also touches on the anonymity of the *daimones*, for example, in his *Homeric Questions* 8.1.93-94, in which he refers to this anonymity to explain Odysseus' prayer 'hear me, Lord, whoever you are' (κλυῖθι, ἄναξ, ὅτις ἐσσί) in *Odyssey* 5.445. In *De Abstinencia* 2.37.10-2.28.1, he provides a more extensive discussion.³⁵¹

Τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς θεοῖς, τῷ τε κόσμῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀπλανέσι καὶ πλανωμένοις, ἕκ τε ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος οὗσιν ὁρατοῖς θεοῖς, ἀντευχαραριστητέον τὸν εἰρημένον τρόπον διὰ τῶν θυσιῶν τῶν ἀψύχων. λοιπὸν οὖν ἡμῖν ἐστὶ τὸ τῶν ἀοράτων πλῆθος, οὗς δαίμονας ἀδιαστόλως εἴρηκε Πλάτων. τούτων δὲ οἱ μὲν κατονομασθέντες ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων παρ' ἐκάστοις τυγχάνουσι τιμῶν τ' ἰσοθέων καὶ τῆς ἄλλης θεραπείας, οἱ δὲ ὡς τὸ πολὺ μὲν οὐ πάντι κατωνομάσθησαν, ὑπ' ἐνίων δὲ κατὰ κώμας ἢ τινὰς πόλεις ὀνόματός τε καὶ θρησκείας ἀφανῶς τυγχάνουσιν. τὸ δὲ ἄλλο πλῆθος οὕτω

³⁴⁸ Dodds 1963: 295.

³⁴⁹ Here the cosmos may refer to the World Soul, which Porphyry would see as an entity wholly divine, like the seven planets and the fixed stars.

³⁵⁰ Porphyry's five-fold division of the Egyptian social class as the various grades of *daimon* is found in his commentary on *Tim.* 24a (F 17 Sodano = Procl. *In Tim.* 152.10-28), according to which the priests correspond to the archangels, the messengers of the gods in the heaven; the military to the *daimones* descending into bodies, the herdsmen to those watching over the flocks of 'animals'; the hunters to those that hunt down souls and confine them in bodies; lastly, the farmers to those watching over fruits. See also Tarrant 2007: 249-50; Dillon 2009: 282-5 for Porphyry's sources of the five-fold division and Iamblichus' objection to him (= F 16 Dillon); Johnson 2013: 86-88 for a discussion of the fragment in comparison with that of the *Philosophy from Oracles* (F 325 Smith).

³⁵¹ Trans. Clark 2000: 70.

μὲν κοινῶς προσαγορεύεται τῷ τῶν δαιμόνων ὀνόματι, πείσμα δὲ περὶ πάντων τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν, ὥς ἄρα καὶ βλάπτοιεν <ἄν> εἰ χολωθεῖεν ἐπὶ τῷ παρορᾶσθαι καὶ μὴ τυγχάνειν τῆς νενομισμένης θεραπείας, καὶ πάλιν εὐεργετοῖεν ἂν τοὺς εὐχαῖς τε αὐτοὺς καὶ λιτανείαις θυσίαις τε καὶ τοῖς ἀκολούθοις ἐξευμενιζομένους.

To the other gods, the world and the fixed and wandering stars - visible gods composed of soul and body - we should return thanks as has been described, by sacrifices of inanimate things. So there remains the multitude of invisible gods, whom Plato called *daimones* without distinction. People have given some of them names, and they receive from everyone honours equal to the gods and other forms of worship. Others have no name at all in most places, but acquire a name and cult inconspicuously from a few people in villages or in some cities. The remaining multitude is given the general name of *daimones*, and there is a conviction about all of them that they can do harm if they are angered by being neglected and not receiving the accustomed worship, and on the other hand that they can do good to those who make them well-disposed by prayer and supplication and sacrifices and all that goes with them.

In this passage, Porphyry refers to *Timaeus* 40d6-9, in which Plato describes *daimones*, the invisible gods, as the offspring of the visible gods (ἐκγονοὶ θεῶν), that is to say, of the cosmos, the fixed stars and the seven planets.³⁵² In accordance with custom, Plato gives the names of the traditional gods in the order of their generation: Ge, Uranus, Oceanus, Tethys, Phorcys, Kronos, Rhea, Zeus, Hera and others (*Tim.* 40e5-41a2). Accordingly, the Sun, the Moon and so on, being symbolically represented on barques by the Egyptians (*De Antro* 10.16-18), correspond to the visible gods. In the *Symposium* (202d11-203a4), Plato regards *daimones* as intermediaries between gods and humans. After him, according to Plutarch's testimony in *On the Obsolescence of Oracles* 416c-d, Xenocrates as

³⁵² In a passage of his commentary on *Timaeus* 29a5-8 (F 44.10-13 Sodano = Procl. *In Tim.* 1.332.14-17), Porphyry calls the demiurges of mortals *daimones*, although νέοι θεοί (Procl. *In Tim.* 1.218.16) is a standard way of referring to the planetary gods to whom the Demiurge hands over the task of weaving of mortal bodies in *Timaeus* 42d5-7; see for this remark Runia 2008: 55 n. 78 and 188 n. 773.

Porphyry's possible source goes further and compares the equilateral triangle to the nature of the gods, the scalene to that of man, and the isosceles to that of the *daimones*.³⁵³ The isosceles triangle, partly equal and partly unequal, shows the dual characters of *daimones* because they have divine powers and human feelings.

Elsewhere in *De Antro*, Porphyry defines the *daimones* which preside over genesis (γενεθλίοις δαίμοσιν, 12.18), implying that they are divine powers, or, more precisely, Naiad nymphs who traditionally belong to the lineage of Poseidon but are among the multitude of the water-deities of lower rank.

Another reference to *daimones* is found in *De Antro* 35 p. 32.27, in which Porphyry explains Homer's description of Odysseus sitting under the olive tree, by specifying that he is 'appeasing the *daimon* of generation' (ἀπομειλισσομένω τὸν γενέθλιον δαίμονα)³⁵⁴ because of his sinful action, namely his blinding of Polyphemus, the son of the nymph Thoosa³⁵⁵ and the greatest among the Cyclopes (*Od.* 1.69-72). This interpretation is supported by the fact that *daimones* and nymphs are associated with genesis throughout the treatise, and that Porphyry states, in *De Antro* 35 p. 32.30, that Odysseus must appease 'the gods of the sea and of matter' (ἀλίων καὶ ὑλικῶν θεῶν), which includes the nymph Thoosa.

The last reference to *daimones* in *De Antro* should be considered in a wider cosmological and astrological context. In *De Antro* 29.13-15, Porphyry discusses proper assignments of the regions, asserting that the western regions are appropriate to *daimones* (δαίμοσι δὲ τὰ δυτικά, *De Antro* 29.15), while the eastern ones are appropriate to the gods. There are two further regions, the South and North, which he allocates to the immortals or more divine beings, and to the race of

³⁵³ Dillon 2005: 128-9; Clark 2000: 154 n. 299 for Xenocrates as Porphyry's possible source. See also Dillon 1996: 37-8 for Xenocrates' interest in Pythagoreanism.

³⁵⁴ The phrase '*daimon* of generation' is also reminiscent of the phrase 'appeasing the gods of generation', ἀπομειλίξασθαι τοὺς γενεθλίου θεοὺς in *Ad Marcellam* 2.3 where Porphyry defends his marriage as a concession to the social norms. See Smith 1974: xvii; Wicker 1987: 82; Whittaker 2001: 164; trans. Zimmern 1986: 40.

³⁵⁵ The daughter of Phorcys listed as one of the offspring of the visible gods in Plato's *Timaeus* 40e6.

the mortals subject to genesis, respectively.³⁵⁶ This statement prompts us to raise a number of questions. Firstly, why does Porphyry assign the western region particularly to *daimones*? Secondly, it should be clarified what precise distinction there is between the souls falling into genesis from the North and those *daimones* who are placed in the West. Lastly, what is the link between the western region and the Naiad nymphs as *daimones*, seeing that Porphyry identifies these nymphs with the souls coming into genesis in *De Antro* 12.14-17?

In *De Antro* 3.25, we receive some information on what ‘the West’ traditionally signifies: it is the quarter which people face entering into temples, whereas the statues of the gods and the entrances to almost all temples face the East. Indeed, this is a part of the puzzle, which Porphyry puts forward in *De Antro* 3.17-4.28 and which he describes as ‘not a simple question’ (οὐ μικρᾶς οὔσης ἀπορίας). He will explain later why Homer assigns the northern entrance to the mortals (θνητοί) and the southern to the immortals (ἀθάνατοι), in a passage which will be discussed in the next chapter (*De Antro* 29.13-15). For our present purpose, what matters first is to clarify what the region of the West cosmologically signifies.

Concerning the last question - whether there is a link between the western region and Naiad nymphs as *daimones* – the general association with the moistness of this region may, at least, offer some insights. In his *Tetrabiblos* (1.11.3-4.1) Ptolemy describes the region to the West as moist:³⁵⁷

ὁ δὲ πρὸς ταῖς δυσμαῖ τόπος αὐτός τέ ἐστιν ὑγρὸς διὰ τὸ κατ’ αὐτὸν γινομένου τοῦ ἡλίου τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἀναποθέντα τότε πρῶτον ἄρχεσθαι ὑγραίνεσθαι· οἷ τε ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ φερόμενοι ἄνεμοι, οὓς κοινότερον ζεφύρους καλοῦμεν, νεαροί τέ εἰσι καὶ ὑγραντικοί.

The region to the West is itself moist, because when the Sun is therein the things dried out during the day then first begin to become moistened; likewise the winds

³⁵⁶ κατὰ ταῦτα τοίνυν τῷ μὲν θνητῷ καὶ γενέσει ὑποπτῶν φύλῳ τὰ βόρεια οἰκεῖα, τῷ δὲ θειοτέρῳ τὰ νότια, ὡς θεοῖς μὲν τὰ ἀνατολικά, δαίμοσι δὲ τὰ δυτικά.

³⁵⁷ Trans. Robbins 1940: 63.

which blow from this part, which we call by the general name Zephyrus, are fresh and moist.

Porphry states in *De Antro* 24 p. 24.4 that the eastern and western regions correspond to the equinoctial points: the East is the spring equinox occurring in Aries in the ascendant, the West the autumnal equinox occurring in Libra in the descendant. In *De Antro* 29.20-21, we receive further information that the cardinal point (κέντρον) falling above the Earth (ὑπὲρ γῆν) corresponds to the East (τὸ ἀνατολικόν), the other under the Earth (ὑπόγειον), to the West (τὸ δυτικόν). In *Adversus Mathematicos* 5.13.6-8, Sextus Empiricus also affirms that Libra is located under the Earth, whereas Aries is in the zenith or midheaven.³⁵⁸

οἷον “ἔσται γὰρ σαφὲς ἐπὶ παραδείγματος” καρκίνου ὠροσκοποῦντος μεσουρανεῖ μὲν κριός, δύνει δὲ αἰγόκερως, ὑπὸ γῆν δὲ ἐστὶ ζυγός.

so – “for it will be clear by means of an example” – if Cancer is in the ascendant, Aries will be in the zenith, Capricorn sets, Libra is under the Earth.

As both Edwards and Johnson also point out, Porphry’s assignment of the western region to *daimones* is reminiscent of his commentary on the story of Atlantis in *Timaeus* 20d8-9 (F 10 Sodano),³⁵⁹ which is preserved in Proclus’ *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* 77.6-24. Proclus’ commentary gives a lengthy doxography including Crantor, Amelius, Origen the Neoplatonist (F 12 Weber), Numenius (F 37 DP = F 49 L) and Iamblichus (F 7 Dillon), as follows:³⁶⁰

Οἱ δὲ καὶ μίξαντες τὴν Ὀριγένους, ὥσπερ οἴονται, καὶ Νουμενίου δόξαν ψυχῶν πρὸς δαίμονας ἐναντίωσιν εἶπον, τῶν μὲν δαιμόνων καταγωγῶν ὄντων, τῶν δὲ ψυχῶν

³⁵⁸ For a detailed discussion of the cardinal points see Sextus Empiricus *Adversus Mathematicos* 5.12-13.

³⁵⁹ Sodano 1964: 6-7; Edwards 1990d: 259: ‘The notion that the west is the seat of daemons is invoked in Porphry’s essay.’ Johnson 2013: 92 n. 223. See Tarrant 2007: 60-84 for a detailed discussion of the exegetical practices on the story of Atlantis.

³⁶⁰ Trans. Tarrant 2007: 170. See also Dillon 2009: 268-70 for a summary of the relevant doxography; Johnson 2013: 91-2 for the illuminating discussion of the passage.

ἀναγομένων· παρ' οἷς ὁ δαίμων τριχῶς· καὶ γὰρ εἶναι φασὶ τὸ μὲν θείων δαιμόνων γένος, τὸ δὲ κατὰ σχέσιν, ὃ μερικαὶ συμπληροῦσι ψυχὰι δαιμονίας τυχοῦσαι λήξεως, τὸ δὲ πονηρὸν ἄλλο καὶ λυμαντικὸν τῶν ψυχῶν. τοὺς οὖν ἐσχάτους δαίμονας τὸν πόλεμον τοῦτον συγκροτεῖν καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἐν τῇ εἰς τὴν γένεσιν καθόδῳ· καὶ ἅπερ οἱ παλαιοί, φασὶ, θεολόγοι εἰς Ὅσιριν καὶ Τυφῶνα ἀνήγαγον ἢ εἰς Διόνυσον καὶ Τιτᾶνας, ταῦτα ὁ Πλάτων εἰς Ἀθηναίους καὶ Ἀτλαντίνους ἀναπέμπει δι' εὐσέβειαν· πρὶν δὲ εἰς τὰ στερεὰ σώματα κατελθεῖν, [ἐναντίωσιν] παραδίδωσι τῶν ψυχῶν πρὸς τοὺς ὑλικοὺς δαίμονας, οὓς τῇ δύσει προσωκείωσεν· ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡ δύσις, ὡς ἔλεγον Αἰγύπτιοι, τόπος ἐστὶ δαιμόνων κακωτικῶν· ἐπὶ δὲ ταύτης ἐστὶ τῆς οἰήσεως ὁ φιλόσοφος Πορφύριος, ὃν καὶ θαυμάσειεν ἄν τις, εἰ ἕτερα λέγει τῆς Νουμενίου παραδόσεως.

Others combine (or so they believe) the views of Origenes and of Numenius and say that it [the conflict between Athenians and Atlantines] is a conflict between souls and daemons, with the daemons being a down-dragging force and the souls trying to come upwards. Their view is that there are three kinds of daemons, a divine type of daemon, a relational (*kata schesin*) type, which is made up of individual souls who have received a daemoniac lot, and the other corrupt kind - the soul polluters. So daemons of the final type strike up this war with souls on their descent into generation. And they claim that, just as the ancient theologians refer this to Osiris and Typhon or to Dionysus and the Titans, Plato attributes it to Athenians and Atlantines out of reverence. For he hands down the tradition that, before they come into three-dimensional bodies, there is rivalry between souls and the enmattered daemons that he assigned to the West; for the West, as Egyptians say, is the region of harmful souls. The philosopher Porphyry is of this view, and one would be surprised if he is saying anything different from the view authorized by Numenius.

Porphyry interprets the story of Atlantis as an allegory of hostility between souls who are trying to ascend to the higher realm and debased *daimones*, combining the interpretations of Origen and Numenius. Origen explained the story of Atlantis as a conflict between *daimones*: one group good, the other evil, one superior in numbers, the other in power, with the good *daimones* emerging victorious (Procl. *In*

Tim. 76.32-77.3). Numenius regarded it as a battle between two different souls: more honourable souls, nurslings of Athena, and the souls who have dealings with generation and are related to the god Poseidon, who is the ruler of genesis (*In Tim.* 77.3-5).³⁶¹ Numenius reduces the story of Atlantis to a battle between souls: some souls are under the protection of Athena, an obvious symbol of practical wisdom or φρόνησις – compare *De Antro* 32.24³⁶² – and some under the protection of Poseidon. Numenius' interpretation reflects the dualism in his doctrine of the human soul, claiming that the soul does not have two or three parts but two separate types of souls, 'the rational and irrational' (τὴν μὲν λογικὴν, τὴν δ' ἄλογον, F 44 DP = Porph. *περὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων*, F 253.18-21 Smith).³⁶³

Porphry's classification includes three, rather than two, types of *daimones* in his commentary on the story of Atlantis, and according to Proclus' quotation, there is an intermediate type of *daimones* between the divine and those being at the lowest level. These *daimones* are, in fact, a group of souls who have received *daimonic* lots, but are also in the process of generation, that is to say, of descending into the material world, which is associated with moisture in *De Antro*. The function of the *daimones* at lowest level is to encourage these souls falling into genesis.

In *De Antro* 29.15, Porphyry assigns the western region to *daimones* connected with matter; it is also the place assigned to Atlantis by Plato.³⁶⁴ If we apply Porphyry's tripartite division of *daimones* and/or souls in the story of Atlantis to *De Antro* 29.13-15, we can propose that:

- The South seems to be suitable to 'more divine beings' (θειότεροι, *De Antro* 29.24; θείων δαιμόνων, F 10.9 Sodano = *In Tim.* 77.10), that is to say, heroic or rational souls which might refer to Odysseus because he is

³⁶¹ In *Crit.* 113c Plato calls Poseidon the domain of Atlantis, see also Edwards 1990d: 258.

³⁶² See Dillon 2009: 286 see for Athena as symbolising practical wisdom.

³⁶³ According to Edwards, Numenius' exegesis of the story of Atlantis is the archetype of Porphyry's *De Antro*, and he speculatively claims that Porphyry's interpretation of the story as the combat of the material *daimones* and the soul might have had some place in Numenius' work, see 1990d: 258-260.

³⁶⁴ See Tarrant 2007: 170 n. 316.

under the guidance of *phronesis* symbolised by Athena, as discussed in Chapter 4.

- The North is appropriate to those who are subject to a *daimonic* lot, and are in the process of falling into generation. ‘The individual souls have received a *daimonic* lot’ (ὁ μερικαὶ συμπληροῦσι ψυχὰι δαιμονίας τυχοῦσαι λήξεως, F 10.10 Sodano = *In Tim.* 77.11-12) is an explicit reference to the souls to which a *daimon* is assigned in the *Republic* (617e1, 619c5, 620d8), which, in the context of *De Antro*, would also pertain particularly to Odysseus.
- The East is apparently allocated to the gods, though it is difficult to pin down precisely which gods Porphyry has in mind. I think that Porphyry is alluding to the visible gods mentioned in *De Abstinencia* 2.37. More speculatively, he may have in mind Athena as the guiding *daimon* of Odysseus. In his *Life of Plotinus*, Porphyry calls Plotinus’ guiding spirit alternately a god (*VPlot.* 10.22-25) and a more divine *daimon* (*VPlot.* 10.28-29), suggesting that, in Porphyry’s view, a more divine *daimon* may also be called a god.³⁶⁵ This suggestion is compatible with *De Abstinencia* 2.41.16-20, in which Porphyry distinguishes good *daimones* from the harmful *daimones*. Accordingly, the idea that the good *daimones* have the capacity to foretell potential dangers about to be caused by harmful ones (προσημαίνουσιν εἰς δύναμιν τοὺς ἐπηρτημένους ἀπὸ τῶν κακοεργῶν κινδύνους) corroborates Porphyry’s identification of Athena with *phronesis*, that is knowledge of the future, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.
- Lastly, the West is the region of the wicked or harmful *daimones*, who are embedded in matter, namely Naiad nymphs. They benefit from our

³⁶⁵ *In Alc.* 78.10-79.6 Proclus calls Socrates’ *daimonion* not only *daimon* but also a god and, refers to Plotinus possessing a divine *daimon* in *In Alc.* 72.20-73.80, see Addey 2014b: 60-2.

thoughtlessness and stimulate our ‘appetites’ (ἐπιθυμίας) with desire and longing for wealth and power and pleasure.³⁶⁶

In other words, there seems to be no sharp distinction in Porphyry’s thinking between *daimones* and souls, particularly those who are allocated to the southern and northern regions, corresponding to *daimones* or souls in the intermediate condition in Proclus’ *Commentary on the Timaeus* (77.10-12). Accordingly, Odysseus belongs to both regions, the North and the South, in the sense that he is a soul who descends into the material world but, at the same time, he is one of those who are trying to attain the intelligible realm. It is probable that the souls in the process of genesis or apogenesis are *daimones* themselves and are also guided by *daimones*, who live with the souls. In fact, in the *Timaeus*, Plato separates *daimones* which preside over the top part of the soul (90a2-5),³⁶⁷ which we liken to Athena, from those which dwell within the soul (90c2-6).³⁶⁸

(90a2-5) τὸ δὲ δὴ περὶ τοῦ κυριωτάτου παρ’ ἡμῖν ψυχῆς εἶδους διανοεῖσθαι δεῖ τῇδε, ὥς ἄρα αὐτὸ δαίμονα θεὸς ἐκάστῳ δέδωκεν, τοῦτο ὃ δὴ φαμεν οἰκεῖν μὲν ἡμῶν ἐπ’ ἄκρῳ τῷ σώματι, πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ συγγένειαν ἀπὸ γῆς ἡμᾶς αἶρειν ὥς ὄντας φυτὸν οὐκ ἔγγειον ἀλλὰ οὐράνιον.

(90a2-5) Now we ought to think of the most sovereign part of our soul as god’s gift to us, given to be our guiding spirit. This, of course, is the type of soul that, as we maintain, resides in the top part of our bodies. It raises us up away from the Earth and toward what is akin to us in heaven, as though we are not plants of the Earth but of heaven.

³⁶⁶ *De Abstinencia* 2.40.

³⁶⁷ See *Leg.* 732c for the guiding spirit as controlling power and 877a as the guardian spirit.

³⁶⁸ Trans. Zeyl 2000: 85-6 I changed the last sentence of 90a2-5 and kept ‘*daimon*’ in the translation of 90c2-6 instead of Zeyl’s adopting ‘guiding spirit’ in order to underline the difference between the guiding spirit given to us and *daimon* which is the soul itself.

(90c2-6) καθ' ὅσον δ' αὖ μετασχεῖν ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει ἀθανασίας ἐνδέχεται, τούτου μηδὲν μέρος ἀπολείπειν, ἅτε δὲ αἰεὶ θεραπεύοντα τὸ θεῖον ἔχοντά τε αὐτὸν εὖ κεκοσμημένον τὸν δαίμονα σύνοικον ἑαυτῷ, διαφερόντως εὐδαίμονα εἶναι.

(90c2-6) And to the extent that human nature can partake of immortality, he (a man) can in no way fail to achieve this: constantly caring for his divine part as he does, keeping well-ordered the *daimon* that lives within him, he must indeed be supremely happy.

As Dillon remarks,³⁶⁹ the idea of human souls as their *daimones* has its source in *Timaeus* 90c, but this idea should be distinguished from the notion of guiding *daimones*, which are dwelling in the highest part of the body, properly speaking the dominant part of the soul, in *Timaeus* 90a.³⁷⁰ In keeping with Plato's distinction between the divine soul and the guiding spirit, Odysseus is one of those divine souls allocated to the South, who passes through all stages of genesis and returns to the Fatherland, that is to say, the intelligible realm (*De Antro* 34.14-15, Plot. *Enn.* 1.6.8.16-20), whereas Athena might be considered as Odysseus' guardian *daimon* or god, allocated to the East, who rules the rational part of Odysseus' soul and leads him to the divine. In his *On Our Allotted Daimon* (*Enn.* 3.4.3), Plotinus considers our guiding *daimon* to be an entity superior to us. Alluding to *Republic* 617e1 in which Plotinus discusses the choice of our own guiding *daimon*, he says, 'if our sense perception is active, the guiding *daimon* becomes the rational principle' (εἰ μὲν τὸ ἐνεργοῦν ἢ αἰσθητικοί, καὶ ὁ δαίμων τὸ λογικόν, *Enn.* 3.4.3.5-6). However, if we live according to the rational principle, the guiding *daimon* stays above it, lying idle because the guiding *daimon* approves what the rational principle performs. Plotinus'

³⁶⁹ Dillon 1996: 319-20.

³⁷⁰ Pl. *Phaedo* 107d-108c, *Rep.* 617e, 620d-e. See Alt 2005: 73-90 for a discussion of guiding and evil *daimones* in the Platonic tradition, particularly in Plotinus and Porphyry; Timotin 2012: 243-331 for Socrates' *daimon* and guiding *daimon* starting from Plutarch to Proclus; Finamore 2014: 36-50 on Socrates' *daimonion* in Apuleius and Plutarch; Addey 2014b: 51-72 for a detailed discussion of Neoplatonists' view of Socrates' *daimonion* where she particularly focuses on Proclus' *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* as a central study.

remarks is consistent with the idea that Athena operates as Odysseus' rational principle when he leads a sensible life.³⁷¹

Regarding the assignments of the gods to the East and of the *daimones* to the West, I suggest that Porphyry's intention is to indicate two extremities, divine (good) and wicked (evil) *daimones*. Following Xenocrates' division of *daimones* into good and evil,³⁷² Porphyry also splits *daimones* into two classes in *De Abstinencia* 2.38.6-10 and 2.38.24-29. Good *daimones* stimulate balance and reason; in a sense, they lead souls to the divine by controlling their *pneuma*.³⁷³ On the other hand, harmful *daimones*, which Porphyry also calls souls, are subject to extravagancies in the material world due to their uncontrolled *pneuma* revealing anger, fear, appetite, etc.³⁷⁴

In another passage of his *Commentary on the Timaeus* Proclus reports Porphyry's interpretation of a disaster, *Timaeus* 22d3-5 (F 13 Sodano).³⁷⁵ The disaster of which Plato speaks in *Timaeus* 22d3-5 is a destruction on the Earth by a fire because of a shifting of celestial bodies. Plato says that people who live in higher and dry places perish more than those who dwell near rivers and seas. Proclus criticises Porphyry on the grounds that he has a propensity to convert a discourse on natural phenomena into that of souls for his ethical concern (*In Tim.* 116.26-117.18).³⁷⁶ Proclus' account shows that Porphyry had a particular interest in the subject of the relationship between soul and body (as is also confirmed by *VPlot.* 13). More importantly, the passage bears resemblance to *De Antro* 10.8-24, 11 p.

³⁷¹ Dillon 2012: 12 convincingly interprets Plotinus' remarks on the guiding *daimon* as 'the undescended soul looked at from another angle' and likens our *daimon* to 'something like our "super-ego"'. For the demonology of Plotinus see also Lepajoe 1998: 7-16.

³⁷² Plut. *De Iside* 361b = F 25 H/229 IP. Dillon 2005: 130; Schibli 1993: 147-8.

³⁷³ Johnson 2013: 86. See a detailed discussion of *pneuma* in Section 3.3 below.

³⁷⁴ Trans. Clark 2000: 70-1. See Alt 2005: 81 for a remark about Porphyry as the first Platonist who explains the origin of evil *daimones*.

³⁷⁵ Sodano 1964: 8-9.

³⁷⁶ In the following discussion I will assume, with Dillon 2009: 277, that Proclus quotes Porphyry's text verbally except where he offers criticism. For Proclus' use of Porphyry see also Tarrant 2007: 212 n. 496.

12.25, in that Porphyry refers to the same fragment of Heraclitus 22 B 77 DK, but not 22 B 62 DK, and uses the same argument.³⁷⁷

Ὁ δέ γε φιλόσοφος Πορφύριος καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἀπὸ τῶν φαινομένων μετὰγει τοὺς λόγους καὶ φησιν, ὅτι ἄρα καὶ ἐν ταύταις ποτὲ μὲν ὑπερζει τὸ θυμοειδές, καὶ ἢ ἐκπύρωσις αὕτη φθορά ἐστι τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν ἀνθρώπων·

ὅσσε δέ οἱ πυρὶ λαμπετόωντι εἴκτην

ἐπὶ θυμουμένου τοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος ἐποίησεν Ὅμηρος · ὅτε δὲ τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν ὑπὸ τῆς γενεσιουργοῦ κατακλυζόμενον ὑγρότητος ἐκνευρίζεται καὶ βαπτίζεται τοῖς τῆς ὕλης ρεύμασι, καὶ ἄλλος οὗτος ψυχῶν τῶν νοερῶν θάνατος, ὑγρῆσι γενέσθαι, φησὶν Ἡράκλειτος. εἰ δὲ ταῦτα ὀρθῶς διατέτακται, τῶν μὲν κατὰ θυμὸν παθῶν ἀπείρατοι μένουσιν ὅσοι ἂν κεχαλασμένον ἔχωσι τὸν θυμὸν καὶ σύμμετρον εἰς τὴν τῶν δευτέρων ἐπιμέλειαν· τοῦτο γὰρ οἱ κοῖλοι τόποι καὶ ὑδάτων γείτονες σημαίνουσι. τῶν δὲ κατ' ἐπιθυμίαν, οἱ συντονώτερον ἔχοντες τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ἐγγεγερμένον ἀπὸ τῆς ὕλης· τοῦτο γὰρ οἱ ὑψηλοὶ τόποι δηλοῦσι. πέφυκε γὰρ πῶς τὸ μὲν θυμικὸν ὀξυκίνητον εἶναι καὶ δραστήριον, τὸ δὲ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἔκλυτον καὶ ἀσθενές· μουσικοῦ δ' ἀνδρὸς χαλάσαι μὲν το θυμοῦ τὸ εὖτονον, ἐπιτεῖναι δὲ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τὸ ἐκμελές.

The philosopher Porphyry transfers the description from the phenomena to souls, and says, forsooth, that in these sometimes the spirited becomes overheated, and this ecpyrosis is the destruction of the 'men' within us:

'and his eyes were like gleaming fire.'

Homer says of the enraged Agamemnon in a temper (*Il.* 1.104).

But when the desiring part is flooded over by the creative wetness³⁷⁸ and is unnerved and submerged in the streams of matter, then this is another death of intelligent souls, 'becoming wet' as Heraclitus says.³⁷⁹ And if this is asserted correctly, as many as have their spirited part slackened, and symmetrical to a concern for secondary things, remain unvexed by the passions of the spirit; this is the meaning of the 'hollow places, near to water'. And those who have their desiring

³⁷⁷ Trans. Dillon 2009: 276-7.

³⁷⁸ A reference to Poseidon as γενεσιουργῶν in Procl. *In Tim.* 77.4

³⁷⁹ Heraclitus 22 B 77 DK: 'it is enjoyment not death for souls to become moist, falling into genesis is a delight for them, as quoted in full in *De Antro* 10.20-1 and discussed in Section 3.1.1.

part keyed up and roused up from matter, are unvexed by those of desire; for this is the meaning of the 'higher place'. For the spirited part is somehow by nature quick of movement and energetic, while the desiring part is slack and weak; and it is the work of a man skilled in music to slacken the tension of the spirit, while tightening up the flatness (τὸ ἐκμελές) of Desire.

Quoting from Heraclitus 22 B 77 DK, Porphyry draws analogies between the spirited part of the soul (τὸ θυμοειδές, cf. *Rep.* 439d) and the high places, and the desiring part of the soul (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, cf. *Rep.* 439e) and the hollow places. The spirited part is located in a relatively higher part of the soul, manifesting itself as anger, temper and so on, and suffering from overheating. The desiring part is the lower part of the soul, manifesting itself as slackness and weakness, and is associated with moistness.

In accordance with Porphyry's interpretation of Heraclitus 22 B 77 DK,³⁸⁰ 'becoming wet' is an indication of a weakened rational part of the soul, while in *De Antro* 10.20-21, Porphyry says that 'becoming wet' is a pleasure for souls due to their fall into genesis. If we combine these two interpretations, 'wetness' symbolises the soul's tendency towards materialistic pleasure and its loss of rationality and genesis occurs because of this tendency and vice versa. In *De Antro* 10.22-23, Porphyry quotes another fragment of Heraclitus 22 B 62 DK: 'we live their death, they live our death' and claims that Heraclitus says that Homer calls souls in genesis 'wet'. In line with Porphyry's similar interpretations of Heraclitus 22 B 77 DK, I suggest that, according to Porphyry, 'death' in 22 B 62 DK³⁸¹ implies spiritual death³⁸² of the rational part of the soul while living its corporeal life, as referring to predominance of the desiring or appetitive part of souls, which are situated between the midriff and the navel (*Tim.* 77b4). This idea receives support from *Timaeus* 88a7-b5, in which Plato advocates a balanced relationship between soul and body,

³⁸⁰ Kahn 1979: 245.

³⁸¹ Kahn 1979: 216-20; Marcovich 2001: 240-1.

³⁸² See Chapter 4.2.1. for a discussion of the meaning of the spiritual death.

explaining that, if a body is too strong for its weak-minded soul, this leads to excessive bodily needs, that is, excessive desire for food, drink, sex and so on, and a neglect of the rational part of the soul:³⁸³

σῶμά τε ὅταν αὖ μέγα καὶ ὑπέρψυχον σμικρᾷ συμφυῆς ἀσθενεῖ τε διανοία γένηται, διττῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν οὐσῶν φύσει κατ' ἀνθρώπους, διὰ σῶμα μὲν τροφῆς, διὰ δὲ τὸ θειότατον τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν φρονήσεως, αἱ τοῦ κρείττονος κινήσεις κρατοῦσαι καὶ τὸ μὲν σφέτερον αὖξουσai, τὸ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς κωφὸν καὶ δυσμαθὲς ἀμνημόν τε ποιοῦσαι, τὴν μεγίστην νόσον ἀμαθίαν ἐναπεργάζονται.

But when, on the other hand, a large body, too much for its soul, is joined with a puny and feeble mind, then, given that human beings have two sets of natural desires - desires of the body for food and desires of the most divine part of us for wisdom - the motions of the stronger part will predominate, and amplify their own interest. They render the functions of the soul dull, stupid, and forgetful, thereby bringing on the gravest disease of all: ignorance.

In conclusion, because of Porphyry's sophisticated interpretation of *daimones* and his symbolic language in *De Antro*, it is difficult to mark precisely the boundary between *daimones*, souls and gods in Porphyry's doctrine. Ambiguity also results from the intermediate position of *daimones*, who are capable of participating in the world of humans and in the world of gods and are not completely impassible, having both human emotions and divine capacity. We might, however, come to the conclusion that the souls in the process of genesis or apogenesis are also called *daimones* until they are passing through the sublunary region, a region in which *daimones* dwell. The souls falling into genesis are those who have not yet completed their self-improvement and are accompanied by a guiding spirit, as in the case of Odysseus and the goddess Athena. On the other hand, it would appear that the souls which are in their ascent out of genesis are classified by Porphyry as 'more divine beings.' Porphyry's treatment of Homer's Naiad nymphs is ambiguous. They are not

³⁸³ Trans. Zeyl 2000: 83-4.

only defined as souls descending into genesis because of their association with wetness, but also identified as *daimones* embedded in matter, like the Atlantians in the *Timaeus*, in other words, harmful *daimones* who affect the desiring part of individual souls and take advantage of people's weaknesses. I think that the discussion on Porphyry's identification of Athena with *phronesis* in Chapter 4 will throw further light on the essence of the relationship of Odysseus and Athena and on my claim that Athena is Odysseus' guiding *daimon*.

3.2. Reading *Dunamis* in *De Antro* 13.25-29 and the Body-Creation

In this section, I will, firstly, analyse the concept of *dunamis* which Porphyry uses for Naiad nymphs in *De Antro* 10.12-14 and 13.25-29. After an introduction showing how Porphyry treats mythical female principles such as Amphitrite and Naiad nymphs as generative powers, my analysis will be subdivided into two parts following the process of the creation of the human body. Porphyry draws a distinction between souls and watery powers, which are represented by different symbols in the Homeric cave. Following this distinction, I will focus on Section 14 of *De Antro*, where Porphyry compares Homer's stone looms to the bones of living beings, identifying the weaving process as an appropriate symbol for souls descending into genesis and the creation of the body (14.1-3). I will briefly examine the body-creation process and its ethical disposition of the soul, which are found in Plato's *Timaeus* (69d-72d, 74e-75a) along with Porphyry's commentary on *Timaeus* 24b4-7. I will then, starting from my claim that Naiad nymphs may be identified with blood, venture to demonstrate that Porphyry's description of the creation of the body in *De Antro* 14 should be interpreted in the context of embryology, using F 253 (Smith) of Porphyry's *Περὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων*, and relevant parts of *Ad Gaurum* in order to show the distinction between the soul itself and the embodied soul.

Porphyry refers to Naiad nymphs as *dunameis* twice, in *De Antro* 10.12-14 (= Numenius F 30 DP), a passage quoted and discussed in the previous section, and in *De Antro* 13.25-29, in both cases identifying them as the *dunameis* which preside over water (προεστῶσας, 10.12; προεστῶσαι, 13.26) In the latter passage, Porphyry explicitly distinguishes watery powers from souls, setting up an argument that each are represented by different symbols:

(13.25-29) Ἀνακείσθω δὴ τὸ προκείμενον ἄντρον ψυχᾶς καὶ ταῖς μερικωτέραις ἐν δυνάμεσι νύμφαις, αἱ ναμάτων καὶ πηγῶν προεστῶσαι πηγαῖαί τε καὶ ναῖδες διὰ τοῦτο κέκληνται. τίνα οὖν ἡμῖν διάφορα σύμβολα, τὰ μὲν πρὸς τὰς ψυχὰς ἀναφερόμενα, τὰ δὲ πρὸς τὰς ἐν ὕδασι δυνάμεις, ἵνα κοινὸν ἀμφοτέραις καθιερωθῇ τὸ ἄντρον ὑπολάβωμεν;

(13.25-29) So, let us suppose that the cave in question is dedicated to souls and to nymphs who are more specific in their powers, namely those who preside over streams (*namata*) and springs and are also called spring nymphs and naiads because of this. Then, which different symbols do we have, some of them referring to the souls and others to the powers in waters, in order that we can understand the cave as being dedicated in common to both?

In a passage of his *Homeric Questions*, *ad Il.* 8.1.95-98, Porphyry remarks that Homer considers everything to be full of divine powers (*dunameis*), referring to Odysseus' prayer, in *Odyssey* 5.445, to the unknown *daimon* of the river of Scheria (κλυῖθι, ἄναξ, ὅτις ἔσσι):³⁸⁴

εὐχεται δὲ τῷ ποταμῷ, ὡς ἂν ἐκάστου ἔχοντος δαίμονα. ὁ δὲ καὶ ἐν ταῖς κρήναις οἶδε θεάς, ἃς Νύμφας καλεῖ· Νύμφαι κρηναῖαι, κοῦραι Διός, καὶ ἄλλαι Νύμφαι ὀρεστιάδες, κοῦραι Διός. οὕτω πεπληρωθῇ θείων δυνάμεων Ὅμηρος ἡγεῖτο ἅπαντα.

[Odysseus] prays to the river, as though each one should have a deity. He is also aware of goddesses in the fountains, who he calls "Nymphs": "Nymphs of the

³⁸⁴ Trans. MacPhail 2011: 131.

fountain, daughters of Zeus” (Od. 17.240), and others are “Nymphs of the mountain, daughters of Zeus” (Il. 6.420). Thus Homer believed that everything was filled with divine powers.

Here, Porphyry describes the nymphs of springs and mountains as both *daimones* and *dunameis*. An identification of Naiad nymphs as *dunameis* is also found in his *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων* (F 359.5-11 Smith = Eus. *PE* 3.21-44). In this passage, Porphyry gives the lineage of water deities: Oceanus represents the power of water as a whole while Tethys, traditionally known as the consort of Oceanus, is the symbol of that power as female principle. Similarly, Amphitrite who is traditionally known as the wife of Poseidon, is the female principle and power which produces the sea, whereas Poseidon is the sea-power that presides over the creation of the sea-water. At a lower ontological level, Porphyry classifies powers of the waters into two types according to their qualities: nymphs are the power of the sweet waters, such as streams and springs (as in the case of *De Antro*) and Nereids are the powers of the salty waters:

Τὴν δὲ ὕδροποιὸν ὅλην δύναμιν Ὠκεανὸν προσεῖπον, τὸ σύμβολον αὐτῆς Τηθὺν ὀνομάσαντες. Τῆς δὲ ὅλης ἡ μὲν τῶν ποτίμων πεποιημένη, Ἀχελῷος αὐτοῖς κέκληται, ἡ δὲ τῶν θαλασσίων Ποσειδῶν, πάλιν τῆς θαλασσοποιού, καθὸ γεννητική, Ἀμφιτρίτης οὔσης. Καὶ αἱ μὲν τῶν γλυκέων ὑδάτων μερικαὶ δυνάμεις Νύμφαι, αἱ δὲ τῶν θαλασσίων Νηρηΐδες κέκληνται.

They called the whole watery power Oceanos, and named its symbol Tethys. However, of the whole watery power, that which presides over the creation of the fresh waters is called by them Achelous, and that which presides over the sea-water Poseidon; in turn the power which produces the sea, in so far as it is productive, is Amphitrite. The particular powers of the sweet (fresh) waters are called Nymphs, those of the sea-waters Nereids.

Especially the *dunameis* which Porphyry assigns to Poseidon and his female counterpart, Amphitrite, provide a significant clue that the female principle has

generative power, that is to say, the female principle is the *dunamis* which is active in the process of creation. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that the female principle also guarantees the continuation of the generative process in perpetuity. At least, Porphyry's reference to the waters which are under the protection of Naiad nymphs being 'ever-flowing' (ἀενάων, *De Antro* 12.17) might be deemed to be indicative of continuity of genesis. On the other hand, the male principle fulfils a more static role in comparison with the female principle and we might consider the male principle to be a provider of power, which does not actively intervene in the creative process. In the context of the *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων*, at the lower ontological level, we might liken the male principle to the Father who generates the cosmos, and the female principle to the Maker who receives the matter or source from him.³⁸⁵ Furthermore, the association of female principles with the active power recalls the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and *dunamis* alludes to the intermediary female principle of the Chaldaean Triad, which consists of Father, Power or Potency, and Intellect in F 4, 56, and 96, as discussed in the previous chapter.³⁸⁶

In *De Antro* 14.3 Porphyry states that female principles, Naiad nymphs, actively participate in the process of 'body-creation', σωματουργία, a noun whose usage is extremely rare.³⁸⁷ In this section, Porphyry explains, step by step, Homer's description of Naiad nymphs weaving sea-purple garments on high stone looms, 'a wonder to be seen.' He interprets the stone as the bones in living beings, and the stone (rather than wood) that constitutes the loom as the most appropriate material, bearing a strong resemblance to bones. The sea-purple colour of the garments suggests the colour of blood that forms flesh, the body covering the soul like a cloak. In his *De Abstinencia* (2.46), Porphyry, likewise, describes the body as a garment, calling it a 'skin tunic' (χιτῶνα τὸν δερμάτινον) very much as he does in *De Antro* 14.11 (χιτῶν γε τὸ σῶμα τῇ ψυχῇ ὃ ἡμφίεσται), taking up a well-known

³⁸⁵ See Chapter 2.1.3.2. Porph. *In Tim.* F 40 Sodano.

³⁸⁶ Majercik 1989: 139.

³⁸⁷ It otherwise only occurs in *Corpus Hermeticum* 26.7.10 (= Stob. *Anth.* 1.49.69.69); Procl. *in Tim.* 3.318.6.

philosophical image.³⁸⁸ Lastly, concerning Homer's words 'a wonder to be seen' (θαῦμα ιδέσθαι), Porphyry argues that there are two primary perspectives for the process of the body-creation, according to its composition (πρὸς τὴν σύστασιν) or with respect to the soul's connection to the body (πρὸς τὴν πρὸς τοῦτο σύνδεσιν τῆς ψυχῆς):

(14.1-16) λίθινοι δὲ κρατῆρες καὶ ἀμφιφορεῖς ταῖς προεστώσαις τοῦ ἐκ πετρῶν ἐξιόντος ὕδατος νύμφαις οἰκειότατοι· ψυχᾶς δὲ εἰς γένεσιν κατιούσαις καὶ σωματουργίαν τί ἂν εἴη οἰκειότερον σύμβολον τούτων; διὸ καὶ ἀπετόλμησεν εἰπεῖν ὁ ποιητὴς ὅτι ἐν τούτοις
'φάρε' ὑφαίνουσιν ἀλιπόρφυρα θαῦμα ιδέσθαι'.

ἐν ὅστοις μὲν γὰρ καὶ περὶ ὅσα ἡ σαρκοποιία, λίθος δὲ ταῦτα ἐν ζώοις λίθω ἐοικότα· διὸ καὶ οἱ ἱστοὶ οὐκ ἀπ' ἄλλης ὕλης, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τοῦ λίθου ἐρρήθησαν. τὰ δ' ἀλιπόρφυρα φάρη ἀντικρυς ἡ ἐξ αἱμάτων ἂν εἴη ἐξυφαινομένη σάρξ· ἐξ αἵματος μὲν γὰρ ἀλουργῇ ἔρια καὶ ἐκ ζώων ἐβάφη καὶ τὸ ἔριον, δι' αἵματος δὲ καὶ ἐξ αἱμάτων ἡ σαργογονία. καὶ χιτῶν γε τὸ σῶμα τῇ ψυχῇ ὃ ἡμφίεσται, θαῦμα τῷ ὄντι ιδέσθαι, εἴτε πρὸς τὴν σύστασιν ἀποβλέποις εἴτε πρὸς τὴν πρὸς τοῦτο σύνδεσιν τῆς ψυχῆς. οὕτω καὶ παρὰ τῷ Ὀρφεῖ ἡ Κόρη, ἥπερ ἐστὶ παντὸς τοῦ σπειρομένου ἔφορος, ἱστουργοῦσα παραδίδοται, τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν πέπλον εἰρηκότων οἷον θεῶν οὐρανίων περίβλημα.

(14.1-16) Hence, stone mixing bowls and amphoras are entirely proper to the nymphs who preside over water, which comes out of rocks. On the other hand, for souls descending into genesis, and the into body-creation, which symbol could be more suitable than these (the stone looms) For this reason, the poet (Homer) also boldly says on these looms

'they weave the sea-purple cloaks, a wonder to be seen.'

For the making of flesh happens on bones and around bones, and these bones are the stone in living beings since they resemble stone. Because of this, the looms too were said (by Homer) to be made of stone, and not of any other matter. And the sea-purple cloaks should clearly be the flesh, which is woven from blood; for sea-

³⁸⁸ Clark 2000: 158 n. 332; Dodds 1963: 308.

purple wool is sea-purple through blood and the wool was dyed with the blood of animals; and the formation of flesh happens through blood and from blood. And the body is a cloak for the soul, clothing it, indeed 'a wonder to be seen,' whether you consider it from the perspective of the body's composition or of the soul's connection to it. Just so, in Orpheus, Kore, who is the guardian of all things sown, is portrayed as working at the loom; and the ancients also spoke of the heaven as a robe, as if it were the garment of the heavenly gods.

Porphyry's explanation of Homer's verses in terms of the process of bodily creation alludes to Plato's discussion, in the *Timaeus*, on the formation of the human body, particularly his detailed account of the locations of the two mortal parts of the soul in the human body in *Timaeus* 69d-72d, and of the unequal allotment of flesh to the body parts in *Timaeus* 74e-75c. In the first of these two passages, in accordance with the Demiurge's shaping of the rational part of the human soul that is divine and composed of the same mixture as the world soul (*Tim.* 41d), the Demiurge assigns to his own offspring the fabrication of the mortal parts (*Tim.* 69c). They imitate the Demiurge: having received the immortal principle of the soul, the gods created by the Demiurge work like artisans. Firstly, they shape a mortal body by covering the immortal part of the soul within a round mortal body. The head, including the divine part of the soul, is the equivalent of the spherical body of the cosmos (*Tim.* 44d-45b).³⁸⁹ The entire body, the torso and limbs, is created as a vehicle (ὄχημα, *Tim.* 44e2, 69c7) to bear the head because, contrary to the body of the cosmos, it is in need of being carried to be movable.

As set out in *Timaeus* 42a, the soul, in the process of implantation into the body constructed by the gods, inevitably develops harmful feelings and emotions as a result of sense-perception, and starts to experience desire mingled with pleasure and pain and fear and temper. In order to define where emotions and appetites are situated in the body, Plato employs a vertically hierarchical classification similar to

³⁸⁹ Cornford 1997: 280-1 with n. 1; Zeyl 2000: 63.

the sub-division of a house into male and female quarters (*Tim.* 69e3-70a2). The part of the soul which reveals manly spirit and contentiousness is situated closer to the head, between the midriff and the neck (*Tim.* 70a2-7), whereas the part which is inferior to the spirited part, and is ruled by appetites and other bodily needs, is situated between the midriff and the navel (*Tim.* 70d7-e). The spirited part of the body is superior in its proximity to heaven, and it constitutes the male part because of its manly attitudes. The appetitive part represents the lower mortal part due to its proximity to the Earth³⁹⁰ and constitutes the female part of the body because of the Earth's nourishing properties.

In the process of bodily creation (*Tim.* 74e-75a), necessity (ἀνάγκη) predominates over Intelligence (νοῦς): the Demiurge makes a choice between the brevity of human life with the superior Intelligence, and the longevity of human life with inferior intelligence. Otherwise, the Demiurge is not able to fulfil the reconciliation between abundant flesh and bones, and keen and quick perception.³⁹¹ The possession of dense flesh indicates the incapability of receiving rational commands, and becomes a kind of barrier which prevents the soul from using its intellectual capacity. Proclus' quotation of Porphyry's comment on *Timaeus* 24b4-7 (F 18 Sodano = Procl. *In Tim.* 1.156.24-31), in which he discusses the meanings of shields and spears, symbols, used by the ancients in the story of Atlantis, of those who fall into genesis and involve themselves with matter, shows his view about the effect of the body on the function of intellect:³⁹²

Πορφύριος μὲν ἀσπίδα τὸ σῶμα καλῶν ἀντὶ τοῦ δόρατος παραλαμβάνει τὸν θυμόν· ταῦτα δὲ εἰς γένεσιν πεσόντων ἐστὶ καὶ ἐνύλων πραγμάτων, καὶ οὐχὶ τῆς ἀτρέπτου σωτηρίας, ἀλλὰ τῆς γενεσιουργοῦ ζωῆς ὄργανα, διαφθείροντα τὴν καθαρότητα τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τὴν κατὰ λόγον ἀπολλύντα ζωὴν.

³⁹⁰ Krell 1975: 418.

³⁹¹ Cornford: 1997: 297-8; Steel 2001: 109-12; Carone 2005: 40.

³⁹² Trans. Tarrant 2007: 253-4; Sodano 1964: 11-12 for Porphyry's fragment; Dillon 2009: 285 for a comparison of Porphyry's and Iamblichus' comments.

Porphyry calls the shield the body, and for the spear he understands the temper, and these things belong to those who fall into generation and into enmattered things, and they are the instruments not of unflinching preservation but of reproductive life, corrupting the purity of intellect and destroying the rational life.

In this passage, Porphyry expresses his view that the body and spirit are what ruins the purity of the mind and the life in accordance with reason. As in this passage, Porphyry also uses the verb πίπτω in *De Antro* 28 p. 28.3 (εἰς γένεσιν πέσωσιν) where he refers to Numenius and the ‘people of dreams,’ and associates the Milky Way with milk as nourishment of those falling into genesis.³⁹³

Regarding Naiad nymphs, because they are mythical female entities at the lowest ontological rank, and because of their generative powers, as Porphyry states in *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων*, they are assigned to the task of the creation of the body in *De Antro*. In line with Homer’s description of the Naiad nymphs weaving sea-purple cloaks, sea-purple cloaks is a reference to the corporeal parts of the body with flesh, and they are active in the formation of the body parts composed of dense flesh. This claim finds support from *De Antro* 14.6, in which they are particularly connected to the activity of ‘making flesh’, ἡ σαρκοποιία, on bones and around bones. This is also consistent with our placement of Naiad nymphs as either harmful *daimones* in the West or the souls falling into genesis in the North, and with their association with the irrational part of the mortal soul.

By interpreting Homer’s image of Naiad nymphs weaving sea-purple cloaks as referring to body-creation, Porphyry echoes an interesting comparison between Homer’s representation of traditional ‘craftwomanship’ with Hesiod’s story of the creation of Pandora in *Op.* 60-64, where Hephaestus mixes earth with water to form a maiden-shape, and Athena then, first of all, teaches the new creature to ‘weave richly-worked cloth (πολυδαίδαλον ἱστὸν ὑφαίνειν). Weaving (ὑφαίνειν) is an image

³⁹³ Edwards 1996: 94: ‘Numenius takes this phrase to mean, not the dead, but the blind majority of the living.’

that also occurs in the context of embodiment in the *Timaeus*. In *Timaeus* 41d1-2, the Demiurge commands his offspring gods to ‘weave’ (προσσυφαίνοντες) the mortal with the immortal in order to create the mortal living beings; in *Timaeus* 72c7 the spleen is called a loosely ‘woven’ organ (ὑφανθέντος).³⁹⁴

(41d1-3) τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν ὑμεῖς, ἀθανάτῳ θνητὸν προσυφαίνοντες, ἀπεργάζεσθε ζῶα καὶ γεννᾶτε τροφήν τε διδόντες αὐξάνετε καὶ φθίνοντα πάλιν δέχεσθε.

The rest of the task is yours. Weave what is mortal to what is immortal, fashion and beget living things. Give them food, cause them to grow, and when they perish, receive them back again.

(72c5-7) διὸ δὴ καὶ ὅταν τινὲς ἀκαθαρσαὶ γίνωνται διὰ νόσους σώματος περὶ τὸ ἥπαρ, πάντα ἢ σπληνὸς καθαίρουσα αὐτὰ δέχεται μανότης, ἅτε κοίλου καὶ ἀναίμου ὑφανθέντος.

Hence, whenever impurities of one sort or another, the effects of bodily illnesses, turn up all around the liver, the spleen, a loosely woven organ with hollow spaces that contain no blood, cleans them all away and absorbs them.

Given Porphyry’s interpretation of the Naiad nymphs’ weaving as the weaving of flesh and the emphasis on the mortal status of the product of the gods’ weaving assignment in *Timaeus* 41d1-3, we may conclude that in *De Antro*, too, flesh is a symbol of the perishability of the human body.

I will now seek to address the question of the precise function of Naiad nymphs in the creation of the body, and the precise *dunamis* they represent, in light of Porphyry’s statement that ‘the formation of flesh (σαρκογονία) happens through blood and from blood’ (*De Antro* 14.10). Here, I propose that Porphyry associates the *dunamis* of Naiad nymphs with blood, whose power or faculty (*dunamis*) creates flesh, because of the liquid state of blood and the identification of the nymphs as *dunameis* presiding over water. This proposition is supported by a passage in his *De*

³⁹⁴ Trans. Zeyl 2000: 28-9, 66; see also Cornford 1997: 140-2, 289-90.

Abstinentia (2.46.8-2.47.1). After a brief mention of the necessity of maintaining our last garment pure, he says:³⁹⁵

νῦν δὲ παντὸς τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ σώματος ἀπορροίας φέροντος δαιμονίων ὑλικῶν,
ἅμα τῇ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ τῇ ἐκ σαρκῶν καὶ αἱμάτων πάρεστιν ἡ ταύτῃ φίλη καὶ
προσήγορος δύναμις δι' ὁμοιότητα καὶ οἰκειότητα.

But as it is, all the perceptible body carries effluences from the *daimones* of matter, and together with the impurity that comes from flesh and blood there is present the power which is its friend and companion because of their likeness and relatedness.

In this passage, '*daimones* of matter' (δαιμονίων ὑλικῶν) is a reference to those embedded in matter in Porphyry's commentary on Plato's story of Atlantis (τοὺς ὑλικοὺς δαίμονας, F 10.17 Sodano), as discussed in the previous section, in which the West is assigned to these harmful *daimones* identified with the Naiad nymphs according to Porphyry's regional assignments in *De Antro* 29.13-15 and his tripartite division of *daimones* in the commentary. Also, from this passage in *De Abstinentia* we can explicitly establish the association of flesh and blood with the Naiad nymphs through Porphyry's statement that the body has 'effluences of the *daimones* of matter' (ἀπορροίας φέροντος δαιμονίων ὑλικῶν, 2.46.9-10). His use of the noun ἀπορροή, which is an explicit reference to the flow of blood in the body,³⁹⁶ is strong evidence for the proposition that the Naiad nymph represent the power of blood.

The identification of the Naiad nymphs with blood also finds some support in *Timaeus* 74c, where it is stated that moisture contained within flesh protects the body by allowing it to get rid of excess heat in the summer and retain heat in the winter:³⁹⁷

Θερμὴν δὲ νοτίδα ἐντὸς ἑαυτῆς ἔχουσιν θερούς μὲν ἀνιδίουσαν καὶ νοτιζομένην
ἔξωθεν ψυχὸς κατὰ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα παρέξειν οἰκεῖον, διὰ χειμῶνος δὲ πάλιν αὖ τοῦτω

³⁹⁵ Trans. Clark 2000: 74.

³⁹⁶ Eur. *Hel.* 1587; Pl. *Phaedrus* 251b.

³⁹⁷ Trans. Zeyl 2000: 68.

τῷ πυρὶ τὸν προσφερόμενον ἔξωθεν καὶ περιστάμενον πάγον ἀμυνεῖσθαι μετρίως.

He made it (flesh) to contain within itself a warm moisture that would come out as perspiration during summertime, when, by moistening the body on the outside, it would impart the body's own coolness to the whole of it, and conversely, in wintertime this moisture would provide an adequate defense, by means of this fire against the frost that surrounds it and attacks it from outside.

From the importance Plato attaches to moisture to sustain life, it is not difficult to see this as the faculty or power of the embodied soul and to Porphyry's remark that 'flesh is generated through blood and from blood.' In order to understand the function of blood in the body, I propose, at this point, to explore how Porphyry distinguishes the parts of the soul and the powers of the body.

Porphyry, like Plotinus, uses Plato's tripartite division of the soul to support his analysis of the ethical disposition of the soul.³⁹⁸ Since the soul is indivisible in essence, this essence, as an unattached incorporeal entity, is the same in all its manifestations.³⁹⁹ According to Plotinus, the soul is 'divisible among bodies' because of its descent, but it is also indivisible because it does not entirely participate in the process of descent (*Enn.* 4.1.9-13). In his *Περὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων* (F 253.11-18 Smith = Stob. *Anth.* 1.49.25a), Porphyry discusses parts and powers of the soul, and explicitly says that the idea that 'the soul has parts' is nothing but the expression of the moral character of the soul, and a misunderstanding of Plato's and Aristotle's assertions by the philosophers:

Παρά δὲ Πλάτωνι καὶ Ἀριστοτέλει ἐν τοῖς ἠθικοῖς τριμερὴς ἡ ψυχὴ λέγεται εἶναι, καὶ κεκράτηκε τοῦτο παρὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀγνοοῦσιν ὥς ἡ διαίρεσις τῆς συστάσεως ἔνεκα τῶν ἀρετῶν παρλείπηται· οὐ γὰρ ἀπλῶς εἰς σύλληψιν πάντων τῶν μερῶν. Τὸ

³⁹⁸ See above F 13 and Procl. in *Tim.* 116.26-117.18 for Porphyry; Blumenthal 1969: 21-2 for Plotinus.

³⁹⁹ Blumenthal 1969: 14-5; Smith 1974: 2-4.

γὰρ φανταστικὸν καὶ αἰσθητικὸν καὶ τὸ νοερὸν καὶ <τὸ> φυτικὸν οὐ δήπου ἐν τῇ διαίρεσει ταύτῃ περιληφθήσεται.

In the ethical works of Plato and Aristotle the soul is said to be tripartite, and this division prevails in many philosophers, but they fail to understand that the division was used for the sake of the constitution of virtues. Indeed, it does not take into account all parts because it does not include imaginative, intellectual and vegetative faculties in this division.

In another surviving passage of *Περὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων* (F 253.37-42), we find the discussion of ‘parts’ and multiple powers of the soul. Porphyry reports the idea of Longinus, a disciple of Ammonius (3rd century C.E.), on this issue, asserting that the embodied soul has multiple powers (πολυδύναμος)⁴⁰⁰ but is indivisible (ἀμερής). After this, Porphyry deems those who say that the soul has parts in a quantitative sense to be mistaken (F 253.77-87). He quotes from Nicolaus of Damascus (1st century B.C.E.), who considers ‘the parts of the soul to be powers of the body that holds it’ (τὰ μέρη τῆς ψυχῆς ὡς δυνάμεις τοῦ ἔχοντος), such as to live, to perceive, to move, to think, to yearn, the cause of all of which is the soul (F 253.88-109). In agreement with Longinus and Nicolaus of Damascus, Porphyry concludes that the soul has parts when it is in relation with body, although it is partless in itself (F 253.110-122).⁴⁰¹ Once again, it is clear that Porphyry’s identification of the Naiad nymphs as *dunameis* implies that their capacity relates to body, however, this capacity is acquired only by the union of the soul with the body. At this point, it is not wrong to assume that the power of blood should not be allocated to any part of the embodied soul; rather, this power should be allocated to the embodied soul as a whole, since blood flows through the bodies of all living beings. However, the effect of this power varies according to the ethical disposition of the soul, as it may

⁴⁰⁰ It is a common Neoplatonic term after Porphyry and Iamblichus, which occurs in F 253.38, 48 Smith. See also Finamore 2002: 109.

⁴⁰¹ See for a detailed discussion of this fragment Finamore 2002: 108-12.

have more effect on the appetitive part of the soul than the spirited part and less effect on the rational part of the soul than the spirited part.

In light of all of the above, and considering the statement in *De Antro* 10.24, 11 p. 12.25 that ‘blood and moist seed are dear to [the souls]’ (αἷμά τε γὰρ ταύταις καὶ ὁ δίυγρος γόνος φίλος), I will now develop my argument concerning the identification of the Naiad nymphs with blood. I suggest that Porphyry’s depiction of the process of embodiment in *De Antro* 14 should be associated with the development of seeds, or embryos, in women’s wombs. There are, in Porphyry’s view, five stages in the development of a seed:⁴⁰² (1) conception, the stage in which the seed is preserved by the womb; (2) first formation, which includes the articulation of limbs and organs; (3) first movement; (4) full articulation, which includes the articulation of nails and hair; and (5) birth (Porphyry *Ad Gaurum* 2). It is reasonable to assume that ‘making flesh’ (σαρκοποιία) belongs to the first formation stage, in which limbs are articulated, because we know that ‘making flesh’ takes place on bones and around bones.

There are three traditional theories that consider the corporeal origin of the seed: the first and oldest, called the *encephalomyelogenic* theory, was accepted by Alcmaeon (24 A 13 DK), the Pythagoreans and Hippon (38 A 12 DK). It says that the origin of the seed is brain and bone marrow.⁴⁰³ The second theory is the theory of *pangenesis*. Approved by Democritus, the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* and Epicurus,⁴⁰⁴ it states that the seed is obtained from every part of the body. Porphyry clearly adopts the third theory, *hematogenesis*, in which the seed is believed to originate from blood.⁴⁰⁵ In his *Ad Gaurum* (7.2) Porphyry says that ‘nature extracts some part of this blood and turns it into seed by reproducing its own form principles in the thing coming to be.’⁴⁰⁶ So, the doctrine of *hematogenesis*

⁴⁰² Wilberding 2011: 32-3 and 2010: 44.

⁴⁰³ Wilberding 2008: 409; 2010: 43.

⁴⁰⁴ Wilberding 2008: 409 n. 11.

⁴⁰⁵ Diogenes of Apollonia 64 B 6 DK; Arist. *De Gen. Anim.* 724a14-19; Galen *De Semine* 1.12.

⁴⁰⁶ Trans. Wilberding 2011: 40.

seems to coincide with Porphyry's statement that 'the formation of flesh happens through blood and from blood' in *De Antro* 14.10. Blood is indeed one of the first substances in the formation of the body, and it also constitutes the generative power of the female principle, which is in the case of *De Antro* represented by the Naiad nymphs.

Porphyry denies that the embryo is ensouled when it is in the womb, but asserts that it only becomes at the moment of birth (F 266 Smith = lamb. *De Anima* 31 = ap. Stob. *Anth.* 1.49.41 = Numenius F 36 DP):⁴⁰⁷

Κατὰ δ' Ἱπποκράτην, τὸν τῶν Ἀσκληπιαδῶν, ὅταν πλασθῇ τὸ σπέρμα (τότε γὰρ ἐπιτηδεῖως ἔχειν αὐτὸ μεταλαμβάνειν ζωῆς), κατὰ δὲ Πορφύριον ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ ἀπογεννήσει τοῦ τικτομένου πρώτως ἢ κατ' ἐνέργειαν ζωοποιία καὶ παρουσία τῆς ψυχῆς φύεται.

According to Hippocrates the Asclepiad, life is actually created and the soul becomes present when the sperm is formed into an embryo (for it is then suitably disposed to share in life), while according to Porphyry it is as soon as the child is born.

In Psellus' *De Omnifaria Doctrina* 115 (= F 267 Smith), Porphyry is said to have asserted that the embryo is not nourished by soul but by nature in the same way as plants. Nourishment is provided by the mother because of the embryo's incapability of feeding itself due to the fact that it is not, as yet, ensouled. However, this is only true up to a point: it is clear from Porphyry's *Ad Gaurum* (4) that the embryo has a part of the appetitive soul, and this is also supported by *Timaeus* 77b3-4 and 91b1-4. Psellus' assumption is also contradicted by Porphyry's statement in *De Antro* 10.24, 11 p. 12.25, where Porphyry draws a traditional analogy between the soul falling into genesis and the soul of plants: the former needs 'blood and moist seed' (αἷμά τε καὶ ὁ δίυγρος γόνος) just as the latter needs water. This too, by assuming appetite, presupposes a process which is more than purely physiological. Additionally, Porphyry's usage of γόνος in *De Antro* 11 p. 12.25 is reminiscent of

⁴⁰⁷ Trans. Finamore 2002: 59, 163-4.

Plato's usage of τοῦ γεννᾶν in *Timaeus* 91b4 in which he states that the seed (marrow) creates a life giving desire for the generation because it has soul in it (cf. *Tim.* 73c). In *Ad Gaurum* 4, Porphyry also refers to Plato's description of the seed, which has a lively desire (ζωτικὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, *Tim.* 91b3), saying that the appetitive part is dominated by pleasure and pain, and yearns for food and nourishment. Until birth, either the seed or the embryo partakes in the third part of the soul located between the midriff and the navel. As Wilberding states, both the embryo and sprouting plants are the result of a physical process; they do not, yet, have any conscious sensation, and plants, which have no self-moving soul, never develop beyond this stage. The embryo, however, is in the physiological phase while it is in the womb, in the sense that it partakes in the vegetative part of the soul, including pleasure and pain, a phase which occurs in the body. At birth, the embryo enters into the phase of full participation in soul, which occurs in the soul. It is plausible to assume that Porphyry's interpretation of Homer's description of the Naiad nymphs weaving sea-purple garments conceives the process of embodiment in the same way as he conceived the development of embryos which are in the womb and in the physiological phase.

3.3. The Pneumatic Body

The idea of an intermediary link between the soul and body, and of assigning an astral body to all souls was developed by the Neoplatonists from the concepts of *ochema* (ὄχημα), 'vehicle of the soul,' found in Plato's *Timaeus* 41e, and of the Aristotelian *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), which is the place of the nutritive, sensitive and imaginative soul, generated from a fifth element, *aithêr*, from which the stars are made (*De Gen. Anim.* 736b37-38).⁴⁰⁸ *Pneuma* is also called πνευματικὸν ὄχημα and αὐγοειδὸς σῶμα, among other terms, and can be defined as the semi-corporeal entity situated between the soul and body. *Pneuma* is one of the key concepts for

⁴⁰⁸ Kissling 1922: 318-30; Dodds 1963: 315-8 for an elaborative discussion of the origin of the theory; Smith 152-8; Schibli 1993: 163-5.

understanding the soul's union with the body, and we know that Porphyry and the later Neoplatonists attached great importance to the subject.⁴⁰⁹

De Antro 11 p. 14.1-13, 12.14 is a significant passage, albeit brief and not original, in confirming some fundamental points of the theory of *pneuma-ochema*. My analysis will embrace other texts of Porphyry, particularly *Sententia* 29 (which is, I think, a complementary text to *De Antro* 11 p. 14.1-13, 12.14, explaining what is implied in *De Antro*. I will also appeal to the fragmentary works of Porphyry, especially F 290 from *De Animae Regressu*, and F 377 and 378 from *On the Styx*. In *De Antro*, Porphyry provides significant information as to how the soul unites with the body as follows:

(11 p. 14.1-13, 12.14) ἀνάγκη τοίνυν καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἥτοι σωματικὰς οὐσας ἢ ἀσωμάτων μὲν, ἐφελκομένας δὲ σῶμα, καὶ μάλιστα τὰς μελλούσας καταδεῖσθαι εἰς τε αἷμα καὶ δίυγρὰ σώματα ῥέπειν πρὸς τὸ ὑγρὸν καὶ σωματοῦσθαι ὑγρανθείσας. διὸ καὶ χολῆς καὶ αἵματος ἐκχύσει προτρέπεσθαι τὰς τῶν τεθνηκότων, καὶ τὰς γε φιλοσωμάτων ὑγρὸν τὸ πνεῦμα ἐφελκομένας παχύνειν τοῦτο ὡς νέφος· ὑγρὸν γὰρ ἐν ἀέρι παχυνθέν νέφος συνίσταται· παχυνθέντος δ' ἐν αὐταῖς τοῦ πνεύματος ὑγροῦ πλεονασμῷ ὁρατὰς γίνεσθαι. καὶ ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων αἱ συναντῶσιν ἰσὶ κατὰ φαντασίαν χρώζουσαι τὸ πνεῦμα εἰδώλων ἐμφάσεις, αἱ μέντοι καθαφαὶ γενέσεως ἀπότροποι. αὐτὸς δὲ φησιν Ἡράκλειτος ᾿ξηρὰ ψυχὴ σοφωτάτη_. διὸ κἀνταῦθα κατὰ τὰς τῆς μίξεως ἐπιθυμίας δίυγρον καὶ νοτερώτερον γίνεσθαι τὸ πνεῦμα, ἀτμὸν ἐφελκομένης δίυγρον τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκ τῆς πρὸς τὴν γένεσιν νεύσεως.

(11 p. 14.1-13, 12.14) Accordingly, it is also necessary for souls, whether they are embodied or not embodied but attracting (ἐφελκομένας) some corporeal substance, and especially those soul which are about to be bound to blood and moist bodies, to incline towards moisture, and to become embodied after having been moistened. Consequently, the souls of the dead are urged on by pouring out bile and blood, and body-loving souls drag (φελκομένας) the moist spirit along with them and thicken it like a cloud; for moisture in the air, when thickened, forms into

⁴⁰⁹ Smith 1974: 152.

a cloud. And when the spirit in them has been thickened by excessive moisture, they become visible. And it is from such souls that the images of phantoms come which occur to people, tainting their spirits in accordance with their fantasies. However, the pure souls avert genesis. Herakleitos himself says: 'the dry soul is the wisest.' And so also here (in the material world), because of longing for sexual intercourse, the spirit becomes more wet and moist, as the soul attracts (ἐφέλκομένας) a moist vapour from its descent in the direction of genesis.

Here, note particularly the use of the verb ἐφέλκομαι in *De Antro* 11 p. 14.2-3, 6 and 13, a common technical term associated with the theory of *pneuma-ochema*, which Porphyry also uses in a similar context further on, in *De Antro* 25.17 (ἐφέλκεσθαι) and in other works, such as *Sententia* 29 (13, 17, 33, 38 and 39) and *Ad Gaurum* (11.3.13-14).⁴¹⁰ The passage in question begins with Porphyry's implicit approval of the two fundamental points of the theory (*De Antro* 11 p. 14.1-5). Firstly, the pneumatic vehicle can be either immaterial or material, according to its level of purity. It is invisible in the state of purity, whereas it becomes visible or material, particularly with in the soul's last garment, flesh and blood (*De Abstinencia* 2.46).⁴¹¹ Furthermore, Porphyry describes the soul attracting to its moist spirit as the body-loving soul, φιλοσώματος, and this usage is very rare in his extant works.⁴¹² In *Ad Marcellam* 14.6, Porphyry mentions the impossibility of loving both God and pleasure and the body (ἀδύνατον τὸν αὐτὸν φιλόθεόν τε εἶναι καὶ φιλήδονον καὶ φιλοσώματον, 14.5-6). This impossibility leads people to be impious towards God and their ancestors.

Porphyry then restates the idea that the pneumatic vehicle is a compound of the irrational soul and body because the lower part of the soul is in need of a 'corporeal substance' (σωματικὰς οὐσας, *De Antro* 11 p. 14.2) in the process of embodiment. In *De Antro* 11 p. 14.1-13, 12.14 Porphyry explains in broad terms how

⁴¹⁰ See also Simonini 2010: 124-5.

⁴¹¹ See Section 3.2.

⁴¹² *Ad Marcellam* 14.6 (trans. Zimmern 1986: 48).

the process of embodiment occurs through the soul's dampness, and he clearly identifies *pneuma* with the irrational soul which has a tendency towards genesis. According to Augustine's report in *De Civitate Dei* 10.9 (= *De Regressu Animae* F 290 Smith), Porphyry also identified the concept of *pneuma* (*anima spiritualis*) with the irrational soul which is incapable of obtaining immortality and eternity in contrast with the rational soul (*anima rationalis* and/or *intellectualis*):

utilem dicit esse mundandae parti animae, non quidem intellectuali, qua rerum intellegibilium percipitur ueritas, nullas habentium similitudines corporum; sed spiritali, qua corporalium rerum capiuntur imagines. Hanc enim dicit per quasdam consecrationes theurgicas, quas teletas uocant, idoneam fieri atque aptam susceptioni spirituum et angelorum et ad uidendos deos. Ex quibus tamen theurgicis teletis fatetur intellectuali animae nihil purgationis accedere, quod eam faciat idoneam ad uidendum Deum suum et perspicenda ea, quae uere Sunt. Ex quo intellegi potest, qualium deorum uel qualem uisionem fieri dicat theurgicis consecrationibus, in qua non ea uidentur, quae uere Sunt. Denique animam rationalem siue, quod magis amat dicere, intellectualem, in sua posse dicit euadere, etiamsi quod eius spiritale est nulla theurgica fuerit arte purgatum; porro autem a theurgo spiritalem purgari hactenus, ut non ex hoc ad immortalitatem aeternitatemque perueniat.

He (Porphyry) says that it (theurgy) is useful for the part of the soul that requires cleansing, not indeed intellectual part, by which the truth of the intelligible beings is conceived, that have no similitude to the bodies; but the spiritual (pneumatic) part, by which the images of corporeal things are captured. This part, he says, through certain theurgic consecrations which they call mystic rites, becomes suitable and appropriate for receipt of spirits and angels, and for seeing gods. However, he shows that from these theurgic rites no purification happens to the intellectual soul in order to make it suitable for seeing its God, and for examining what really exists. From this it can be understood what kind of gods these are, or he would say what kind of apparition is performed by theurgic consecrations, in which what really exists is not seen. Accordingly, he says that the rational soul or rather, as he likes calling it, the intellectual soul, can ascend to its own place, even though

its spiritual (pneumatic) part has not been purified by theurgic art. On the other hand, though the spiritual part may be purified by a theurgist, yet it cannot reach immortality and eternity.

The distinction between the rational and the pneumatic part is also found in *De Civitate Dei* 10.27 (= F 287 Smith), in which it is explained that the purification of the pneumatic part of the soul is achieved through theurgic rites and of the rational part through philosophy.

Porphyry likens the becoming moist of the pneumatic part to a natural phenomenon, namely the formation of clouds through condensation.⁴¹³ A thick, heavy and moist *pneuma* of the soul symbolises a life which is enslaved to the sensitive and material passions, including excessive desire for food, sleep, sex, wealth, fame, and so on. Porphyry's 'cloud-*pneuma*' analogy is reminiscent of Apuleius' *De Deo Socratis* 10, where he draws a parallel between clouds 'being replete with moisture' (si aliquo umore fecundae sunt) and a 'fetus being brought forth' (veluti ad fetum edendum), both of them showing a 'downward movement' (deorsus degrassantur).

Porphyry's reference to Heraclitus in *De Antro* 11-12 (22 B 118 DK), on the other hand, implies a thin, light and dry *pneuma* as symbol of a life which is dedicated to philosophy and ethical values. The comparison between the wet and the dry *pneuma* is found in *Sententia* 29.40-43, which we may liken to a blurry and clear mind, respectively. Porphyry considers the dry *pneuma* to be the soul's avoidance of nature, a dry light without a shadow and cloud (ὅταν δὲ μελετήσῃ ἀφίστασθαι φύσεως, αὐγὴ ξηρὰ γίνεται, ἄσκιος καὶ ἀνέφελος).

It is clear that a dry kind of *pneuma* enables the soul to ascend to the intelligible world because of its state of purity, whereas a moist and dark *pneuma* pulls the soul towards the underworld. Porphyry explains the expression 'the soul

⁴¹³ Synesius *De Insomniis* 10.15-16: τὸ ὁμιχλῶδες τοῦ πνεύματος.

being in Hades' in *Sententia* 29, saying that the descent into Hades signifies a downward propensity of the dark and heavy *pneuma*, which consequently leads the soul to dark places under the Earth. Porphyry uses ὑπόγειος and σκοτεινός in various places in both *Sententia* 29 and *De Antro*.⁴¹⁴ The former implies the western region assigned to *daimones* in accordance with *De Antro* 29.20, as I discussed in Section 3.2.1. We might then conclude that Hades metaphorically shows the region below the fixed stars and the planets, corresponding to the cave of the nymphs. On the other hand, σκοτεινός indicates the key feature of the material world as discussed in the previous chapter, and of the pneumatic part of the soul. Thus, Hades and the cave of the nymphs are dwellings where the pneumatic bodies subsist, as Porphyry explains in *Sententia* 29.14-22.⁴¹⁵

ἐν Ἅιδου δὲ λέγεται, ὅτι τῆς αἰδοῦς φύσεως ἐτύγχανε τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ σκοτεινῆς. Ἐπεὶ δὲ διήκει τὸ βαρὺ πνεῦμα καὶ ἔνυγρον ἄχρι τῶν ὑπογείων τόπων, οὕτω καὶ αὕτη λέγεται χωρεῖν ὑπὸ γῆν οὐχ ὅτι ἡ αὐτῆς οὐσία μεταβαίνει τόπους καὶ ἐν τόποις γίνεται, ἀλλ' ὅτι τῶν πεφυκότων σωμάτων τόπους μεταβαίνειν καὶ εἰληχέναι τόπου σχέσεις ἀναδέχεται, δεχομένων αὐτὴν κατὰ τὰς ἐπιτηδειότητας τῶν τοιούτων σωμάτων ἐκ τῆς κατ' αὐτὴν ποιᾶς διαθέσεως.

However, it (the soul) is said to be in Hades, because *pneuma* has become endowed with an invisible and dark nature. When the heavy and damp *pneuma* penetrates as far as the places under the Earth, thus, the soul is also said to go down under the Earth. That does not mean that the essence of the soul passes from one place to another and is in a place, but that it receives habits of bodies whose nature it is to change places and to obtain a place by lot. Such bodies receive it according to their tendencies originated from disposition of a certain nature towards it.

In accordance with *Sententia* 29, the soul does not present itself in the same manner as the body because of the immaterial nature of the soul. The souls which have fallen

⁴¹⁴ ὑπόγειος: *Sententia* 29.5, 17, 40; *De Antro* 29.20; σκοτεινός: *Sententia* 29.6, 15; *De Antro* 3.6, 16; 5.5; 6.7; 7.31; 9.28, 3; 12.19; 33.34.

⁴¹⁵ Trans. Guthrie 1988: 42-3 modified.

into the sublunary region are now in the cave of the nymphs according to *De Antro*, or in Hades, according to *Sententia* 29. Porphyry's statement that the souls 'preside over their image' (ὅταν προεστήκη εἰδώλου, *Sententia* 29.3-4), is also reminiscent of the Naiad nymphs presiding over the waters in *De Antro*. The dark nature of this image enables the soul to be attuned to the material world, and provides the union of the soul and body through self-attraction. Thus, as Chase states,⁴¹⁶ the pneumatic part of the soul metamorphoses into an image characterised by dark and moist vapours. As in *De Antro* 11, as we have seen, there exists a close relation between *pneuma* and the desire for 'intercourse' (μίξις); thus, we may conclude that the pneumatic part of the soul operates as a catalyst, wet and moist during the descent of the soul into genesis, while the soul attracts a moist vapour which is nothing other than its own *pneuma*.

Porphyry, like Plotinus (*Enn.* 4.3.15), thinks that the pneumatic part of the soul is obtained in heaven, and according to Dodds, this idea may be traced back to Posidonius.⁴¹⁷ Porphyry classifies the four major phases of the pneumatic part of the soul during the process of its descent into genesis, when the soul receives different substances.⁴¹⁸ Firstly, the aethereal body is generated from the substances of the first five planets because of the similarity of its nature to the immaterial. Of the second and third substances, the solar and lunar bodies, obtained from the Sun and the Moon, 'appearance' (φαντασία) predominates over reason in the former, femininity and desire prevail in the latter. The fourth substance is the heavy and moist *pneuma* generated from 'exhalation' (ἀναθυμίασις) in the sublunary region, showing the process of embodiment of the soul, as is explained in *Sententia* 29.22-31.⁴¹⁹

ὥς γὰρ ἂν διατεθῇ, εὕρισκει σῶμα τάξει καὶ τόποις οἰκείοις διωρισμένον· διὸ καθαρώτερον μὲν διακειμένη σύμφυτον τὸ ἐγγὺς τοῦ ἀύλου σῶμα, ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ

⁴¹⁶ Chase 2004b: 13 n. 38.

⁴¹⁷ Dodds 1963: 366.

⁴¹⁸ Chase 2004b: 25 n.72.

⁴¹⁹ Johnson 2013: 121 (trans. Dillon).

αἰθέριον, προελθούση δὲ ἐκ λόγου εἰς φαντασίας προβολὴν σύμφυτον τὸ ἡλιοειδές, θηλυνθείση δὲ καὶ παθαινομένη πρὸς τὸ εἶδος παράκειται τὸ σεληνοειδές, πεσούση δὲ εἰς σώματα, ὅταν κατὰ τὸ αὐτῶν ἄμορφον στῇ εἶδος, ἐξ ὑγρῶν ἀναθυμιάσεων συνεστηκότα, ἄγνοια ἔπεται τοῦ ὄντος τελεία καὶ σκότωσης καὶ νηπιότης.

For in fact it is in accordance with its disposition that it finds a body of a definite rank and assigned to areas proper to it: that is why, when its condition is sufficiently pure, it gravitates naturally to a body close to immaterial, that is, an aetherial one, while if it proceeds down from reason to the projection of imagination, it inclines naturally to a solar body; and when it becomes feminine and subject to passion a lunar one is standing ready for it as suitable to its form; but when it falls into bodies, as it comes to rest at the level of their unlovely form, constituted as they are from exhalations, there ensues complete ignorance of true being and black-out and puerility.

The aethereal body becomes darkened gradually as it descends through the sublunary region and finally acquires its earthly body. As Porphyry remarks in *Sententia* 29.30-31, the soul, in turn, suffers from a complete ignorance of true being as if it were a newborn. Porphyry's association of the pneumatic part with the function of *phantasia* in his works such as *De Antro* (11 p. 14.9-10) and *Sententiae* (29.25-26) is an allusion to the ignorant prisoners who dwell in the Platonic cave, and are convinced that the reality is nothing other than shadows and reflections of images (*Rep.* 514a-515c).

Porphyry contrasts the pneumatic part of the soul upon which 'images' (εἰδωλα) are imprinted, to the rational part of the soul, by which the intelligibles are conceived.⁴²⁰ However, it is quite difficult to understand in what way the images are imprinted on *pneuma*. Two fragments, F 377 and F378 Smith from Porphyry's *On the*

⁴²⁰ Smith 1974: 155-6; Dillon 2004: 201 n.9; Chase 2004b: 37-58.

Styx,⁴²¹ preserved in Stobaeus' *Anthology* (1.49.53.53-70 and 1.49.54) are significant in this context because, in them, Porphyry establishes a close connection between the capability of thought and memory, and blood. In F 377, Porphyry remarks that humans need blood to speak and think about human things, illustrating this with the fact that the Odyssean Tiresias, as a soul in the underworld, cannot prophesy without drinking blood, even though he retains 'human reasoning' (τὸν λογισμὸν τὸν ἀνθρώπινον). Blood, therefore, has the power or capacity to enable humans to think about mortal things. In addition to looking at the Homeric works, Porphyry himself must also have witnessed that, either excessive or insufficient blood (being angry or faint) causes the loss of some sensible abilities and, consequently, the loss of intellectual abilities, (F 377 Smith):⁴²²

Τῶν δ' ἐντὸς τοῦ ποταμοῦ καὶ ἀφηρημένων τὸν λογισμὸν τὸν ἀνθρώπινον μόνος ὁ Τειρεσίας καὶ τοῦτον ἔχει παρόντα· οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι ἀλλήλους μὲν γινώσκουσι κατ' ἰδιότητα φρονήσεως ἣν ἐν Ἅιδου κέκτηνται, τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους οὐκέτι· οὐδ' ἂν φθέγγαιντο περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων τοῖς ζῶσιν ἔτι ἀνθρώποις, εἰ μὴ ἀτμοῦ μεταλάβοιεν αἵματος καὶ τούτῳ φρενωθεῖεν τὰ ἀνθρώπινα, ἃ δὴ οἱ ἔξω καὶ μὴ πiónτες τοῦ αἵματος φρονοῦσι, κατάστασιν ἔχοντες τῆς ἐξ αἱμοποσίας τῶν θνητῶν ταῖς ψυχαῖς γιγνομένης γνωρίσεως. Τειρεσίας δὲ ἔχει μὲν λογισμὸν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων, μαντεύεται δ' οὐδ' αὐτὸς περὶ τῶν εἰμαρμένων τοῖς ζῶσι πρὶν πιεῖν τοῦ αἵματος. Οἶεται γὰρ καὶ Ὅμηρος, [καθὰ καὶ πλεῖστοι τῶν μετ' αὐτὸν ὑπέλαβον], ἐν τῷ αἵματι εἶναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὴν περὶ τὰ θνητὰ φρόνησιν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τῶν μετ' αὐτὸν πολλοὶ τοῦτο πιστοῦνται δεικνύντες ὅτι καὶ ὑπερθερμανθέν ὑπὸ πυρετοῦ καὶ χολῆς ἀφραίνειν ποιεῖ καὶ ἀνοηταίνειν.

Of those who are within the river and have abandoned human reasoning Tiresias alone possesses this too as present to him; but the others recognize each other by the particular way of thinking which they have obtained in Hades, but they no longer recognize humans. Nor would they speak about human things to those humans still living, unless they receive the vapor of blood and thereby think human things, which

⁴²¹ Johnson 2013: 31-7 including the discussion that *On the Cave of the Nymphs* and *On the Styx* might be similar interpretive exercises.

⁴²² Trans. Johnson 2013: 335.

those outside also think though they do not drink of the blood, since they have the condition of the knowledge that occurs in the souls of mortals from drinking blood. But Tiresias has the reasoning of humans and yet does not himself prophesy about the things fated for the living until he drinks the blood. For Homer too thinks {as a great many of those after him also suppose} that for humans thinking about mortal things is in their blood, since many of those after him also confirm this, showing that when [the blood] becomes excessively hot by the heat and bile it makes one senseless and unthinking.

Elsewhere, in F 378.10-15 (= Stob. *Anth.* 1.49.54.10-15), Porphyry confirms that ‘appearance’ (φαντασία) arises from memory, referring to Plato’s *Philebus* 39a. That memory is taken away results in the images formed also being taken away. Thus, bodily sufferings of the soul are also eliminated as a result of the loss of the connection between memory and images. Porphyry also restates the association between blood, memory and appearances in F 378.35-38 (= Stob. *Anth.* 1.49.54.34-37), again with reference to Homer:

Τὸ δ’ αἷμα, ὡς ἔφημεν, ὀλκὸν Ὅμηρος ἡγεῖται τῆς φανταστικῆς καὶ μνημονικῆς ψυχῆς, ἧς καὶ ὁ λογισμὸς, συναγερμὸς ὦν μνήμης διὰ φαντασιῶν εἰς τὰ καθόλου κρίματα κεφαλαιουμένης.

Homer, as we said, deems blood to be attractive to the imaginative and reminiscent soul, which also possesses reason, which is a gathering together of memory as summarised into universal judgements through appearances.

During the last level of the process of embodiment, blood, the essence of the garment of the soul, seems to be the substance which is essential to activate memory, and it functions as a pneumatic vehicle since it attracts to itself the soul and appearance. Considering Porphyry’s identification of Homer’s ‘Naiad nymphs weaving a sea-purple garment’ with the formation of the body through blood and from blood in *De Antro* 14.10-11, it is appropriate to conclude that blood enables

‘images’ (εἰδωλα) to be imprinted on the pneumatic part of the soul and that blood allows the earthly life of the soul to commence.

3.4. Honey as Symbol of Pleasure: a Trap

In this section, I will analyse *De Antro* 16 p. 18.3-19 in which Porphyry uses ‘pleasure’ (ἡδονή), for the first time in the text. Pleasure leads Kronos to fall into genesis by a trap set by the primeval goddess Night and Kronos’ son, Zeus. In order to show the effect of overeating on the soul, Porphyry draws an analogy between Poros (Wealth) and Kronos, both inebriated by the pleasure of nectar and honey, i.e., by excessive consumption. As a result of their inebriation, Poros engages in sexual intercourse with Penia (Poverty) in the garden of Zeus in Plato’s *Symposium*, in Porphyry’s conception, while Kronos falls into genesis.

I will provide an outline of the Orphic cosmogony which begins with Chronos (Time) and ends with the sovereignty of Zeus, and briefly discuss a possible source of the Orphic poem preserved in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.8-10. Thereafter, I will attempt to prove that Uranus, Kronos and Zeus belong to the sublunary region, although they are usually considered to belong to higher realms in the Neoplatonic cosmology. Lastly, I will focus on the negative effect of overeating on the soul, as it causes the strengthening of the bond of the soul with the material world and prevents its rational part from operating properly. My arguments will embrace the relevant parts of *De Abstinencia*, which is a significant ancient source defending vegetarianism on ethical and spiritual grounds, as well as *Miscellaneous Researches, Sententiae*, and Plato’s *Republic* 7. Herein, I will begin the discussion by quoting *De Antro* 16 p.18.3-19:

(16 p.18.3-19) παρὰ δὲ τῷ Ὀρφεῖ ὁ Κρόνος μέλιτι ὑπὸ Διὸς ἐνεδρεύεται· πλησθεὶς γὰρ μέλιτος μεθύει καὶ σκοτοῦται ὡς ἀπὸ οἴνου καὶ ὑπνοῖ ὡς παρὰ Πλάτωνι ὁ Πόρος τοῦ νέκταρος πλησθεὶς· ‘οὐπω γὰρ οἶνος ἦν.’ φησὶ γὰρ παρ’ Ὀρφεῖ ἡ Νύξ τῷ Διὶ ὑποτιθεμένη τὸν διὰ μέλιτος δόλον·

‘εὕτ’ ἂν δὴ μιν ἴδῃαι ὑπὸ δρυσὶν ὑψικόμοισιν

ἔργοισιν μεθύοντα μελισσᾶν ἐριβομβέων,
δῆσον αὐτόν'. ὁ καὶ πάσχει ὁ Κρόνος καὶ δεθεὶς ἐκτέμνεται ὡς ὁ Οὐρανός, τοῦ
θεολόγου δι' ἡδονῆς δεσμεῖσθαι καὶ κατάγεσθαι τὰ θεῖα εἰς γένεσιν αἰνισσομένου
ἀποσπερματίζειν τε δυνάμεις εἰς τὴν ἡδονὴν ἐκλυθέντα. ὅθεν ἐπιθυμία μὲν
συνουσίας τὸν Οὐρανὸν κατιόντα εἰς Γῆν ἐκτέμνει Κρόνος· ταῦτόν δὲ τῇ ἐκ
συνουσίας ἡδονῇ παράστησιν αὐτοῖς \leq ή \geq τοῦ μέλιτος, ὅφ' οὔ δολωθεὶς ὁ Κρόνος
ἐκτέμνεται. πρῶτος γὰρ τῶν ἀντιφερομένων τῷ Οὐρανῷ ὁ Κρόνος ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ τούτου
σφαῖρα. κατίασι δὲ δυνάμεις ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν πλανωμένων· ἀλλὰ τὰς μὲν
ἐξ οὐρανοῦ δέχεται Κρόνος, τὰς δ' ἀπὸ τοῦ Κρόνου Ζεὺς.

(16 p.18.3-19) According to Orpheus, Kronos is ensnared with honey by Zeus; for filled up with honey, he is stupefied and suffers from vertigo as if from wine, and sleeps just as Poros did in Plato, filled up with nectar - 'for there was as yet no wine.'⁴²³ Since in Orpheus, the goddess of Night speaks to Zeus, offering him the treachery through honey:

'Whenever you see him under the oaks with lofty foliage
drunken with the works of loud buzzing bees,
bind him.' This is what happens, and Kronos is fettered and castrated like Uranus. The theologian (Orpheus) hints that the divine principles are ensnared by pleasure and led down to genesis, and that they shed their powers (semen) after they have been dissolved in pleasure. So Kronos castrates Uranus, who descends to Earth (Gaia, Rhea) with desire for sexual intercourse; for the ancients, the taste of honey represents the same thing as the desire of intercourse, by which Kronos is beguiled and castrated. For Kronos, with his sphere, is the first of those who are set against Uranus. Powers descend from heaven and from those which are the planets; but Kronos receives those that come from Uranus and Zeus receives them from Kronos.

In his analogy between Poros and Kronos, Porphyry depicts the former getting drunk on nectar and feeling drowsy (Pl. *Symp.* 203b5-7), and Kronos getting drunk on honey, which is the only account of the Orphic poem recording that Zeus traps

⁴²³ Pl. *Symp.* 203b5-7.

Kronos by inebriating him with honey.⁴²⁴ The Platonic and Orphic narratives correspond to a period of time in which wine had not as yet been created, as Dionysos had not as yet been born.⁴²⁵ Porphyry evidently deems honey to be the food of the gods, the same as nectar, when he says that Homer calls honey ‘ruddy nectar’, (νέκταρ ἐρυθρόν, *Il.* 19.38; *Od.* 5.93; *De Antro* 16 p. 16.34-p. 18.1), implying that the two have the same colour. Additionally, he remarks that nectar and honey have the same effect on Poros and Kronos, making both inebriated. Furthermore, nectar and honey cause desire for sex. Consequently, in *Symposium* 203b, Poros and Penia engage in sexual intercourse in the garden of Zeus,⁴²⁶ and in the Orphic poem which Porphyry quotes, Kronos is depicted as lying down under the oak tree which is one of the sacred symbols of Zeus in Greek mythology.⁴²⁷

Then, follows a discussion of the presumable source of the Orphic poem quoted by Porphyry and preserved in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.3-19 (*OF* 154 Kern).⁴²⁸ In his *De Principiis* (123-124), Damascius talks about the three different versions of the *Rhapsodies*, which are circulated under the name of Orpheus, that is, the theology of Hieronymus, Hellanicus and Eudemus of Rhodes.⁴²⁹ Damascius is presumably referring here to the poem ‘*Sacred Discourse in Twenty-Four Rhapsodies*’ (ἱεροὺς λόγους ἐν ῥαψωδίαις κδ’, the *Suda* 654), which may have been written towards the end of the first century C.E.⁴³⁰ He also says that one of the above-mentioned theologies is transmitted by the philosophers and found in the works of the Neoplatonists, particularly Proclus.

⁴²⁴ Athanassakis 2013: 101.

⁴²⁵ Athanassakis 2013: 101.

⁴²⁶ See *Cont. Cels.* 4.39 for Origen’s identification of the garden of Zeus with paradise, Poros with Adam and Penia with the serpent.

⁴²⁷ *Od.* 14.328; see *De Abstinencia* 2.5, 4.2 for Porphyry’s remarks on the oak tree showing the frugality of the ancients.

⁴²⁸ F 187 II; F 220; F 222; F 225 Bernabe.

⁴²⁹ Trans. Rappe 2010 415-8; see also Alderink 1981: 36-7; West 1983: 68-70; Betegh 2006: 140.

⁴³⁰ Rappe 2010: 496 n. 80; see also West 1983: 229 on the date of the poem; Brisson 2004: 96.

The generations and events of the *Rhapsodies* can be summarised as follows.⁴³¹ First, there exists Chronos (Time); Chronos begets Aither and Chaos or Chasma (*OF* 66 K = Procl. *In Remp.* 2.138.14-15).⁴³² Chronos forms an egg with Aither (*OF* 70 K = F 114 I-IV Bernabe = Damascius *De Principiis* 55),⁴³³ also referred to as a white tunic or cloud. Alternatively, the egg is the product of Aither and Chaos, as described by Damascius in *De Principiis* 123.1 and in Proclus' *In Tim.* 1.428.4. The god, Phanes, comes out of the egg, and Damascius says, in *De Principiis* 123, that Phanes is also called Metis and Erikepaios (*OF* 81 K = Procl. *In Tim.* 1.429.26);⁴³⁴ in other sources this god is called Protogonos (*OF* 86 K = F 123 I-IV Bernabe = Hermias *in Phaedrus* 148.25), Eros (*OF* 74 K = Procl. *In Tim.* 1.433.31-434.5),⁴³⁵ Zeus, and Bromios (*OF* 170 K = Procl. *In Tim.* 1.336.9).⁴³⁶ Damascius gives a summary of the theogony of the *Rhapsodies* only up to this point, but we have numerous references to the poem provided by the Neoplatonists, and they enable us to reconstruct the rest of the narrative.

In the subsequent generation, the goddess Night frequently appears in the *Orphic Rhapsodies*: she is called the 'immortal nurse of the gods (Θεῶν τροφὸς ἀμβροσίη,' *OF* 106 K = F 112 Bernabe),⁴³⁷ as the nourishment of the intelligible order of the gods; she is the wife and daughter of Phanes; Proclus explains in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (1.450.22-25) that Phanes springs forth alone and that he is celebrated in a song as both 'female and father' (Θῆλυς καὶ γενέτωρ, *OF* 81 K = Procl. *In Tim.* 1.429.26). Phanes creates the Nights, and has intercourse with the middle one (*OF* 98 K = F 148 Bernabe) – that is to say, possessing both genders, Phanes' female aspect creates the Nights and his male has intercourse with one of them.⁴³⁸ The royal succession of the gods begins from Phanes and extends all the

⁴³¹ For this summary see also Betegh 2006: 141-2.

⁴³² F 105; F 111 I, VII, IX, X; F 116 Bernabe.

⁴³³ Damascius also describes the egg as the product of Aither and Chaos in *De Principiis* 123.1, see Rappe 2010: 498 n. 84.

⁴³⁴ F 129 I; F 134 I-II, IV; F 136 II Bernabe.

⁴³⁵ F 124; 141 V Bernabe.

⁴³⁶ F 141 I-II; F 243 XV Bernabe.

⁴³⁷ Procl. *in Crat.* 168.2-6; the *Chaldaean Oracles* F 17.

⁴³⁸ Brisson 2004: 95-6; Runia 2008: 343 n. 757.

way to Dionysos (OF 101 K = Procl. *In Crat.* 105.10-25).⁴³⁹ Phanes willingly gives the sceptre to Night and then Uranus receives it from Night. This is contrary to Porphyry's statement in *De Antro* 16 that Kronos receives the sceptre from Uranus and gives it to Zeus after castration – a version which is in line with Hesiod's *Theogony*. The goddess Night engenders Uranus and Gaia (OF 109 K = Hermias in *Phaedrus* 154.23-27)⁴⁴⁰ so that Uranus becomes the third king. The marriage of Uranus and Gaia results in the birth of numerous gods, including Kronos and Rhea, the subsequent royal couple.⁴⁴¹ Kronos castrates Uranus and becomes the fourth king (OF 154 K = *De Antro* 16 p. 18.15).

With the arrival of Zeus, the Orphic theogony diverts from that of Hesiod and becomes a cosmogony, as Brisson has demonstrated.⁴⁴² Zeus, the son of Kronos and Rhea, who is nurtured by the goddess Night, takes the royal power from Kronos by castrating him (OF 137 K = Procl. *In Crat.* 105.30-32; OF 154 K = *De Antro* 16).⁴⁴³ Zeus swallows up Phanes (Protogonos), who possesses the primordial principle through Night, so that he reforms the gods and gives a new form to the universe (OF 167 K = Procl. *In Tim.* 1.324.14).⁴⁴⁴

Porphyry's narrative in *De Antro* 16 embraces the part of the *Rhapsodies* that tells of Uranus' abdication of royal power through his castration by Kronos in the same way as he himself is later castrated by Zeus. It ends with a reference to the divine succession of Uranus, Kronos, and, finally, Zeus, who also receives all the powers of Uranus and Kronos. At this juncture, it is necessary to examine how Porphyry analyses these three traditional gods, particularly Kronos and Zeus, in order to establish their status in the hierarchical model of the Neoplatonists.⁴⁴⁵ In his *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων* Porphyry states that Zeus is assumed to be the mind of the

⁴³⁹ F 98 IV; F 167 VI; F 168 I; F 174 III; F 193 I; F 226; F 299 X Bernabe.

⁴⁴⁰ F 123 I; F 149 I-IV, VII; F 177 V Bernabe.

⁴⁴¹ Betegh 2006: 142 n. 43.

⁴⁴² Brisson 2004: 96.

⁴⁴³ OF 137 K = F 193 II, 225 I Bernabe.

⁴⁴⁴ F 241 I-II, IV-VI Bernabe.

⁴⁴⁵ See Chase 2004a: 84-87 about Porphyry's identification of Zeus.

cosmos, the one who created everything that the cosmos contains (F 354.5-41 Smith = Eus. *PE* 3.8.2-9, 9). Quoting from an Orphic hymn (*OF* 168 K = F 354.42-44 Smith),⁴⁴⁶ Porphyry concludes that (*Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων* 3.38-40):

Ζεὺς οὖν ὁ πᾶς κόσμος, ζῶν ἐκ ζώων καὶ θεὸς ἐκ θεῶν· Ζεὺς δὲ καθὼ νοῦς, ἀφ' οὗ προφέρει πάντα καὶ δημιουργεῖ τοῖς νοήμασιν.

Zeus, therefore, is the whole universe, living being of living beings, and god of gods; but that is Zeus in so far as he is mind from which he brings forth all things, and creates them through his thoughts.

Having given an iconographic description of the god, Porphyry underlines that Zeus is the demiurgic intellect (F 354.49-51, 58 Smith). Since he sympathises with the doctrine of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and of Numenius, Porphyry will very likely have identified Zeus with the Chaldaean second intellect (δὶς ἐπέκεινα), the creator of the material world, also found in Numenius.⁴⁴⁷ The Chaldaean cosmology has three main worlds: the Empyrean World including the intelligible, the Aethereal including the fixed stars and the seven planets, and the Material world including the sublunary region with the Earth. This region is also identified with Hades.⁴⁴⁸ We might also relate the Chaldaean triad, the First God or Father, *Dunamis* or Hecate as the World Soul, and the Second God or Demiurgic Intellect in the Empyrean World, to Kronos-Rhea-Zeus in *De Antro* 16. These two assumptions may seem to be speculative because we have only fragmentary evidence, but they cannot totally be dismissed inasmuch as these traditional gods of the ancient Greek religion were widely used by the *Oracles* and the Neoplatonists at different ontological levels of their doctrines.

Plotinus likewise identifies Kronos as the Intellectual Principle in his treatise of *On Love* (*Enn.* 3.5.2.19), when he discusses the birth of Eros in the *Symposium*

⁴⁴⁶ F 243 I-VIII, XIV, XVI, XIX-XXII, XXIV-XXVIII, XXXV-XXXVIII Bernabe.

⁴⁴⁷ F 365 Smith = Joannes Lydus *De Mensibus* 110, 18-25; Chase 2004: 87; see also Chapter 2.1.3.2.

⁴⁴⁸ On the identification of Hades with the sublunary region by Xenocrates and the Middle Platonists see Schibli 1993: 146; Dillon 1996: 27; Majercik 2013: 16-8.

(203b-d) and the metaphysical identities of Aphrodite, heavenly and earthly, and of Uranus and Zeus.⁴⁴⁹ Accordingly, we might conclude that Uranus is the One, as he is the father of Kronos (*Enn.* 3.5.2.33-34). Aphrodite is Soul, as she is generated from Uranus, and she is therefore called Heavenly Aphrodite (*Enn.* 3.5.2.14-16), whereas the other Aphrodite, the daughter of Zeus and Dione, is the ruler of Earthly marriages (*Enn.* 3.5.2.16-17). Plotinus deems Zeus to be the great Soul and Intellect, referring to *Philebus* 30d1-2,⁴⁵⁰ which shows the close affinity between Intellect and Soul since Aphrodite is from Intellect and with Intellect (*Enn.* 3.5.8.14-15).⁴⁵¹ He also supports this view that Aphrodite is the soul of Zeus, because every intellectual principle represented by male gods associates with its souls represented by female gods (ὥς νῦν ἐκάστῳ ψυχῆς συνούσης, *Enn.* 3.5.8.19-21).

If we attempted to equate the Neoplatonic Hypostases, the One, Intellect and Soul, or the Chaldaean triad, Father, *Dunamis* and the Demiurgic Intellect to Uranus, Gaia, Kronos, and Zeus in *De Antro* 16, there will be a contradiction between this equation and the Neoplatonic view that the gods are transcendent and impassible (ἀπάθεια, F 377.86 Smith = Stob. *Anth.* 1.49.53; Plot. *Enn.* 3.5.6.13).⁴⁵² The contradiction is evident in Porphyry's description of Kronos as enjoying human activities, although the god is basically accepted as belonging to the intelligible realm, but he himself is subjected to genesis according to Porphyry's treatise. A passage from Porphyry's own *On the Styx* could be the answer to this conundrum. There, Porphyry says that the cosmic gods are not completely unaffected (οὐ πάντῃ ἀπαθεῖς). Although Homer calls them gods because of an old custom, there is, in

⁴⁴⁹ See Smith 2007: 233-42 for a full discussion.

⁴⁵⁰ See Plot. *Enn.* 4.4.9.1-3 for the other reference to *Phil.* 30d; also *Enn.* 4.4.10.1-4: 'the ordering principle is twofold, there is the principle known to us as the Demiurge and there is the Soul of the All; we apply the appellation Zeus sometimes to the Demiurge and sometimes to the principle conducting the universe' (trans. MacKenna 1991: 294).

⁴⁵¹ Smith 2007: 238-9.

⁴⁵² See Plot. *Enn.* 3.5.6.4-24 for a detailed discussion; *Sententia* 30 for Porphyry designation of the One as God and Dillon 2010: 33.

fact, a great *daimon*, which is called Zeus by him, ruling over those who reach the sky (F 377.84-101 Smith = Stob. *Anth.* 1.49.53.81-97):⁴⁵³

Τὰ μὲν οὖν κατὰ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους οὕτως αὐτῷ διατέτακται· ὑποθέμενος δὲ τοὺς κοσμικοὺς θεοὺς, ὧν τὰ γένη διηριθμήκαμεν, οὐ πάντη ἀπαθεῖς, <θεοὺς> καλέσας κατὰ παλαιὰν συνήθειαν [ὧν τὰ γένη ἐξεθήκαμεν], κατ' αὐτὸν μεγάλου δαίμονος ὄντος, ὃν καλεῖ Δία καὶ οἷον ἄρχοντος τῶν ἄχρισ οὐρανοῦ φθανόντων, ὑποθέμενος οὖν τούτους, καθάπερ καὶ λέγονται, ἐμπαθεῖς καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἐπιθυμίας μετέχοντας καὶ ὀργῆς καὶ μίσους καὶ ἔχθρας καὶ ὑφ' εἰμαρμένην ὄντας, εἰκότως καὶ ἀμαρτάνειν οἴεται καὶ ψεύδεσθαι καὶ ὀμνύναι καὶ εὐορκεῖν ἢ τούναντιον τινὰς πλημμελεῖν εἰς τοὺς ὅρκους. Διὸ καὶ τούτων κολάσεις ὑποτίθεται, οὐ μέντοι ἀναμειγμένους τοῖς ἀνθρωπίνους κολαστηρίοις, ἀλλ' ἅτε μείζονας ὄντας, μείζονος καὶ τιμωρίας πειρᾶσθαι ἀδίκησαντας. Διὸ τῶν μὲν ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν ἐν Ἄϊδου τὰ κολαστήρια· τῶν δ' εἰρημένων θεῶν ὑπὸ τὸν Ἄϊδην ἐν τῇ Κρόνου ἐπικρατείᾳ κατὰ τὸν Τάρταρον.

In this way, he made the rankings for humans; but he supposed that the cosmic gods, whose races we have enumerated, were not entirely impassible, calling them <gods> according to the ancient practice {whose races we have set forth}, since there is, according to him, a great daemon, whom he calls Zeus, and rules those who come first as far as heaven. He supposed, therefore, that they are passible, just as they are said [to be], and for this reason they participate in desire, anger, hatred, enmity, and are under Fate; reasonably he also supposes that they sin, lie, swear oaths, keep oaths, or on the contrary some break their oaths. For this reason also he lays down their punishments, though of course not mixing them up with human punishments; but since those who did wrong were greater they also experienced a greater punishment. For this reason the prisons of human souls are in Hades, while the prisons of those called gods are under Hades in the realm of Kronos down in Tartarus.

⁴⁵³ Trans. Johnson 2013: 355.

This passage assures us that Porphyry considers Uranus, Kronos, and Zeus to be *daimones*, and that they belong to the sublunary region, which is below the visible celestial bodies, including the cosmos, the fixed stars and the seven planets.⁴⁵⁴ The idea of a lower Zeus, reigning over the sublunary region, finds its origin in Plutarch's testimony of Xenocrates (F 18 Heinze = *Plat. Quaest.* 1007f), who separated two 'Zeuses', with the upper Zeus reigning over the intelligible realm.⁴⁵⁵

The phrase 'Kronos with his sphere is the first of those who are set against Uranus' in *De Antro* 16 p.18.15-17 raises the intriguing question of how Porphyry intended this to be understood.⁴⁵⁶ The usage of τῶν ἀντιφερομένων τῷ Οὐρανῷ is an allusion to Aristotle's *De Caelo* (ἕκαστον γὰρ ἀντιφέρεται τῷ οὐρανῷ κατὰ τὸν αὐτοῦ κύκλον, 291b2), in which he discusses the various speeds of the planets according to their distance to heaven. The movement of the planets is hindered by their proximities to heaven: the outmost revolution of heaven is the fastest of all, whereas the movements of the planets are the reverse of that of the outer heaven. That means that the nearest to heaven, namely Saturn (Kronos), is the most affected, and so moves the slowest; thus, the Moon, the farthest from heaven, is the least affected and moves the fastest. In his commentary of *Timaeus* 36d2-7 (*In Tim.* 2.263.19-264.33) Proclus also discusses why the speeds of the circuits of the planets change, saying that some (astronomers) divided 'space into seven circles which move in opposite directions to one another' (τῇ ἀπλανεῖ τοῖς ἑαυτῶν κύκλοις ἀντιφερόμενοι κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν κίνησιν, *In Tim.* 2.264.2-3). Having explained the different views of astronomers, Proclus agrees with those who claim that the seven circles of the planets and of the fixed stars move in opposite directions because of their 'reverse revolution' (ἐναντίος, *In Tim.* 2.264.15-19). The opposite direction of the heavenly bodies also occurs in Plato's *Statesman*, in which the age of Kronos

⁴⁵⁴ See also Chapter 3.1.2.

⁴⁵⁵ Dillon 1996: 27; see also Schibli 1991: 146-7.

⁴⁵⁶ See also *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων* (F 359.85-87 Smith = Eus. *PE* 3.11.21-44) for the image of Kronos: 'They saw the power of Kronos slow-moving and tardy and cold; they therefore ascribed the power of time to him, and they represent him standing and grey-headed in reference to time presentation of growing old.'

belongs to the time when the revolutions of the heavenly bodies turned in the 'opposite direction' (ἐναντία, *Polit.* 270d5). This change resulted in rejuvenation of the old and at a time when people effortlessly obtained what they needed in abundance.

Considering Porphyry's description of Kronos as inebriated by honey (pleasure) in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.4-9, I propose that it would be acceptable to consider from a perspective of microcosmic interpretation the assumption that Kronos symbolises the individual souls under the process of embodiment. The usage of the verb σκοτοῦν in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.4 is an echo of σκότωσης in *Sententia* 29.30 which is the outcome of the soul falling into bodies. Zeus is the cause or force which leads the individual souls down to the material world.

In his *Miscellaneous Researches* (F 261.32-52 Smith = Nemesius 3.41.10-42.1), Porphyry explains that the soul is in intellect when its rational part predominates. He declines the spatial blend of the soul and body and says that the soul is in a non-spatial relation to the body.⁴⁵⁷ He emphasises that the body's entrapment of the soul actually signifies its non-spatial relation to the body, that is to say, it results from the relation, downward movement and propensity of the soul towards any object:⁴⁵⁸

μη κωλυόμενα γὰρ ὑπὸ τῶν σωμάτων τὰ νοητά, ἀλλὰ διὰ παντὸς σώματος χωροῦντα καὶ διαφοιτῶντα καὶ διεξιόντα, οὐχ οἷά τέ ἐστιν ὑπὸ τόπου σωματικοῦ κατέχεσθαι· νοητὰ γὰρ ὄντα ἐν νοητοῖς καὶ τόποις ἐστίν, ἢ γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἢ ἐν τοῖς ὑπερκειμένοις νοητοῖς, ὡς ἡ ψυχὴ ποτὲ μὲν ἐν ἑαυτῇ ἐστίν, ὅταν λογίζεται, ποτὲ δὲ ἐν τῷ νῷ, ὅταν νοῇ. ἐπὶ τὸ οὖν ἐν σώματι λέγεται εἶναι, οὐχ ὡς ἐν τόπῳ τῷ σώματι λέγεται εἶναι, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐν σχέσει καὶ τῷ παρεῖναι, ὡς λέγεται ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν. καὶ γὰρ τῇ σχέσει καὶ τῇ πρὸς τι ῥοπῇ καὶ διαθέσει δεδέσθαι φανερὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ σώματος τὴν ψυχὴν, ὡς λέγομεν ὑπὸ τῆς ἐρωμένης δεδέσθαι τὸν ἐραστήν, οὐ σωματικῶς οὐδὲ τοπικῶς, ἀλλὰ κατὰ σχέσιν. ἀμέγεθες γὰρ ὃν καὶ ἄογκον καὶ ἀμερὲς τῆς κατὰ μέρος

⁴⁵⁷ Sorabji 2005: 204-5.

⁴⁵⁸ Trans. Dillon 2004: 198-9.

τοπικῆς περιγραφῆς κρεῖττον ἐστίν. τὸ γὰρ μὴ ἔχον μέρος ποῖω δύναται τόπῳ περιγράφεσθαι; ὅγκῳ γὰρ τόπος συνυφίσταται· τόπος γάρ ἐστι πέρας τοῦ περιέχοντος, καθ’ ὃ περιέχει τὸ περιεχόμενον.

For since intelligibles are not hindered by bodies but, rather control and penetrate and traverse them, they cannot be contained in a corporeal space, for being intelligible, they are in intelligible locations, either in themselves or in intelligibles superior to them; and the soul is sometimes in itself and sometimes in intellect, that is, whenever it is thinking. So, when it is said to be “in the body,” it is not said to be in the body as in a place but as being in relation to it and as being present to it, even as god is said to be “in us;” for, indeed, it is by reason of relationship and inclination and attitude towards an object that we say that the soul is “ensnared” by the body, even as we say that the lover is “ensnared” by the beloved, neither corporeally nor spatially, but by relationship; being something without size or bulk, it [soul] is superior to any spatial circumscription of part by part, for by what sort of spatial circumscription could something that does not possess parts be contained? Place, after all, is ontologically coordinate with bulk, for place is the limit of the containing element, in accordance with which the contained is contained.

It is reasonable to infer that in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.10 the verb, δεῖν, signifies ‘the soul being in relation with the body,’ as was explicitly expressed in this passage by Porphyry (δεδέσθαι, F 261.45-46 = Nemesius 3.41.17-18).⁴⁵⁹ In contrast to the effect of the predominance of the rational part of the soul over the irrational part, the influence of the desiring part of the soul manifests itself by the tendency towards the fulfilment of bodily needs, either in the form of having excessive food or desiring for intercourse. Porphyry’s remark shows that the ‘pleasure’ (ἡδονή) of having the taste of honey, as in the case of Kronos, results in the same way as sexual desire (ἐπιθυμία), as in the case of Uranus it causes the descent of the soul into the

⁴⁵⁹ Simonini 2010: 164-5 states that the description of the desire for sexual intercourse is dear to Porphyry who uses it several times in *De Abstinencia* (1.30.6; 1.31.1; 1.33.2; 1.34.4; 4.13.8) and *Ad Marcellam* 33.4 (δεῖν), and that the desire of sexual pleasures causes the union of the soul that in the context of *De Antro* refers to that of the Naiad Nymphs’ weaving of flesh.

material world. One of the passages in *De Abstinentia* (1.46.1-15) is quite significant not only because Porphyry emphasises that reason (λόγος) is in no need of excessive food, but also because the soul feels the ill effects of overnutrition on the body. Porphyry's description of the states of Kronos and Poros in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.4-5, who are filled up with honey and nectar, and the passage in *De Abstinentia* 1.46.1-15, share similarities in such a way that any propensity for extremes, particularly excessive consumption, makes the soul lazy and sleepy:⁴⁶⁰

Οὐκ ἀπεικότως ἄρα τὸ πολὺ καὶ περιττὸν ὁ λόγος ἀποκρίνας εἰς ὀλίγον περιγράφει τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, εἰ μέλλει μήτε πορίζων ἔξειν πράγματα διὰ τὸ δεῖσθαι πλειόνων, μήτε εὐτρεπῇ ποιῶν πλειόνων τῶν ὑπηρετησομένων δεήσεσθαι, μήτε ἐσθίων πλειόνων ἡδονῶν ἀντιλήψεσθαι, μήτε πληρούμενος πολλῆς ἀργίας ἐμπλήσεσθαι, μήτε παχυτέρου φορτίου ἐμπιπλάμενος ὑπνώδης γίνεσθαι, μήτε τῶν παινόντων τὸ σῶμα πληρούμενος ἰσχυρότερον μὲν τὸν δεσμόν, αὐτὸν δὲ ἀργότερον πρὸς τὰ οἰκεῖα ποιήσῃ καὶ ἀσθενέστερον.

Reason, then, will quite properly reject abundant or excessive food, and will restrict what is necessary to a small amount, if the intention is neither, when making provision to have problems because more is needed; nor, when preparing the meal, to need more servants; nor, when eating it, to reach out for more pleasures; nor, when getting full, to be filled with inertia; nor, when filled up with this heavy load, to become sleepy; nor, when full of the foods which fatten the body, to make one's chains stronger and oneself more inert and feebler about one's own concerns.

Food overindulgence in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.11, also leads to bodily pleasure and strengthens the bonds or chains of the soul with the material world through the fattening of the body, that is to say that the satisfaction of bodily needs results in impairment of the rational part of the soul. In order to explain why reason does not operate properly, Porphyry uses the metaphor of tares as a symbol of the activities of all the capacities of the soul through perception and the body, and of wheat-seed

⁴⁶⁰ Trans. Clark 2000: 49.

as a symbol of the activities of reason (*De Abstinencia* 1.30-31).⁴⁶¹ When the soul does not remain in the intelligible realm because of its wickedness, there is no room for the activities of reason. Wickedness of the soul does not damage its own essence by engendering unreason and its irrational part deals only with the material world.⁴⁶² However, this feature of the soul is connected with mortality by means of unreason and is dragged down from its own to what is foreign. We might conclude from Porphyry's remarks in *De Antro* 16 and the relevant passages of *De Abstinencia* that he considers overeating a wickedness of the soul, which also leads the body to restrain the activities of the soul.

The usage of the verb δεσμεῖν in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.11 is an echo of the depiction of the prisoners dwelling in the subterranean cave in the *Republic*, who since childhood have fetters on their necks and legs (*Rep.* 514a-b, 515c). The prisoners' fetters cause restrictions on their activities so that the prisoners see truth as representing the reflections and shadows of the artificial objects, as in the case of *De Abstinencia* 1.30-31, in which the irrational part of the soul leaves no room for the activities of its rational part. Thus, it is apparent that Porphyry considers that the descent of Kronos into genesis in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.10-11 or the union of the soul with the body signifies the soul bound with the fetters of the material world, and because of the soul's propensity to passions and pleasure, this union leads to the soul's suffering from loss of intellect.

The explanation of the statement that 'the divinities shed their powers, ἀποσπερματίζειν, like semen, after they have been dissolved in pleasure' in *De Antro* 16 p. 18.12-13 is found in *Sententia* 37.36-49, which includes the Neoplatonic exegesis of Poros and Penia, whose son is Eros in *Symposium* 203b-c.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶¹ See Clark 2000: 134-5 n. 108; Plot. *Enn.* 1.8.14

⁴⁶² *Sententiae* 37.29-30: 'body does not cut off its union, when it unites with soul, although it is a hindrance to its energies in many ways.'

⁴⁶³ Trans. Guthrie 1988: 62-3 with minor changes. Plutarch in *De Iside* 374c-4 considers Poros to be intelligible reality, Penia to be matter and Eros to be the universe. See Plot. *Enn.* 3.5.5 and 3.5.9. for the dual aspect of Eros and Penia as matter.

Ὡσπερ δὲ κρατηθὲν ἐν ὕλῃ τι σπέρμα καθ' ἕκαστον ὧν ἐδύνατο λόγων ἐν τοῖς μέρεσι τῇ ὕλῃ κρατεῖται καὶ πάλιν συναχθὲν εἰς τὴν τοῦ σπέρματος δύναμιν καθ' ἕκαστον τῶν μερῶν ἔχει τὴν πᾶσαν δύναμιν, οὕτω καὶ ψυχῆς ἀύλου τὸ ὡς μέρος ἐπινοούμενον τῆς πάσης ψυχῆς ἔχει τὴν δύναμιν. τὸ δὲ πρὸς ὕλην ῥέψαν κεκράτῃται μὲν καθ' ὃ εἶδος ῥέψαν ἐπιτηδεῖως ἔσχε προσομιλεῖν ἐνύλῳ, ἔχει δὲ τὴν τῆς ὅλης δύναμιν ἤδη καὶ ἐντυγχάνει οὕσῃ ἐν ἑαυτῷ, ὅταν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνύλου ἀποστὰν ἐν ἑαυτῷ γένηται. ἐπεὶ δὲ πρὸς μὲν ὕλην ῥεπούση ἀπορία πάντων καὶ τῆς οἰκείας δυνάμεως κένωσις, εἰς δὲ τὸν νοῦν ἀναγομένη τὸ πλήρες αὐτῆς κατὰ \leq τὸ \geq τὴν δύναμιν ἔχειν τῆς πάσης εὐρίσκετο, τὴν μὲν εἰκότως Πενίαν, τὴν δὲ Πόρον οἱ τοῦτο πρῶτον γνόντες τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ πάθος ἤνιξαντο.

As seed, when united with matter, rules over the properties of the whole Seed [spermatic logos], and as, on the other hand, universal Seed possesses all the properties of the individual seeds dispersed within matter, thus the parts which we conceive of in the [universal] Soul that is separated from matter, possess all the powers of the universal Soul. The individual soul, which declines towards matter, is bound to the matter by the form which her disposition has made her choose; but she preserves the powers of the universal Soul, and she unites with her when the [individual soul] turns away from the body, to concentrate within herself. Now as in the course of her declination towards matter, the soul is stripped entirely bare by the total exhaustion of her own faculties; and as, on the contrary, on rising towards intelligence, she recovers the fullness of the powers of the universal Soul, the ancient philosophers were right, in their mystic phrasing, to describe these two opposite conditions of the Soul by the names of Penia and Poros (Wealth and Poverty).

From the passage in *Sententia* 37 we may infer that the divinities' shedding of powers signifies that the inclination towards Matter leads the soul to be in need of everything and to empty its intellectual power. Thus, Penia and Poros show the two opposite conditions of the soul. The former is a status of the soul which loses its own power, whereas the latter is in a condition for the purification of all the weaknesses of the material world. Its own power is filled with the universal Soul.

Elsewhere in *De Abstinētia* (2.37.21-33), Porphyry states that our inferior nature is the reason for our incapability of preserving the divine pure and unharmed. Poros or Resource indicates the condition of the soul which ascends towards Intellect and becomes filled with its own power, but then falls away because of genesis and our nature suffering from deprivation.⁴⁶⁴

εἰ δὲ μή, ἀλλ' ἐντεῦθεν γε τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἐλάττωμα, ἐντεῦθεν τὸ θρηνούμενον πρὸς τῶν παλαιῶν, ὡς τοίων ἔκ τ' ἐρίδων ἔκ τε νεικέων γενόμεσθα, ὅτι τὸ θεῖον ἀκήρατον καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν ἀβλαβὲς σώζειν οὐ δυνάμεθα· οὐ γὰρ ἐν πᾶσιν ἤμεν ἀπροσδεεῖς· αἰτία δὲ ἡ γένεσις καὶ τὸ ἐν τῇ πενίᾳ ἡμᾶς γενέσθαι, τοῦ πόρου ἀπορρυσθέντος· ἡ δὲ πενία ἐξ ἀλλοτρίων τὴν σωτηρίαν καὶ τὸν κόσμον, δι' οὗ τὸ εἶναι ἐλάμβανεν, ἐκτᾶτο. ὅστις οὖν πλεονόντων δεῖται τῶν ἑξωθεν, ἐπὶ πλεόν τῇ πενίᾳ προσήλwται· καὶ ὅσῳ πλεόνων ἐνδεής, τοσούτῳ θεοῦ μὲν ἄμοιρος, πενία δὲ σύνοικος.

But if it is not possible, and the defect of our nature is there, there is what the ancients lamented:

from strife like this, and quarrels, we are born⁴⁶⁵

namely that we cannot keep the divine untouched and harmless in relation to everything. The cause is generation and our being born in poverty, resource having trickled away. Poverty got its preservation, and the world from which it acquired existence, from things that are not its own. So whoever needs more from outside is riveted the more firmly to poverty, and the more he needs more, the more he has no share in the god but is wedded to poverty.

We might, therefore, conclude that Kronos, like Poros, is the soul under the influence of irrationality as a result of the intoxicating effect of honey (or nectar as in the case of Poros in the *Symposium*), which is a hostile and alien source to the rational part of the soul. Predominance of irrationality is indicative of the soul suffering from poverty or deprivation, which Plotinus identifies with Matter being

⁴⁶⁴ Trans. Clark 2000: 99 with n. 533.

⁴⁶⁵ Empedocles 31 B 124 DK, F 118 Inwood; Clark 2000: 178 n.532.

destitute, in *Enneads* 3.5.9.45-57, and, therefore, the soul falls into the material world.

Chapter 4

The Path Towards the Immortality of the Soul

My purpose in this chapter is to analyse the relevant passages in *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, which include Porphyry's account and interpretation of the journey of the soul found in the last four verses of Homer. These verses state that the cave has two entrances: one oriented towards the South for the immortals, the other towards the North for the mortals (*Od.* 13.109-112):

δύω δέ τέ οἱ θύραι εἰσίν,
αἱ μὲν πρὸς βορέαο καταβαταὶ ἀνθρώποισιν,
αἱ δ' αὖ πρὸς νότου εἰσὶ θεώτεραι· οὐδέ τι κείνη
ἄνδρες ἐσέρχονται, ἀλλ' ἀθανάτων ὁδὸς ἐστίν.

It has two entrances:

one is northerly for humans to descend,
the other, southerly, is more divine; through that entrance
men do not enter, but it is the way of immortals.

The discussions in this chapter will be based on Porphyry's classification of the journey of the soul, or rather, of two journeys, one through the intelligible realm and the other through the sensible realm; the latter journey is, in turn, divided into two, one through the fixed stars and the other through the seven planets. In the first section, I will discuss the journeys of the soul through the sensible world in order to demonstrate how Porphyry interprets the subject within the scope of the gates of heaven, relating to the two entrances of Homer's cave. In the second section, I will deal with the journey of the soul through the intelligible realm and seek to show

that the relevant parts of *De Antro* testify to the fact that the philosophical way of life leads the soul to attain immortality.

4.1. The Journey of the Soul through the Sensible World

Porphyry's interest in astrology is evident in his commentary on Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, which, according to Holden, is a dictionary of astrological terms.⁴⁶⁶ *De Antro*'s astrological interpretation of the double gates of the Homeric cave is significant, in the sense that we can consider Porphyry's extensive use of astrology as an exegetical practice through which he explains the journeys of the soul through the sensible world, either through the fixed stars or through the seven planets (*De Antro* 29.17). This theory is based on the fact that the seven planets are related to the path of the soul for the descent into genesis. Of the four major phases of the pneumatic part of the soul during the process of its descent into genesis, the phase of the aethereal body is generated from the substances of the first five planets, and the phases of the solar and lunar bodies from the substances of the Sun and the Moon, as we have previously seen.⁴⁶⁷ However, its ascent must occur through the fixed stars, although Porphyry does not specify this. As an opposite process to the descent of the soul, the pneumatic vehicle and the irrational part of the soul lose their composition and are resolved into their elements.⁴⁶⁸

Porphyry presents different astrological exegeses of the double gates of the cave of the nymphs, variously named, such as the gates of Cancer and Capricorn, the gates of the Sun, and the gates of the Sun and the Moon. He refers to Numenius and, consequently, to the myth of Er in Plato's *Republic*; in fact, the quotation from Numenius is mainly an exegesis of the myth of Er. In a broader sense, Porphyry follows his master Plato, since he may have the same ethical purpose in the myth of

⁴⁶⁶ Holden 2009: viii n. 2.

⁴⁶⁷ See Chapter 3.3.

⁴⁶⁸ See Chapter 4.2.1 for a detailed discussion.

Er as he does in *De Antro*, that is, to show how significant it is for the fate of the soul to lead a philosophical life.

The parts which cover our discussion of the solstitial gates are centred upon the discussion of the cosmological model of the Mithraic mysteries by Mithraic scholars, particularly Beck, since it is commonly agreed that the astrological model of the cosmos based on the solstitial gates has strong Mithraic influences.⁴⁶⁹ But rather than repeating Beck's detailed arguments on the interpretation of the solstitial gates, I will provide a short summary. This section will also include some comparative remarks on Porphyry's and Proclus' quotations of Numenius on this subject. Porphyry is not the only Neoplatonist quoting passages from Numenius on the solstitial gates, as Proclus also draws on Numenius' exegesis for his commentary on the *Republic*. Those exegetical activities prove how influential a figure Numenius is. I exclude Macrobius' interpretation of this subject in his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* because he draws on Porphyry and may be less credible.⁴⁷⁰

Later, I will focus on the parts in *De Antro* 22.15-16 and 29.23-26 in which Porphyry explicitly refers to the myth of Er and associates the two entrances (δύο στόμια) in *Republic* 615d5, e2 with the gates of the Sun and the Moon. Unfortunately, the section including the gates of the Sun and the Moon in *De Antro* has, up to now, received less attention from scholars than the section related to the solstitial gates. My analysis will proceed to show how the Sun and the Moon are associated with the routes of the soul's ascent and descent in Porphyry's thought, including the discussion of the possible identity of the theologians to whom Porphyry refers in *De Antro* 22.15. Here, Porphyry's commentary on the *Timaeus* (F 79 Sodano)⁴⁷¹ is significant in that, at the celestial level, he considers the Sun and the Moon to be the latter two principles of the noetic triad (Being, Life, Intellect), which he identifies with Intellect and Life, respectively. Indeed, the association of

⁴⁶⁹ See Beck 2007 and the relevant articles in Beck 2004 for the astrological interpretation of the solstitial gates.

⁴⁷⁰ See Stahl 1990: 24-32 on Macrobius' sources.

⁴⁷¹ Sodano 1964: 67-8; Johnson 2013: 68.

the Sun with Intellect is not unfamiliar in the Platonic tradition. For example, we find instances of association of Intellect with the Sun in Plutarch's *De Genio* 591b and *De Facie* 945bc. My analysis of Porphyry's identification of the latter two principles of the noetic triad with the Sun and the Moon aims to offer some insights towards an alternative reading of *De Antro*.

4.1.1. The Solstitial Gates: Numenius Fragments 31 and 32

(21-24 p. 24.3) ἔπεται τοίνυν ζητεῖν τὸ βούλημα εἴτε τῶν καθιδρυσαμένων, εἴπερ ἱστορίαν ὁ ποιητὴς ἀπαγγέλλει, ἢ αὐτοῦ γε τὸ αἴνιγμα, εἴπερ αὐτοῦ πλάσμα τὸ διήγημα. τοῦ δὴ ἄντρου εἰκόνα καὶ σύμβολον φησὶ τοῦ κόσμου φέροντος Νουμήνιος καὶ ὁ τούτου ἐταῖρος Κρόνιος δύο εἶναι ἐν οὐρανῷ ἄκρα, ὧν οὔτε νοτιώτερόν ἐστι τοῦ χειμερινοῦ τροπικοῦ οὔτε βορειότερον τοῦ θερινοῦ. ἔστι δ' ὁ μὲν θερινὸς κατὰ καρκίνον, ὁ δὲ χειμερινὸς κατ' αἰγόκερων. καὶ προσγειότατος μὲν ὢν ἡμῖν ὁ καρκίνος εὐλόγως τῇ προσγειοτάτῃ Σελήνῃ ἀπεδόθη, ἀφανοῦς δ' ἔτι ὄντος τοῦ νοτίου πόλου τῷ μακρὰν ἔτι ἀφεστηκότι καὶ ἀνωτάτῳ τῶν πλανωμένων πάντων ὁ αἰγόκερος ἀπεδόθη. καὶ ἔχουσί γε ἐφεξῆς αἱ θέσεις τῶν ζωδίων· ἀπὸ μὲν καρκίνου εἰς αἰγόκερων πρῶτα μὲν λέοντα οἶκον Ἡλίου, εἶτα παρθένον Ἑρμοῦ, ζυγὸν δὲ Ἀφροδίτης, σκορπίον δὲ Ἄρεος, τοξότην Διός, αἰγόκερων Κρόνου· ἀπὸ δ' αἰγόκερω ἔμπαλιν ὑδροχόον Κρόνου, ἰχθύας Διός, Ἄρεος κριόν, ταῦρον Ἀφροδίτης, διδύμους Ἑρμοῦ, καὶ Σελήνης λοιπὸν καρκίνον. δύο οὖν ταύτας ἔθεντο πύλας καρκίνον καὶ αἰγόκερων οἱ θεολόγοι, Πλάτων δὲ δύο στόμια ἔφη· τούτων δὲ καρκίνον μὲν εἶναι δι' οὗ κατίαςιν αἱ ψυχαί, αἰγόκερων δὲ δι' οὗ ἀνίαςιν. ἀλλὰ καρκίνος μὲν βόρειος καὶ καταβατικός, αἰγόκερος δὲ νότιος καὶ ἀναβατικός. ἔστι δὲ τὰ μὲν βόρεια ψυχῶν εἰς γένεσιν κατιουσῶν, καὶ ὀρθῶς καὶ τοῦ ἄντρου μὲν βόρεια ψυχῶν εἰς γένεσιν κατιουσῶν, καὶ ὀρθῶς καὶ τοῦ ἄντρου αἱ πρὸς βορρᾶν πύλαι καταβαταὶ ἀνθρώποις· τὰ δὲ νότια οὐ θεῶν, ἀλλὰ τῶν εἰς θεοὺς ἀνιουσῶν, διὰ τὴν αὐτὴν δ' αἰτίαν οὐ θεῶν ἔφη ὁδός, ἀλλ' ἀθανάτων, ὃ κοινὸν καὶ ἐπὶ ψυχῶν ὡς οὐσῶν καθ' αὐτὸ ἢ τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἀθανάτων. τῶν δύο πυλῶν τούτων μεμνησθαι καὶ Παρμενίδην ἐν τῷ Φυσικῷ φησὶ Ῥωμαίους τε καὶ Αἰγυπτίους. Ῥωμαίους μὲν γὰρ τὰ

Κρόνια ἑορτάζειν Ἥλιου κατ' αἰγόκερων γενομένου, ἑορτάζειν δὲ τοὺς δούλους ἐλευθέρων σχήματα περιβάλλοντας καὶ πάντων ἀλλήλοις κοινωνούντων· αἰνιξαμένου τοῦ νομοθέτου ὅτι κατὰ ταύτην τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὴν πύλην οἱ νῦν ὄντες διὰ τὴν γένεσιν δοῦλοι διὰ τῆς Κρονικῆς ἑορτῆς καὶ τοῦ ἀνακειμένου Κρόνῳ οἴκου ἐλευθεροῦνται, ἀναβιωσκόμενοι καὶ εἰς ἀπογένεσιν ἀπερχόμενοι. καταβατική δὲ αὐτοῖς ἡ ἀπ' αἰγόκερω ὁδός· διὸ ἰανούαν εἰπόντες τὴν θύραν καὶ ἰανουάριον μῆνα τὸν θυραῖον προσεῖπον, ἐν ᾧ Ἥλιος ἀπ' αἰγόκερω πρὸς ἑῶαν ἐπάνεισιν ἐπιστρέψας εἰς τὰ βόρεια. Αἰγυπτίοις δὲ ἀρχὴ ἔτους οὐχ ὁ ὑδροχόος, ὡς Ῥωμαίοις, ἀλλὰ καρκίνος· πρὸς γὰρ τῷ καρκίνῳ ἡ Σῶθις, ἣν κυνὸς ἀστέρα Ἕλληνες φασί. νομηνία δ' αὐτοῖς ἡ Σώθews ἀνατολή, γενέσεως κατάρχουσα τῆς εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

(21-24 p. 24.3) It, therefore, follows that we should investigate either the intention of those who consecrated the cave, if the poet (Homer) is giving a factual account, or what is his riddle, if the tale is his fiction. Representing the cave as an image and symbol of the cosmos, Numenius and his companion Cronius say that two highest points in the heaven exist, of which one is not more southern than the winter solstice, and the other not more northern than the summer solstice. The summer solstice exists in the region of Cancer, the winter solstice in the region of Capricorn. Cancer, being the nearest to us, has reasonably been assigned to the Moon, which is the nearest to the Earth. However, since the southern pole is unseen yet, Capricorn has been assigned to the most remote and highest of the planets of all. Indeed, the signs of the planets keep in order from Cancer to Capricorn: first Leo, the house of the Sun; then Virgo, the house of Mercury; Libra, the house of Venus; Scorpio, the house of Mars; Sagittarius, the house of Jupiter; Capricorn, the house of Saturn. If we count backwards from Capricorn: Aquarius, the house of Saturn; Pisces, the house of Jupiter; Aries, the house of Mars; Taurus, the house of Venus; Gemini, the house of Mercury; and finally Cancer, the house of the Moon. The theologians, therefore, considered the two gates as Cancer and Capricorn, as Plato spoke of two mouths (or entrances of the underworld). Of these, Cancer is the gate through which the souls descend, Capricorn through which they ascend. However, Cancer is northerly and fit for descent, while Capricorn is southerly and fit for ascent. The northern regions belong to souls descending into genesis, and the northern gates of the cave are truly the descent for humans. The southern gates of the cave

do not belong to gods but to those ascending to gods; for the same reason, he (Homer) speaks not of the way of gods but of immortals, which is also a common word for souls, since they are immortal either in accordance with themselves or by essence. He (Numenius) says that Parmenides also made reference to these two gates in his *Physics* as the Romans and the Egyptians do. For he remarks that the Romans celebrate the Saturnalia when the Sun is in Capricorn, and that they celebrate the slaves putting on clothes of freemen and all share with one another. The lawgiver implied that those who are now slaves because of genesis, according to this gate of the heaven would be free through the Saturnalian feast and the house dedicated to Saturn (Capricorn), coming to life again and leaving the world for apogenesis. According to them, the way coming from Capricorn is fit for descent; so, after having named the entrance Ianus, they also called the beginning month January, in which the Sun goes back from Capricorn towards the East while it is turning towards the North. However, according to the Egyptians, the beginning of the year is not Aquarius, as it is for the Romans, but Cancer. For Sothis, which the Greeks call the Dog-Star (Sirius), is in Cancer. For them the beginning of the month/year (New Moon) is the ascendant of Sothis, which governs the genesis into the cosmos.

In this lengthy passage, Porphyry begins his detailed discussion of different significations of the Homeric cave's two gates by referring to a lost work of Numenius (F 31 DP = F 43 L). He considers Numenius and Cronius as the originators of the theory of the solstitial gates, as they propose that the Homeric cave of the nymphs is the image of the cosmos. In addition, Porphyry predicates the theory on a principle of nature which inherently includes opposites, as in the case of the solstitial gates of celestial oppositions, particularly in relation to the journey of the soul through the sensible world (*De Antro* 29.16-22). The winter and summer solstices indicate the two 'extremities in heaven' (ἄκρα ἐν οὐρανῷ), opposite cosmological dyads, where the former occurs in Capricorn and the latter in Cancer. The assignments of the two extreme points, Cancer and Capricorn to the Moon and Saturn, are simply based on the idea of their distances from the Earth in the

geocentric model of the Solar system so that the Moon as the house and ruler of Cancer is the closest to the Earth in the northern hemisphere, whereas Saturn, as the house and ruler of Capricorn, is the remotest planet from the Earth in the northern hemisphere. The soul descends into the material world through the chain of the seven planets towards the Earth through the Moon, and returns to its source through Saturn to the fixed stars.

Another reference to Numenius is found in *De Antro* 28 p. 26.26-p. 28.5 (F 32 DP = F 44 L), in which Numenius interprets the gates of the Sun of Homer in *Odyssey* 24.12 as being the same as the gates of Cancer and Capricorn. Porphyry also refers to Pythagoras, identifying Homer's people of dreams with souls and suggesting that the Milky Way is the place where souls are brought together.⁴⁷² Nevertheless, Porphyry's direct assignment of the doctrine to Pythagoras is through Numenius:

(28 p.26.26-p. 28.5) λέγει δέ που καὶ Ἡλίου πύλας, σημαίνων καρκίνον τε καὶ αἰγόκερων· ἄχρι <γὰρ> τούτων πρόεισιν ἀπὸ βορέου ἀνέμου εἰς τὰ νότια κατιῶν κάκεῖθεν ἐπανιῶν εἰς τὰ βόρεια. αἰγόκερως δὲ καὶ καρκίνος περὶ τὸν γαλαξίαν τὰ πέρατα αὐτοῦ εἰληχότες, καρκίνος μὲν τὰ βόρεια, αἰγόκερως δὲ τὰ νότια· δῆμος δὲ ὀνείρων κατὰ Πυθαγόραν αἱ ψυχαί, ἃς συνάγεσθαι φησὶν εἰς τὸν γαλαξίαν τὸν οὕτω προσαγορευόμενον ἀπὸ τῶν γάλακτι τρεφομένων, ὅταν εἰς γένεσιν πέσωσιν. ὧ καὶ σπένδειν αὐταῖς τοὺς ψυχαγωγοὺς μέλι κεκραμένον γάλακτι ὡς ἂν δι' ἡδονῆς εἰς γένεσιν μεμελετηκυῖαις ἔρχεσθαι· αἷς συγκευῖσθαι τὸ γάλα πέφυκεν.

(28 p.26.26-p. 28.5) He (Numenius) also speaks somewhere of the gates of the Sun, signifying Cancer and Capricorn. For the Sun advances as far as these, descending from the northern quarter to the South, and rising from that place to the North. Capricorn and Cancer are near the Milky Way, falling to the boundaries of the Milky Way, Cancer to the North, Capricorn to the South. According to Pythagoras, the souls are the people of dreams, which are, he says, brought together into the Milky Way, and the Milky Way is named from those who are nourished with the milk

⁴⁷² Burkert 1972: 367 n. 94; Fortenbaugh 2009: 106-8.

whenever they would fall into genesis. So, those who lead souls to the underworld also pour libations of milk and honey to them, since they have been accustomed to enter into genesis because of pleasure; the milk is produced for those who are generated together.

It is well known that in his *Commentary on the Republic of Plato* (*In Remp.* 2.128.26-129.21 = F 42 L = F 35 DP) Proclus ascribed the theory of the solstitial gates to Numenius, not Cronius. In his commentary, the gates of Capricorn and Cancer are the ascending and descending paths for the soul. Proclus' reference to Numenius and Porphyry's quotation from Numenius in *De Antro* 28 p. 26.26-p. 28.1 are compatible with each other because the gates of the Sun, according to Numenius, signify the gates of Capricorn and Cancer. The correspondence of the solstices to the gates of the Sun seems to result from the fact that the Sun astrologically occurs in Capricorn during the winter solstice and in Cancer during the summer solstice. The Sun proceeds towards the solstices, descending from the North, Capricorn, to the South, Cancer, and from there ascending to the North, Capricorn, during its apparent annual path of the Sun, which is described as the ecliptic. In accordance with Proclus' quotation in his commentary on the *Republic*, Numenius deemed not only the winter and summer solstices (τὰ τροπικὰ ζώδια), and the 'two gates' of the Sun (αἱ δύο πύλαι), but also the 'two chasms' of Plato (τὰ χάσματα τὰ διπλᾶ, *Rep.* 614c2, d4) to be the same thing, differing only in name.⁴⁷³

Νουμήνιος μὲν γὰρ τὸ κέντρον εἶναί φησιν τοῦτον τοῦ τε κόσμου παντὸς καὶ τῆς γῆς, ὡς μεταξὺ μὲν ὄν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, μεταξὺ δὲ καὶ τῆς γῆς· ἐν ᾧ καθῆσθαι τοὺς δικαστὰς καὶ παραπέμπειν τὰς μὲν εἰς οὐρανὸν τῶν ψυχῶν, τὰς δὲ εἰς τὸν ὑπὸ γῆς τόπον καὶ τοὺς ἐκεῖ ποταμούς· οὐρανὸν μὲν τὴν ἀπλανῆ λέγων καὶ ἐν ταύτῃ δύο χάσματα, τὸν αἰγόκερω καὶ τὸν καρκίνον, τοῦτον μὲν καθόδου χάσμα τῆς εἰς γένεσιν, ἀνόδου δὲ ἐκεῖνον, ποταμούς δὲ ὑπὸ γῆς τὰς πλανωμένας (ἀνάγει γὰρ εἰς

⁴⁷³ Trans. Petty 2012: 74-7; for the commentary on the fragment see Petty 2012: 193-4. Also Lambertson 1986: 70 for, according to Proclus' quotation, the lists of 'the elements of the Numenian interpretation of the Homeric passages in question – the description of the cave of the nymphs at *Od.* 13.110-12 and the second *nekyia* at the opening of *Od.* 24.'

ταύτας τοὺς ποταμοὺς καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Τάρταρον)· καὶ ἄλλην πολλὴν ἐπεισάγων τερατολογίαν, πηδήσεις τε ψυχῶν ἀπὸ τῶν τροπικῶν ἐπὶ τὰ ἰσημερινὰ καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων εἰς τὰ τροπικὰ καὶ μεταβάσεις, ἃς αὐτὸς πηδῶν ἐπὶ τὰ πράγματα μεταφέρει, καὶ συρράπτων τὰ Πλατωνικὰ ῥήματα τοῖς γενεθλιαλογικοῖς καὶ ταῦτα τοῖς τελεστικοῖς· μαρτυρούμενος τῶν δύο χασμάτων καὶ τὴν Ὀμήρου ποίησιν οὐ μόνον λέγουσαν [Od. ν 110–112] τὰς μὲν πρὸς βορέαο καταιβατὰς ἀνθρώποισιν ὁδοὺς, ἐπεὶπερ ὁ καρκίνος εἰς ταίγόμερον προσελθὼν ἀποτελεῖ· τὰς δὲ πρὸς νότον [εἶναι θειοτέρας], δι' ὧν οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνδράσιν [εἰσελθεῖν], ἀθανάτων δὲ μόνον ὁδοὺς αὐτὰς ὑπάρχειν· ὁ γὰρ αἰγοκέρως ἀνάγων τὰς ψυχὰς λύει μὲν αὐτῶν τὴν ἐν ἀνδράσι ζωὴν, μόνην δὲ τὴν ἀθάνατον εἰσδέχεται καὶ θείαν· οὐ ταῦτα δ' οὖν μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡλίου πύλας ὑμνοῦσαν καὶ δῆμον ὀνείρων [Od. ω 12], τὰ μὲν δύο τροπικὰ ζῶδια πύλας ἡλίου προσαγορεύσασαν, δῆμον δὲ ὀνείρων, ὥς φησιν ἐκεῖνος, τὸν γαλαξίαν. καὶ γὰρ τὸν Πυθαγόραν δι' ἀπορρήτων Ἄιδην τὸν γαλαξίαν καὶ τόπον ψυχῶν ἀποκαλεῖν, ὥς ἐκεῖ συνωθουμένων· διὸ παρὰ τισιν ἔθνεσιν γάλα σπένδεσθαι τοῖς θεοῖς τοῖς τῶν ψυχῶν καθάρταις καὶ τῶν πεσουσῶν εἰς γένεσιν εἶναι γάλα τὴν πρώτην τροφήν. τὸν δὲ δὴ Πλάτωνα διὰ μὲν τῶν χασμάτων, ὥς εἴρηται, δηλοῦν τὰς δύο πύλας, διὰ δὲ τοῦ φωτός, ὃ δὴ σύνδεσμον εἶναι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, τὸν γαλαξίαν· εἰς ὃν ἀνιέναι δι' ἡμερῶν δυοκαίδεκα τὰς ψυχὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ τόπου τῶν δικαστῶν· ἦν δὲ ὁ τόπος τὸ κέντρον. ἐντεῦθεν τοίνυν ἀρχομένην τὴν δυωδεκάδα τελευτᾶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν· ἐν ᾗ τὸ κέντρον εἶναι, τὴν γῆν, τὸ ὕδωρ, τὸν ἀέρα, τὰς ἑπτὰ πλανωμένας, αὐτὸν τὸν ἀπλανῆ κύκλον. εἶναι δ' οὖν τὰ τροπικὰ ζῶδια, τὰ χάσματα τὰ διπλᾶ, τὰς δύο πύλας ὀνόματι διαφέροντα μόνον, καὶ πάλιν τὸν γαλαξίαν, τὸ φῶς τὸ τῇ ἱριδι προσφερές, τὸν δῆμον τῶν ὀνείρων ταυτόν. ὀνείροις γὰρ ἀπεικάζειν τὰς ἄνευ σωμάτων ψυχὰς καὶ ἄλλοθι τὸν ποιητήν.

For Numenius says that this is the centre of the entire universe and of the Earth, since it is between the heavens and the Earth. Here the judges are seated and send the souls along, some into heaven and some into the region below the Earth and the rivers that are there. And equating heaven and the fixed sphere, he (Numenius) says that there are two chasms in it, one Capricorn and one Cancer; the latter is the chasm of descent into generation, the former is that of ascent. And he equates the subterranean rivers with the spheres of the planets, for he draws up both the rivers and Tartarus itself into these spheres. And he brings in a great deal of other

marvellous talk such as the leaps of the souls from the solstices to the equinoxes and from these to the solstices; and the alterations which he, by a leap of his own, transfers to these matters, even stitching the Platonic sayings to the astrological lore and this to the teaching of the mysteries. As evidence for the two chasms he cites the poem of Homer which not only states that the paths at the North are the paths of descent for men, especially since the Sun [...] but also that those at the South are <more divine>, through which it is not possible for men to pass, but these paths themselves exist only for the immortals. For Capricorn, drawing the souls upwards, dissolves their life as men and accepts within only the immortal and divine. Not only this, then, but the poem also sings of the “gates of the Sun and people of the dreams”, calling the two solstitial signs the “the gates of the Sun”, and calling the Milky Way ‘Hades’ and the place of the soul, and that is why milk is the first food of those falling into generation. So then, as stated before, by the two chasms Plato indicates the two gates; and by the light, which is indeed the bond of the heavens, he signifies the Milky Way. Into this through a period of twelve days the souls ascend from the place of the judges. And this place was the centre. Starting from that point, therefore, the dodecade ends in heaven; in it are comprised the Earth, the water, the air, the seven planets, even the circle of the fixed stars. So the signs of the solstices, the double chasms, and the two gates differ only in name, and in turn, the Milky Way, the light similar to the rainbow, and the people of dreams are the same thing. For elsewhere the poet likens the souls without bodies to dreams [...]

In the above passage Proclus provides more accurate information on the doctrine than Porphyry in *De Antro*. One of the possible reasons is that Numenius and Proclus dealt only with the exegesis of the myth of Er, whereas Porphyry’s quotation on the Milky Way is, for example, only a part of his extended exegetical practice. The other possible reason is that Porphyry’s classification of Homer’s Hades in *On the Styx*, which is preserved in Stobaeus’ *Anthology* (1.49.53.7-31 = F 377 Smith), is not fully in agreement with the Pythagoreans, who see the Milky Way as the land of souls. Porphyry’s *On the Styx* argues that there are three places for the souls; one is ‘on

the Earth' (ἐπίγειος) and another is in 'the Elysian plain' beside Oceanus (τό'Ηλύσιον πεδίον), where souls are sent while alive, that is to say, where souls take their bodies along with them. The third place is in Hades, where souls are present after death in order to be liberated from their bodies. Porphyry's meticulous reading of the Homeric underworld in *On the Styx* conflicts with his casual quotation of Numenius in *De Antro* and suggests that he has some hesitation about the Pythagoreans' equation of the Milky Way to the land of souls.

As regards Proclus' quotation from Numenius, he criticises Numenius' use of astrology (γενεθλιαλογικοῖς) and mystic rites in his interpretation of the myth of Er. Proclus' usage of the phrase 'the leaps of the souls from the solstices to the equinoxes and from these to the solstices' is particularly revealing and Beck states that it is 'ritual action replicating in the *mithraeum* the descent and return of the souls.'⁴⁷⁴ Porphyry, like Proclus, uses the same word as a noun, γενεθλιᾱλόγος, in order to show Plotinus' unfavourable view of astrology (*VPlot.* 15.-21-26).

Throughout *De Antro*, Porphyry uses the original words for the gates, contrary to Proclus' usage of χάσμα which is found in *Republic* 614c2, d4. In *De Antro*, we can divide various usages of words for gates, entrances or doors into three, that is, θύρα, πύλη and στόμιον: in *De Antro* 22.16; 29.23 and 31.7, στόμιον occurs three times. I shall discuss this classification in the next section, particularly Porphyry's direct reference to *Republic* 615d5 and 615e2. In this passage, Plato uses στόμιον to signify the entrance to the underworld where wicked souls are punished more severely than their crimes. Among such criminals, for example, he mentions Ardiaeus the Great, a dictator in Pamphylia, who was presumed to have committed many atrocious crimes, such as killing his father and brother.

⁴⁷⁴ Beck 2006:130. The phrase is a scornful comment of Proclus, who uses another sarcastic expression (ὡς ἐκεῖνος λέγει προστραγωδῶν) in his commentary on the *Timaeus* (1.304.4 = F 21.6 DP) for Numenius' proposition of three gods, the First 'Father', the Second 'Maker', and the Third 'Product.'

In *De Antro* 1.11; 20.26; 24 p. 24.4; 31.3, Porphyry uses θύρα often when referring to the gates of the cave of the nymphs, just as Homer in *Od.* 13.109. In *De Antro* 23.31, θύρα is used in reference to the gate which the Romans called 'ianus', who in ancient Roman religion is the god symbolising beginnings and transitions, and the god of gates, entrances and doors. Porphyry also associates 'ianus' with the 'beginning of the month of January' (*De Antro* 23.32 ἰανουάριον μῆνα τὸν θυραῖον). In *De Antro* 27, in which θύρα is used five times, Porphyry mentions the tradition that the Pythagoreans and Egyptians did not even permit one to speak while passing through gates of temples or any other sacred gate. Referring to Homer and quoting from *Il.* 9.583, Porphyry states that the poet was already aware of the sacred gates. Apart from θύρα, in *De Antro* 3.5; 3.18; 10.6; 20.25, Porphyry also uses δίθυρος to signify the two entrances of the Homeric cave of the nymphs. Furthermore, in *De Antro* 29.16 and 31.2, he identifies natural formations with two entrances as the symbol of nature due to the formations containing innate oppositions within themselves.

In *De Antro* 3.4; 23.20; 24 p. 24.6; 26.1, Porphyry then uses πύλη in reference to the gates of heaven for humans, and for immortals and gods. In *De Antro* 27.21, Porphyry claims that Homer knows about the 'gates of heaven' (πύλαι οὐρανοῦ). The Homeric 'gates of the Sun' (Ἡλίου πύλαι) are found in *De Antro* 28 p. 26.26, with the quotation from Numenius (F 32 DP = F 44 L), and the same occurs in *De Antro* 29.24, in which Porphyry refers to the theologians assigning the gates of the Sun and the Moon to souls for ascending and descending. The gates of the Sun are also reminiscent of Diogenes Laertius' report of the fact that Pythagoras 'called the eyes the gates of the Sun' (D.L. 8.29.11, ἡλίου πύλας καλεῖ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς), and this suggests that Porphyry's use of πύλη should be traced back, not only to Homer, but also to Pythagoras.

4.1.2. *The Gates of the Sun and the Moon*

(29.23-26) δύο δὲ στόμια Πλάτων φησί, δι' οὗ μὲν ἀναβαινόντων εἰς οὐρανόν, δι' οὗ δὲ κατιόντων εἰς γῆν, καὶ τῶν θεολόγων πύλας ψυχῶν Ἥλιον τιθέντων καὶ Σελήνην, καὶ διὰ μὲν Ἥλιου ἀνιέναι, διὰ δὲ Σελήνης κατιέναι.

(29.23-26) Plato says that there are two entrances, one through which the souls go up to heaven, the other through which they come down to Earth, while the theologians also make the Sun and the Moon the gates of souls, ascent through the Sun and descent through the Moon.

On the subject of the gates of the Sun and the Moon as conduit for souls, I begin by offering a possible brief astrological interpretation. There are different classifications of the zodiacal signs such as feminine or masculine, nocturnal or diurnal, animal or human, fertile or sterile and so on.⁴⁷⁵ The diurnal and nocturnal rotations of the zodiacal signs or the seven planets corresponding to them are, I believe, closely related to the routes of the ascent and descent of the soul, and so the theologians assign the Sun and the Moon to the gates of souls. Accordingly, we can associate the planetary order given by Porphyry in *De Antro* 22.10-14 with the gates of the Sun and the Moon. The first allocation, which starts with the Sun in the house of Leo and ends with Saturn in the house of Capricorn, represents diurnal rotation, whereas the second allocation, which starts with Saturn in the house of Aquarius and ends with the Moon in the house of Cancer, represents the nocturnal rotation. The association of the gates of the Sun and the Moon with the diurnal and nocturnal rotations of the seven planets (or the zodiacal signs) is apparently compatible with the idea that the Moon, as the gate of genesis, is the closest to the Earth, as in the case of the summer solstice in Cancer above, and that, although not

⁴⁷⁵ Barton 2003: 102, 108.

accurate, as in the winter solstice in Capricorn, the Sun, as the gate of apogenesis, is close enough to Saturn.

Here, I believe that Porphyry's main concern about the association of the gates of the Sun and the Moon with the two celestial openings of Plato in *Republic* 10 is ethical, rather than suggesting just an astrological interpretation. The ascending path towards the Sun can be compared to the escape of the liberated prisoner from the Platonic cave, representing a choice towards a philosophical life instead of slavery to the material world. Thus, the path through the Sun symbolises the bright side of the soul under the guidance of its rational part, as is the case with the diurnal rotation of the seven planets; similarly, the path through the Moon can be considered to be a symbol of the dark side of the soul under the guidance of its irrational part, as is the case with the nocturnal rotation of the seven planets.

It would be quite speculative and difficult to try to suggest why the theologians whom Porphyry addresses in *De Antro* 29.24 see the Sun and the Moon as the gates for souls. The plural usage of the word θεολόγος can evidently be a reference to a particular group of people or members of different philosophical or religious/mystical groups. One of the theologians whom Porphyry has in his mind may be Parmenides, due to Numenius' direct reference to him, and the two gates in the prologue of Parmenides' poem in *De Antro* 23.23-24 (= 28 B 1, 11 DK).⁴⁷⁶ Because of the fragmentary evidence, it is unclear whether the 'gates of the journeys of Night and Day' (πύλαι Νυκτός τε καὶ Ἡματός κεύθων) are associated with the gates of the Sun and the Moon, but they signify light and darkness in the prologue of the poem. We may, at most, propose that both Numenius and Porphyry believe that there is a link between the Parmenidean gates and the two celestial openings in Plato's myth of Er. Bearing in mind that the Parmenidean journey is one from a lie to the truth as revealed to him, albeit literally described as a journey from the underworld to heaven, we can compare Er with the philosopher in the sense that

⁴⁷⁶ See Coxon 2009: 275-6.

they are both messengers enlightening people as to what types of lives they should lead in order to be rewarded in this life and the afterlife.

Porphyry identifies the Moon as the counter-Earth, the 'heavenly/aethereal Earth' (αἰθέρια γῆ) in his commentary on the story of Atlantis in the *Timaeus* (F 16 Sodano = Procl. *In Tim.* 147.6-24).⁴⁷⁷ According to Burkert, Porphyry's identification is closely related to the idea of 'astral immortality' and to the Moon-Hades in the late tradition. Porphyry traces back the concept of the Moon as the aethereal Earth to the Egyptians, as related to the process of the descent of the soul into genesis:⁴⁷⁸

Ὁ δέ γε φιλόσοφος Πορφύριος ... ἐξηγούμενος τὸν μὲν Ἥφαιστον <τὸν> τεχνικὸν ὑποτίθεται νοῦν, γῆν δὲ τὴν σεληνιακὴν σφαῖραν· ταύτην γὰρ αἰθερίαν γῆν καλεῖσθαι παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις. τὰς οὖν ψυχὰς τὰς ἀπὸ μὲν θεοῦ ὑποστάσας, τοῦ δὲ τεχνικοῦ νοῦ μετεχούσας εἰς [[τε]] τὸ τῆς σελήνης σῶμα σπεῖρεσθαί φησιν, ὡς ἐκεῖ πολιτευομένας τὰς τεχνικὰς τῶν ψυχῶν, σώματα δ' ἐχούσας ἀπορροίας ὄντα τῶν αἰθερίων σωμάτων.

The philosopher Porphyry interprets Hephaistos as a symbol of the skilful mind, Earth as a symbol of the lunar sphere. For he says that this is called aethereal Earth according to the Egyptians; the souls that are from God, but have a share of the skilful mind, are sown into the body of the Moon, as in that place those souls that are skilful become dwellers, possessing bodies that are effluences from aethereal bodies.

We can find Porphyry's usage of μῦχος in *Sententia* 29.35, in reference to the meaning of 'depth of the Earth' (μῦχος τῆς γῆς) when he speaks of the pneumatic body as naturally inclined to descending into the depths of the Earth even after it has left the earthly body. Another usage of the word is found in his commentary on the *Timaeus* (F 79.30 Sodano),⁴⁷⁹ which is preserved in Proclus' *Commentary on Timaeus* 64.8-65 (μυχῶν τῆς γῆς), in relation to the reasons for the irregular speeds

⁴⁷⁷ Sodano 1964: 10.

⁴⁷⁸ Burkert 1972: 233 n. 78.

⁴⁷⁹ Sodano 1964: 67-8.

of the seven planets. Here, Porphyry uses μῦχος in the same way as in *Sententia* 29.35, except that it contains the statement that the depth of the Earth is the last place of the process of generation. The passage in his commentary on the *Timaeus* (F 79 Sodano = Theodorus testimonium 17 Deuse) also shows the complexities of the noetic triad and provides evidence for its origins in Neoplatonic metaphysics:⁴⁸⁰

Οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐξηγηταὶ τὴν αἰτίαν ζητήσαντες ἐπὶ τὰς ζωὰς αὐτῶν ἀνήγαγον τὴν τῆς ἰσότητος καὶ ἀνισότητος τῶν δρόμων ἀρχήν, ὥσπερ δὴ φασὶ Πορφύριός τε καὶ Θεόδωρος· ἔστι γὰρ κατ' αὐτοὺς τὸ ἀνισοταχὲς ἢ ἰσοταχὲς παρὰ τὸ αὐτόθεν ἢ διὰ πλειόνων φέρεσθαι τοὺς νόας ἐπὶ τὴν οὐσίαν, καὶ παρὰ τὸ εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ καταστρέφειν, εἰ καὶ δι' ἄλλων μέσων, ἢ καὶ εἰς ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο· ἥλιος μὲν γὰρ οὐσία ὦν ἐπὶ νοῦν ὁδεύει διὰ ζωῆς, Ἀφροδίτη δὲ νοῦς μὲν, ἀλλὰ διὰ ζωῆς ἐπὶ νοῦν, Ἑρμῆς δὲ ζωὴ μὲν, διὰ δὲ <οὐσίας> εἰς νοῦν· εἰ καὶ ὁ νοῦς οὗτος, ἐφ' ὃν ἡ καταστροφή τοῖς τρισίν, ὅπου μὲν ἐστὶν οὐσιώδης, ὅπου δὲ νοερός, ὅπου δὲ ζωτικός· διὸ καὶ ἀνισοταχῶς κινούμενοι καὶ ἀλλήλων ἀπολείπεσθαι καὶ προηγῆσθαι δοκοῦντες εἰς ταύτῃ καταλήγουσι. Κρόνος δὲ καὶ Ζεὺς καὶ Ἄρης δύναιτο μὲν ἂν καὶ διαφόρων εἶναι τμημάτων καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἰσοταχεῖς· εἰ δὲ καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἶεν, ἀλλὰ τῷ μὴ πρὸς <τὸ> αὐτὸ καταστρέφειν ἢ μὴ διὰ τῶν ἴσων μεσοτήτων οὐκ ἰσοταχεῖς· οἷον εἰ Κρόνος μὲν αὐτόθεν οὐσία ὦν ἐπὶ τὴν οὐσίαν ἴοι, Ζεὺς δὲ διὰ νοῦ μόνον, Ἄρης δὲ διὰ νοῦ καὶ ζωῆς, ἔσται ὁ μὲν ἀμέσως ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ, ὁ δὲ διὰ μιᾶς μεσότητος, ὁ δὲ διὰ δυεῖν, καὶ οὕτως οὐκ ἰσοταχεῖς· ἔστι γὰρ τῶν πλανωμένων ἡ μὲν πρώτη τριάς ἐπὶ οὐσίαν, ἡ δὲ δευτέρα ἐπὶ νοῦν ἀναγομένη, σελήνη δὲ ἐπὶ ζωὴν, πᾶσαν τὴν γένεσιν ἐν ἑαυτῇ περιέχουσα καὶ προϊούσα μέχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων μυχῶν τῆς γῆς. ταῦτα μὲν οὖν φασὶ Πορφύριός τε καὶ Θεόδωρος, οἰκείας ὑποθέσεις περαίνοντες, πανταχοῦ μὲν πάντα λέγοντες, καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ τὸν νοῦν καὶ τὴν ζωὴν, καὶ ἕκαστον τῶν θεῶν μετέχειν τιθέμενοι τῶν τριῶν πατέρων, ἐπικρατεῖν δὲ ἄλλο ἐν ἄλλοις ἰδίωμα, καὶ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἄλλων εἶναι ἄλλην καὶ δι' ἄλλων μέσων τὴν ἀναγωγὴν.

The commentators from the school of Plato, on the other hand, in their investigation of the cause of this, have related the origin of the equality and inequality of the

⁴⁸⁰ Trans. Dillon 2004: 212-13; see Baltzly 2013: 129-30 n. 245 for a discussion of the noetic triad in relation to the irregular speeds of the seven planets.

circuits to the vital principles of the planets concerned, as indeed Porphyry and Theodorus declare. According to them, the equality or inequality of speed is a function of the direct or mediated relation of the intellects [of these planets] to the essence and whether they tend towards the same goal, even if through different intermediaries, or towards different ones in each case. Thus, the Sun, qua Essence, proceeds towards Intellect via Life; Venus is Intellect, certainly, but proceeds towards Intellect via Life; Mercury is Life, but proceeds via Essence to Intellect; and even if Intellect is the goal of the reversion of all three, yet, in the one case, it is of the essential order; in another, of the intellectual; and in another, of the vital. And that is why these planets, though moving at different speeds and giving the appearance of alternately passing each other and leaving each other behind, yet all finish at the same point. As for Saturn and Jupiter and Mars, it is possible that they belong to different divisions [of Intellect], and, for that reason, that they are not of the same speed. If, however, they belong to the same, they will be of unequal speed, either because they do not return to the same goal or because they do not do that through an equal number of intermediaries. For example, if Saturn, being Essence, proceeds to Essence without any intermediary, if Jupiter proceeds to it via Intellect alone, and if Mars does so via Intellect and Life, one will rest in Essence immediately, the second via one intermediary, and the third via two, and so they will not be equal in speed. In fact, among the planets, the first triad is directed towards Essence, the second towards Intellect, and the Moon towards Life, because it [Life] comprehends within itself the whole of generation and proceeds as far as the ultimate recesses of the Earth. This, then, is the view of Porphyry and Theodorus, pursuing their own distinctive hypotheses, declaring that all —Being (or Essence) and Life and Intellect— are everywhere. They postulate that each of the gods participates in all three fathers, but that a different property predominates in each; that the activity of each is different in each one of them; and that their ascent to their goal is through different intermediaries.

This fragment provides valuable insights into how Porphyry considers the Sun and the Moon in the Neoplatonic metaphysical and cosmological scheme. We can make inferences from the fragment about Porphyry's identification of the Sun and the

Moon with the gates for the soul through the theologians, as the soul ascends through the former and descends through the latter. The passage is part of the argument of the matter originating from the exegesis of *Timaeus* 38d, in which Timaeus states that the speeds of the circles of Venus and Mercury are, on average, the same as the speed of the Sun, whereas the remaining planets all have different speeds. It should be noted that the sequence of the planets given as Sun, Mercury and Venus in *Timaeus* 38c7-d is compatible with that given in *De Antro* 22.10-14.⁴⁸¹

In the fragment, according to Proclus' report, Porphyry explains the reasons for the irregular speeds of the seven planets through their direct or indirect relations with the noetic triad, that is Essence or Being, Life or Potency and Intellect or Mind and for the opposition of Mercury and Venus to the Sun. The idea is based upon the projection of the noetic triad on the planetary divinities at the celestial level, so that the planets return towards one of the noetic principles according to their configuration. In conformity with his interest in the relationship of soul and body, and his ethical concern, Porphyry associates the equal and unequal speeds of the planets and the opposition of Mercury and Venus to the Sun with the distinction of the souls of the planets, and Dillon claims that his association of the noetic triad with the planets is an application of the noetic triad in the *Chaldaean Oracles*.⁴⁸² Although the planets participate in each noetic principle, the predominant principle plays a significant role according to how many intermediaries the planets have to pass through in order to reach their targeted principle. As regards those having different speeds, Saturn, as Being, is not in need of any intermediary to proceed through Being. Jupiter, as Intellect, is in need of one intermediary so that it proceeds to Being through Intellect, and, lastly, Mars, as Life, is in need of two intermediaries so that it proceeds to Being through Intellect and Life. On the other hand, the Sun, Mercury

⁴⁸¹ See *Rep.* 616d-e for the order of the planets as Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Sun and Moon. The order of the planets given in *De Antro* is based on Hellenistic and later astronomy, Beck 2000b: 554-5, 2004: 115-16.

⁴⁸² Dillon 2009: 356. See Chapter 2.1.3.2 for a discussion of the identification of Hecate, Life, in the noetic triad of the *Oracles* with Mithras as the master of genesis.

and Venus, which on average have the same speed, are in need of only one intermediary to proceed to Intellect, even though their ways to Intellect are different.

I propose a connection between Porphyry's division of the noetic triad at the celestial level and the assignment of the Sun and the Moon to the gates for the soul in *De Antro* 29.24-26. The association of the planets with the principle of the noetic triad, starting from the top to the bottom, would be as follows: the first triad of the planets, that is Saturn, Jupiter and Mars, is led towards Being; the second triad, that is Venus, Mars and the Sun, towards Intellect; and the Moon towards Life which stretches out as far as the depths of the Earth. The Moon as the descending gate for the soul in *De Antro* is compatible with the idea presented above in the passage which states that the predominant principle and the goal of the Moon are Life, which contains all the generative activities in itself. The positioning of the Sun in the list after the Moon and the Sun's participation in the group of the planets tending towards Intellect are also in accord with its representation as the ascending gate for the soul in *De Antro*. The Sun seems to be the first divinity, marking the boundary between the region subjected to generation and the path leading the soul up to the intelligible realm.

We note that not only Porphyry but also Plutarch, too, connects Intellect with the Sun (*De Genio* 591b), though without mentioning the gates.⁴⁸³ Moreover, in *De Facie* 945b-c, Plutarch states that during the process of generation the Earth provides body, the Moon the soul and the Sun Intellect.⁴⁸⁴ In the reverse process, after the soul has left the body together with Intellect, Intellect is then detached from the soul at the level of the Sun. The connection of the Sun with Intellect is clearly reminiscent of Plato's metaphor of the Sun in the *Republic* (507b-509c), in which he likens the Sun to the child of goodness so that with its light the Sun

⁴⁸³ See Dillon 2014: 67-8 for a discussion of the connections of Intellect and the soul with the Sun and the Moon.

⁴⁸⁴ Simonini 2010: 226.

uncovers the true nature of the objects as the source of truth and knowledge in the material world. More importantly, the idea originates in the analogy of the cave in *Republic* 7, in which the liberated prisoner escapes from a deceptive world to the world of realities through the Sun, and is enabled to see things clearly.

4.2. Philosophy: the Great Liberator of the Soul

In this section, I will turn to an analysis of the fate of the soul after death in *De Antro* 29.17 according to Porphyry's classification of the journey of the soul through the intelligible realm. In Porphyry's view, the pneumatic vehicle is an indispensable part of the discussion of the ascent of the soul and its descent, in the context of purification of the soul which is necessary for its separation from the body. His *On the Return of the Soul*, which is preserved in Augustine's *City of God*, states that theurgy affects to some extent the purification of the pneumatic vehicle, but the rational part of the soul is in need of philosophy.⁴⁸⁵ Therefore, my aim is to show that leading a philosophical life is a *sine qua non* for completing the successful journey of the soul through the intelligible realm.

Afterwards, I shall focus on two significant phrases in the text: 'stripped himself of his rags' in *De Antro* 35 p. 34.3 and 'Odysseus surrounded by souls ignorant of maritime and material activities' in *De Antro* 35 p. 34.5-6. I will propose that both are closely related to the actions that the soul should take for a successful journey towards the intelligible realm, or for the way it should live. My discussion will embrace the relevant parts of *De Antro* and other texts by Porphyry, particularly *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, as these texts are closely associated with each other in this particular subject.

If Plato's main concern in the myth of Er is to emphasise how one should choose one's way of life in this life and in the afterlife, it will also raise the question regarding the limit of a person's free will in Porphyry's thought. I will analyse the

⁴⁸⁵ Finamore 1985: 4.

question of free will in the relevant passages of Porphyry's fragmentary treatise, *On What Is In Our Power*, which is preserved in Stobaeus' *Anthology* (2.8.39-42). This analysis will contribute to our understanding of the extent to which Porphyry's division of the form of life can be compatible with the choices of ignorant souls; for example, in the myth of Er the first soul chooses a tyrannical life despite having previously led a good life, Odysseus, as the last soul, intentionally chooses to live apart from society.

The last section examines Porphyry's identification of the goddess Athena with practical wisdom in *De Antro* 32.24, along with his different identification of the goddess with the Moon in his commentary on the story of Atlantis in the *Timaeus* (F 22 Sodano)⁴⁸⁶ and *On Images* (F 359.60-62 Smith). I intend to suggest a possible reason for Porphyry's identification of the goddess with the Moon and will compare it to the relationship between Athena and Odysseus. I propose that Porphyry's ultimate goal in *De Antro* is to illustrate that leading a philosophical life, attainable only through wisdom, is the only route to the salvation of the soul. This goal is reflected in his identification of Athena with *phronesis*. In order to support this claim, I will suggest that Porphyry's identification of Athena with *phronesis* should be read from the perspective of the cathartic virtues in *Sententia* 32. In this text, Porphyry formulates the Neoplatonic doctrine of virtues, namely the political, the cathartic, the theoretical, and the paradigmatic virtues. Those virtues play a significant role in the Neoplatonic tradition, and they show that human excellence can be achieved in stages. These stages depend on distinct moral and philosophical achievements. In *the City of God*, Augustine eulogises Porphyry for maintaining that the human soul would be re-embodied only in human bodies, contrary to Plato and Plotinus.⁴⁸⁷ Augustine's statement can be considered a testimony that Porphyry sees one's evolution in this life as playing a vital role in the struggle towards attaining the intelligible realm. The relevant passages of *Sententia* 32 will help us to see the level

⁴⁸⁶ Sodano 1964: 13-4.

⁴⁸⁷ *Civ. Dei* 10.30.1-10 = F 300 Smith.

of virtue Odysseus achieves, and the role of Athena or *phronesis* in the process of his ascent through the intelligible realm.

4.2.1. The Journey through the Intelligible Realm

According to Augustine's report in *De Civitate Dei* (10.32.5-16 = F 302 Smith = F 12 Bidez), Porphyry is said to have never acquainted himself with the universal path for the salvation of the soul, either through the truest philosophy, or through the practices and discipline of the Indians, or through the inductive reasoning of the Chaldaeans. However, Clark states that the phrase 'beyond any doubt' (*procul dubio*, F 302.20) indicates that Porphyry conversely accepts that there is not a single way for the liberation of the soul.⁴⁸⁸ Even so, I propose that Porphyry's ultimate aim is to show that only philosophy liberates the rational part of the soul, as stated in *De Antro* 29.17, in which he explicitly affirms the ascent of the soul through the intelligible, with reference to Plato and the theologians. This evidence of Porphyry's views, to a certain extent, contradicts and therefore casts doubt on some of Augustine's testimony, particularly the part asserting that the 'universal way of the salvation of the soul' (*uniuersalis uia animae liberandae*) has not been received 'from any very true philosophy' (*a philosophia uerissima aliqua*):

(29.16-19) Ἀρξαμένης γὰρ τῆς φύσεως ἀπὸ ἐτερότητος πανταχοῦ τὸ δίδυρον αὐτῆς πεποίηται σύμβολον· ἡ γὰρ διὰ νοητοῦ ἢ πορεία ἢ δι' αἰσθητοῦ· καὶ τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ ἢ διὰ τῆς ἀπλανοῦς ἢ διὰ τῆς τῶν πεπλανημένων, καὶ πάλιν ἢ διὰ τῆς ἀθανάτου ἢ διὰ τῆς θνητῆς πορείας.

(29.16-19) Since nature originated from the principle of dissimilarity, that which has two entrances was made a symbol of her everywhere. For the journey is either through the intelligible or through the sensible; if it is through the sensible, it is

⁴⁸⁸ Clark 2007: 136-40; Addey 2014a: 47-50; see also Smith 1974: 136-9, suggests that Porphyry might have three interpretations in mind: a way of salvation for all humans, or for all nations or ethnic groups, or a way of total liberation for the soul without discriminating the parts of the soul.

either through the fixed stars or through the seven planets, and again it is either through the immortal or through the mortal journey.

I will discuss how Porphyry considers the concept of natural and spiritual death and the fate of the soul after death, as both are closely related to the idea that there is a path which leads us to live under the guidance of the rational part of the soul during this life and in the afterlife. In the above passage (*De Antro* 29.17), Porphyry's classification of the journey of ascent and descent of the soul, through the intelligible realm and through the sensible realm, implies the existence of the different types of separation of the soul from the body and different types of union. Porphyry focuses on the journey through the sensible, which is either through the fixed stars or through the seven planets, despite the fact that he does not elaborate on the ascending route of the soul through the intelligible. Even so, in the subsequent passages of *De Antro* (34-35), he concludes that it becomes impossible for the soul to free itself from earthly life unless it entirely rids itself of passions identified with moistness. What Porphyry means by this remark is that only the dominance of reason over sense-perception can lead the soul to dwell in the realm of Intellect, the real habitat or homeland of the soul. Porphyry's brief statement may be deemed the favoured aspect of separation of the soul from the body because of its ascent to the intelligible realm. In his *Sententiae* 8 and 9, we learn how separation between the soul and the body occurs so that the soul binds itself to and unbinds itself from the body, while it is nature that binds the body to the soul and unbinds it from the soul:⁴⁸⁹

(8) Ὁ ἔδησεν ἡ φύσις, τοῦτο φύσις λύει, καὶ ὁ ἔδησεν ἡ ψυχὴ, τοῦτο αὐτὴ λύει, ἔδησε δὲ φύσις μὲν σῶμα ἐν ψυχῇ, ψυχὴ δὲ ἑαυτὴν ἐν σώματι. φύσις μὲν ἄρα λύει σῶμα ἐκ ψυχῆς, ψυχὴ δὲ ἑαυτὴν λύει ἀπὸ σώματος.

⁴⁸⁹ Smith 1974: 21-3.

Nature unbinds what it has bound, and the soul also unbinds what it has bound. Nature has bound body to soul, but soul has bound herself to body. Nature unbinds body from soul, but soul unbinds herself from body.

(9) Ὁ θάνατος διπλοῦς, ὁ μὲν οὖν συνεγνωσμένος λυομένου τοῦ σώματος ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς, ὁ δὲ τῶν φιλοσόφων λυομένης τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος, καὶ οὐ πάντως ὁ ἕτερος τῷ ἐτέρῳ ἔπεται.

Death is twofold, in fact, the one generally understood is when the body unbinds itself from the soul; but the other, acknowledged by the philosophers, is when the soul unbinds herself from the body. The latter by no means follows upon the former.

Sententia 9 is important to us, for Porphyry draws a distinction between the conventional and the philosophical understanding of death. The last sentence of *Sententia* 9 implies that the soul's 'self-detachment' from the body does not lead to the detachment of the body from the soul, and it would be a hint at the ascent of the soul towards the intelligible realm while still living its corporeal life, which Smith calls 'spiritual death,'⁴⁹⁰ as it is also implied in *De Antro* 29.17. In fact, Porphyry must have been familiar with spiritual death because of Plotinus' spiritual and autobiographical experiences discussed in the treatise *On the Descent of Soul into Body* (*Enn.* 4.8.1.1-11), in which he speaks several times of his union with Intellect. Plotinus defines his temporary 'dwelling in the divine' (ἡ ἐν τῷ θείῳ στάσις) as 'raised into myself from the body, coming to be external to all other things and inside of myself,' ἐγειρόμενος εἰς ἑμαυτὸν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος καὶ γινόμενος τῶν μὲν ἄλλων ἔξω, ἑμαυτοῦ δὲ εἴσω (*Enn.* 4.8.1.1-2).

On the other hand, the journey of the soul through the sensible, either through the fixed stars or the seven planets, may also be deemed to be the negative aspect of the spiritual death of the soul because of the dominance of the irrational

⁴⁹⁰ For the Neoplatonic treatment of the natural and spiritual death of the soul see Smith 1974: 22 n. 6.

part of the soul over the rational. The ascent of the soul through the intelligible is definitely the route of those who lead philosophical lives. The soul's journey through the sensible is the route of ordinary men doomed to multiple rebirths because of the limited capability of sacrifices offered to gods, and of the soul's provisional avoidance of corporeal things. Concerning the relation to the long journey of Odysseus, Porphyry explicitly remarks that all the sufferings of the hero will end, once he has entirely liberated himself from pleasures, passions, angers and fears; in other words, from all the features manifested in the irrational part of the soul. Porphyry's narrative in *De Antro* 35 p. 34.1-5 guarantees a successful journey for Odysseus, that is, for the soul to return to its homeland, the intelligible realm. However, the success of the journey is not guaranteed, since Odysseus' stripping off his rags is not a sufficient effort to rid himself of toils caused by the material world:

(35 p. 34.1-5) οὐς χρή πρότερον ἀπομειλίξασθαι θυσίαις τε καὶ πτωχοῦ πόνοις καὶ καρτερίαις, ποτὲ μὲν διαμαχόμενον τοῖς πάθεσι, ποτὲ δὲ γοητεύοντα καὶ ἀπατῶντα καὶ παντοίως πρὸς αὐτὰ μεταβαλλόμενον, ἵνα γυμνωθεὶς τῶν ῥακέων καθέλῃ πάντα καὶ οὐδ' οὕτως ἀπαλλαγῇ τῶν πόνων, ἀλλ' ὅταν παντελῶς ἑξαλος γένηται καὶ ἐν ψυχαῖς ἀπείροις θαλασσίων καὶ ἐνύλων ἔργων, ὥς πτύον εἶναι ἡγεῖσθαι τὴν κώπην διὰ τὴν τῶν ἐναλίων ὀργάνων καὶ ἔργων παντελεῖ ἀπειρίαν.

(35 p. 34.1-5) These gods (the gods of the sea and of matter) must first be appeased with sacrifices, and with the labours and perseverance of the beggar (Odysseus), contending with the passions at one time, and beguiling and cheating them at another and undergoing a change in all kinds of ways from them, in order that, stripped of his rags, he may overpower them all. And even so he will not be released from toils: this will not happen until he has utterly freed himself from the sea and has become among souls inexperienced in the deeds of the sea and matter, as the oar is deemed to be a winnowing-shovel because of absolute ignorance of nautical instruments and deeds.

In this passage, the verb γυμνῶω, 'strip naked,' (*De Antro* 35 p. 34.3) is an echo of Plato's *Gorgias* 524d5, whereby Plato implies the soul's 'dissociation from the body'

(γυμνωθῆ τοῦ σώματος, *Gorg.* 524d5). He claims that the soul reflects all its experiences and features because of its manner towards its various pursuits in this life. As a result of this, Plato uses his own myth of the Judgement of Souls (*Gorg.* 523a-527a) in order to explain why the soul is judged naked by the naked judges so that any misleading decision by appearances is prevented in the reign of Zeus.

We can also find similarities between *De Abstinencia* 1.30 and 1.31, and *De Antro* 33 and 35.1-5 in which Porphyry seems to transfer exegetical applications of his thoughts from *De Abstinencia* to *De Antro* or vice versa. For example, in *De Antro* 33 p. 32.4-7, he draws the analogy between victorious athletes and the soul released from many toils, and in *De Abstinencia* 1.31.13-17, he urges his audiences to go to the stadium and compete in the Olympiad of the soul after it is stripped naked. In reference to victorious athletes in *De Antro*, Porphyry, I think, hints at the olive wreath, which was the prize of victorious athletes in the ancient Olympic Games. A victor who received the olive wreath can be considered as a symbol of the soul who is under the guidance of the rational part of the soul because the olive tree is the plant of the goddess Athena, and Porphyry associates her with *phronesis* in *De Antro* 23-24.⁴⁹¹ The image of the 'naked' soul (γυμνήτης) is frequently used; for instance, F 116 DP in the *Chaldaean Oracles* (= Procl. *In Crat.* 88.4-6), nakedness signifies the freedom of the soul from its material substances.⁴⁹² In *Enneads* 1.6.7.1-12, Plotinus also speaks of sacred rites where initiates strip off their clothes in order to be purified, and enter 'naked' (γυμνοῖς) into initiation before proceeding to go up, casting off all that is alien to the God.

Placing the above in the context of *De Abstinencia*, I will now offer my reading of how and why 'Odysseus stripped himself of his rags' should be interpreted. My focus will be on the link between Odysseus' stripping of his rags and the ascent of the soul towards the intelligible realm, and on how the soul's liberation (or purification) from the material realm affects its process of ascent. In *De Abstinencia*

⁴⁹¹ See Chapter 4.2.2 for a discussion of Porphyry's identification of Athena as *phronesis*.

⁴⁹² Majercik 2013: 92-3, 186.

1.31.17-1.32.1 (ἀποδύειν), Porphyry employs the metaphor of ‘stripping of one’s garments’ in the same way as *De Antro* 35 p. 34.3 (γυμνοῦσθαι),⁴⁹³ and he considers it the initial stage of the soul’s passive involvement in earthly life. Of course, there cannot be an entire separation from corporeal things, particularly while living in the material world, and the journey of the soul concentrates on rising to the intellectual life where our actions and thoughts ought not to be in conflict with each other:⁴⁹⁴

ἀρχὴ δὲ τὸ ἀποδύσασθαι [καὶ] οὐκ ἂνευ τὸ ἀγωνίζεσθαι γένοιτο. ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰ μὲν ἦν ἔξωθεν τῶν ἐνδυμάτων, τὰ δὲ ἔσωθεν, καὶ ἀπόδυσις ἢ μὲν διὰ τῶν φανερῶν, ἢ δὲ διὰ τῶν ἀφανεστέρων. τὸ μὲν γὰρ τῶν φανερῶν, ἢ δὲ διὰ τῶν ἀφανεστέρων. τὸ μὲν γὰρ μὴ φαγεῖν φέρε ἢ μὴ λαβεῖν διδόμενα χρήματα τῶν φανερῶν ἦν καὶ ἐκκειμένων, τὸ δὲ μὴδὲ ἐπιθυμεῖν τῶν ἀφανεστέρων. ὥστε μετὰ τῶν ἔργων ἀποστατέον καὶ τῆς πρὸς αὐτὰ προσπαθείας καὶ τοῦ πάθους. Τί γὰρ καὶ ὄφελος τῶν ἔργων ἀφιστάμενον ταῖς αἰτίαις, ἀφ’ ὧν καὶ τὰ ἔργα, προσηλῶσθαι;

Stripping off is the starting point, without which the contest will not happen. And since some of our clothes are outside, some inside, the stripping-off of the first will involve things that are plain to see, of the second things that are less apparent. For instance, not eating, or not taking bribes, is obvious and public, but not even wanting to is less apparent. So we should become detached from doing things, and then from the attraction to do them and from passion. For what is the use of detaching oneself from actions, but being riveted to the causes of the actions?

Porphyry also remarks in *Sententia* 7 that being in the state of impassivity is the way of liberation from corporeal things provided by the material world as detachment from the body is within the capacity of the soul. There is no doubt that impassivity towards all kinds of pleasures, emotions, power and wealth in the soul’s journey towards truth is a *sine qua non* for the philosophical way of life; that is the kind of mental condition that should provide a permanent liberation of the soul:

⁴⁹³ *Od.* 21.1.

⁴⁹⁴ Trans. Clark 2000: 43.

Ψυχὴ καταδεῖται πρὸς σῶμα τῇ ἐπιστροφῇ τῇ πρὸς τὰ πάθη τὰ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ λύεται δὲ πάλιν διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας.

Soul binds herself to body by turning towards the passions arising from the body, and she, in turn, unbinds herself from these through liberation from emotions.

In Porphyry’s view, as mentioned earlier, the pneumatic vehicle, *ochema*, is closely connected with the process of the ascent of the soul, but also with the process of its descent. The bonds of the soul with the material world will not only be strengthened if the soul becomes attracted to corporeal things, but the pneumatic body will be defiled by the thick, heavy, dark and moist *pneuma* of the soul.⁴⁹⁵ We may, therefore, consider the rags or garments in *De Antro* 35 p. 34.3 as a symbol of substances which are acquired from each sphere by the soul during its descent into the material world. Those substances which generate the pneumatic part of the soul, the aethereal, solar and lunar bodies respectively dissolve into their original states in the process of disembodiment in accordance with Porphyry’s commentary on the *Timaeus* (F 80 Sodano),⁴⁹⁶ which is preserved in Proclus’ *Commentary on Timaeus* 41d1-2 (*In Tim.* 3.234.18-26). Porphyry and his followers are part of Proclus’ threefold doxographical discussion about which part of the soul is immortal and which part is mortal.⁴⁹⁷

οἱ δὲ τούτων μετριώτεροι, ὥσπερ οἱ περὶ Πορφύριον, καὶ πράότεροι παραιτοῦνται μὲν τὴν καλουμένην φθορὰν κατασκεδαννύναι τοῦ τε ὀρήματος καὶ τῆς ἀλόγου ψυχῆς, ἀναστοιχειοῦσθαι δὲ αὐτὰ φασὶ καὶ ἀναλύεσθαι τινα τρόπον εἰς τὰς σφαῖρας, ἀφ’ ὧν τὴν σύνθεσιν ἔλαχε, φυράματα δὲ εἶναι ταῦτα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανίων σφαιρῶν καὶ κατιοῦσαν αὐτὰ συλλέγειν τὴν ψυχὴν, ὥστε καὶ εἶναι ταῦτα καὶ μὴ εἶναι, αὐτὰ δὲ ἕκαστα μηκέτ’ εἶναι μηδὲ διαμένειν τὴν ιδιότητα αὐτῶν.

Those who are more moderate and more gentle, like Porphyry, refuse to spread the so-called destruction of the *okhêma* and the irrational soul, but they say they are

⁴⁹⁵ See Chapter 3.3.

⁴⁹⁶ Sodano 1964: 68-9.

⁴⁹⁷ Trans. Chase: 2004b: 20; for a detailed discussion of Proclus’ doxography see Dillon 2009: 371-7.

resolved into their elements and dissolved, in some way, into the same spheres from which they obtained their composition; they say they are mixtures (*phuramata*) from the celestial spheres, and that when it descends, the soul collects them, so that they exist and do not exist, but they no longer exist as such, nor does their distinguishing characteristic persevere.

Additional evidence is also found in *De Anima* 37 of Iamblichus (= Stob. *Anth.* 1.49.43.33-42), showing that, as Finamore states, Proclus draws on Iamblichus' commentary, since the ideas are consistent in both passages:⁴⁹⁸

τοὺς δὲ περὶ Πλωτῖνον τῆς στάσεως προισταμένους ἐκείνης τῆς χωριζούσης αὐτὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ λόγου, ἢ καὶ ἀφείσεως εἰς τὴν γένεσιν, ἢ καὶ ἀφαιρούσης ἀπὸ τῆς διανοίας, ἀφ' ἧς πάλιν διττῆς δόξης γίνεταί διακρίσις. Ὅτι γὰρ λύεται ἐκάστη δύναμις ἄλογος εἰς τὴν ὅλην ζωὴν τοῦ παντός ἀφ' ἧς ἀπεμερίσθη, ἢ καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα μένει ἀμετάβλητος, ὥσπερ ἡγεῖται Πορφύριος· ἢ καὶ χωρισθεῖσα ἀπὸ τῆς διανοίας ἡ ὅλη ἄλογος ζωὴ μένει καὶ αὐτὴ διασωζομένη ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ὥσπερ οἱ παλαιότατοι τῶν ἱερέων ἀποφαίνονται.

Plotinus and his school, on the other hand, champion the opinion that separates the irrational faculties from the reasoning element, either releasing them into the realm of generation or separating them from the discursive reasoning. From this opinion arises a choice between two doctrines. Either each irrational faculty is freed into the whole life of the universe from which it was detached, where each remains as far as possible unchanged, as Porphyry thinks. Or the whole irrational life continues to exist, separated from the discursive reasoning and preserved in the cosmos, as the most ancient of the priests declare.

The pneumatic vehicle is invisible in the state of purity, whereas it becomes visible or material, clothed with the soul's last garment, flesh and blood in the process of

⁴⁹⁸ Trans. Finamore 2002: 66-7, with the discussion see 182-3. See also Smith 1974: 65; Dillon 2009: 375-6. On the discrepancies between Porphyry and Iamblichus see Finamore 1985: 11-27.

embodiment, as I have discussed in the previous chapter.⁴⁹⁹ The reverse process, that is the process of the ascent of the soul, involves the pneumatic vehicle and the irrational part of the soul losing their composition, and being resolved themselves into their elements, which are then given back to their original spheres or bodies.⁵⁰⁰ As a consequence of this process, their particular character does not persist in their mixed forms, but their existence continues in the spheres or bodies in which they originally developed. According to Porphyry's belief, the separation of the rational part of the soul from the irrational is appropriate to a privileged group of souls that would not be subjected to numerous embodiments. On the one hand, he believes that the gods are not different from humans in essence (*De Abstinencia* 3.7.5) because of the immortality and divinity of the rational part of the soul, a point at which he also hints in *De Antro* 23.20-23 (τὰ δὲ νότια οὐ θεῶν, ἀλλὰ τῶν εἰς θεοὺς ἀνιουσῶν, διὰ τὴν αὐτὴν δ' αἰτίαν οὐ θεῶν ἔφη ὁδός, ἀλλ' ἀθανάτων, ὃ κοινὸν καὶ ἐπὶ ψυχῶν ὡς οὐσῶν καθ' αὐτὸ ἢ τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἀθανάτων). On the other hand, he claims that Socrates, the good soul, is not even good in the same way as Aristotle and Plato, or that of bad souls some are better and some worse (*De Abstinencia* 3.8.37-41). Porphyry's statement, thus, shows a belief in the existence of a hierarchy of souls.

As regards 'souls inexperienced or ignorant of maritime and marital activities,' (ἐν ψυχῇς ἀπείροις θαλασσίων καὶ ἐνύλων ἔργων) in *De Antro* 35 p. 34.5-6, the phrase refers to *Odyssey* 11.126-134 in which Tiresias prophesies that after taking his revenge on the suitors, Odysseus would come to a place where 'men do not know of the sea' (οἳ οὐκ ἴσασι θάλασσαν ἄνδρες, *Od.* 11.123-124). The other usage of ἄπειρος is found in *De Antro* 34.14-17 (F 33 DP = F 45 L), when Porphyry refers to Numenius' interpretation of Odysseus 'returning to those who are ignorant of every wave and sea', ἀποκαθισταμένου εἰς τοὺς ἔξω παντὸς κλύδωνος καὶ

⁴⁹⁹ See F 259 Smith (= Nemesius *De Natura Hominis* 3.38.12-40) for Porphyry's discussion of the soul which is united with the body but remains unblended, drawing on Ammonius, the teacher of Plotinus. See also trans. Dillon 2004: 195-8.

⁵⁰⁰ This belief finds support in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, see for this F 61 Des Places; Chase 2004b: 11; Dillon 2009: 373.

θαλάσσης ἀπείρους, after having passed through the stages of genesis. On the basis of these two statements, we can safely assume that the souls who have nothing to do with sea and matter refer to those who would no more be subjected to embodiment, or have no experience with embodiment.⁵⁰¹

These statements raise the question of to what extent one should detach oneself from the earthly life, while living in this life, and if Porphyry deems a life in the material world to be a toil. In *De Abstinencia* 1.32.9-1.33.1, he describes the best detachment, accompanied with constant meditation on the intelligibles, as abstinence from perceptions which awake passions, and which also arises from nourishment. Later, he gives more details about detachment in *De Abstinencia* 1.33.14-1.34.1:⁵⁰²

αἱ δὲ ἀποστάσεις διὰ τῶν ἐκκλίσεων τῶν κατὰ τὰς αἰσθήσεις παθῶν καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὰς ἀλογίας, αἱ δὲ αἰσθήσεις ἢ διὰ τῶν ὁρατῶν ἢ τῶν ἀκουστῶν ἢ γευστῶν ἢ ὀσφραντῶν ἢ ἀπτῶν. οἷον γὰρ μητρόπολις ἡ αἴσθησις ἣν τῆς ἐν ἡμῖν ἐκφύλου τῶν παθῶν ἀποικίας. φέρε γὰρ ἴδε καθ' ἐκάστην ὅσον τὸ ὑπέκκαυμα εἰσρεῖ τῶν παθῶν εἰς ἡμᾶς, τοῦτο μὲν ἐκ τῆς κατὰ τὰς θεάς ἵππων τε ἀμίλλης καὶ ἀθλητῶν ἢ τῶν ἐκλελυγισμένων ὀρχήσεων, τοῦτο δὲ ἐκ τῆς ἐπιβλέψεως τῆς πρὸς τὸ θῆλυ, αἱ δέλεαρ τοῦ ἀλογίστου παντοίαις ἐπιθέτοις παγίσι χειροῦνται τὸ ἄλογον.

Detachment comes by avoiding the passions that go with perception and those that go with unreason. Perceptions come from things seen or heard or tasted or smelled or touched. Perception is like the mother-city of the alien colony of passions in ourselves. See how much there is that inflames the passions that flow into us with each perception, perhaps from the sight of contests of horses and athletes or of dissolute dancing, perhaps from looking at the female; such sights are the bait for unreason, and bring it under their control with all kinds of additional snares.

⁵⁰¹ Chase 2004b: 15 says, 'After physical death, the process of ethical progress may continue; the practitioner of theoretical virtues, who lives according to the intellect and has eliminated the passions, becomes a god.'

⁵⁰² Clark 2000: 43-4.

In this passage, Porphyry sees perception and unreason stimulating passions, and apparently every stimulus related to senses is alien to the soul and a trap for the irrational. He continues to describe how sensual stimuli arouse emotional turbulences and damage in the soul in *De Abstinencia* 1.34. Referring to the Pythagoreans and former sages, who lived in isolated places, temples and sacred groves of the cities and to Plato's *Theaetetus* 173c-174a, he defends a life which is simple, self-sufficient and involved with material things at the minimum level because of the impossibility of involving oneself in everyday life without being unaffected by it (*De Abstinencia* 1.35-1.37).⁵⁰³ In this sense, Odysseus, who decisively chooses a detached attitude to life after suffering so many years in the material world in the myth of Er (*Rep.* 620d), might be an appropriate model for detachment defined in the quoted passages from *De Abstinencia*. In his *Life of Plotinus* (7.31-46), Porphyry likewise speaks of how Rogatianus, a senator of the third century, detached himself (ἀπόστασις) from politics and became the pupil of Plotinus for the sake of leading a philosophical life. The Homeric hero of *De Antro*, Odysseus, becomes an ideal model, who is in contact with the intelligible realm like a philosopher or like the disciples of Plotinus, detached from every honour, dignity, wealth and power derived from the material world, someone who internalises philosophy as a way of life.

Our last question is how free will affects choices for the afterlife, and the earthly life, as Socrates underlines that both are equally important, which may be likened to a chain reaction in which one affects the other (*Rep.* 618e-619a). In his *Περὶ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῶν*, which is either an exegesis or a treatise on the myth of Er, Porphyry distinguishes two forms of life.⁵⁰⁴ The first form of life, which is predetermined, is related to the biological lives of various animals and human beings, who also have different genders (F 268.48-55 Smith = *Stob. Anth.* 2.8.39.47-

⁵⁰³ Clark 2000: 44-5.

⁵⁰⁴ Wilberding 2011: 123-32, 2013: 87-105 for a detailed discussion of Porphyry's conception of free will. See also Chase (forthcoming): 16-21 Porphyry's thoughts on fate, providence and free will.

53). The second form of life, which is self-determined, provides opportunities for determining one's own way of life in Earth (F 268.54-61 Smith = Stob. *Anth.* 2.8.32.52-59). The predetermined and self-determined lives inevitably affect each other. According to Porphyry (F 268.61-75 Smith = Stob. *Anth.* 2.8.32.59-72), only human souls have the power to choose the self-determined life, even if this life is not fully under our control, because inherited and acquired features influence what is within our power on the Earth.⁵⁰⁵

Ἀλλὰ τοῖς μὲν ἀλόγοις, ἀφρημένοις τοῦ αὐτεξουσίου, ἢ διὰ φύσεως ὁ χαρακτήρ οὗτος ἐπισυνίσταται ἢ διὰ κατατάξεως τοῦ κτησαμένου· ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸ μὲν ἢ ἐκ προγόνων γενέσθαι ἀγαθῶν ἢ κάλλους τυχεῖν σωματικοῦ διὰ φύσεως ἐπορίσθῃ ἢ τύχης, πλὴν ὅτι τούτων οὐδὲν ἦν ἐφ' ἡμῖν δῆλον. Τὰς δὲ γε τῶν τεχνῶν ἀναλήψεις καὶ τὰς τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ἐπιστημῶν τε καὶ <τὰς> τῶν πολιτικῶν βίων ἀρχῶν τε διώξεις καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, ἐκ τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἡρτῆσθαι συμβέβηκεν, εἰ καὶ τινα δυσεπίτευκτα, τῷ καὶ τῆς ἔξωθεν προσδεῖσθαι συλλήψεως, δι' οὗ εἰς τὸ τυχεῖν δύσκολα καὶ ἀποθέσθαι οὐ ῥάδια, ὥσπερ ἀρχὰς καὶ τυραννίδας καὶ δημαγωγίας. Πάντα μὲν οὖν τὰ τοιαῦτα ἡρτῆσθαι συμβέβηκεν <ἐκ> τῆς προαιρέσεως, ἡ δὲ τεῦξις αὐτῶν οὐ πάντως ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

Now with non-rational [animals], since they are deprived of self-determination, this character is formed as an addition either naturally or as a result of training by its owner, whereas in the case of human beings, coming from a good family or being endowed with bodily beauty is provided by nature or by chance, except that clearly none of these things was in our power. By contrast, the acquisition of skills and habits and knowledge, as well as the acquisition of political lives and the pursuit of positions of power and all such things – these things happen to depend on what is in our power, even if some [of these things] are difficult to achieve because they depend on our receiving a certain contribution from the outside world, for which reason they are [in some cases] difficult to attain and [in other cases] not easy to turn one's back on, e.g., positions of power and leadership and tyrannies. All of

⁵⁰⁵ Trans. Wilberding 2013: 92-3.

these sorts of things happen to depend on deliberate choice, although achieving them is not completely in our power.

In accordance with the division of the features of the self-determined life into two, those features inherited from ancestors, such as having a fine appearance and coming from a good family, are naturally beyond what is within our power. However, Porphyry emphasises that our acquisition of skills, habits and knowledge and our ways of using them is, to some extent, within our power in this world, despite the fact that the achievement of some of them depends on external conditions. On the external conditions, I agree with Wilberding, who points out⁵⁰⁶ that Porphyry might be referring to *Republic* 490e-497d, in which Plato speaks of some external conditions causing the corruption of the philosophical nature of the soul; for example, physical beauty, height, living in a big city and descending from a powerful and wealthy family can cause the soul to become excessively arrogant and confident (*Rep.* 494c-d). If we apply the influences of those external conditions to the lives of Odysseus, we can come to the conclusion that the Homeric hero is an example of a rare soul which has a philosophical nature,⁵⁰⁷ a soul that never lost its resistance against any external condition.

4.2.2. The Goddess Athena as symbol of *phronesis*

Porphyry not only describes the goddess Athena as ‘practical wisdom’ (φρόνησις, *De Antro* 32.24), but the olive tree also symbolises the *phronesis* of the God (Zeus or the Demiurge), and Homer places one near the cave and at the head of the harbour in *Odyssey* 13.102. In *De Antro* 36.10, Porphyry says, ‘Homer has also great *phronesis*’ (τὴν Ὅμηρου ὅση τις φρόνησις). His identification of Athena and the olive tree with *phronesis* and his remark on Homer’s also having *phronesis* raise some questions: What do the goddess (with her attribute the olive tree) and Homer have

⁵⁰⁶ Wilberding 2013: 94.

⁵⁰⁷ See *Rep.* 491b1-2: φιλόσοφος γενέσθαι, ὀλιγάκις ἐν ἀνθρώποις φύεσθαι καὶ ὀλίγας.

in common, and how do they function in the process of the ascent of the soul towards the intelligible realm?

Before delving into those two questions, I shall discuss Porphyry's different characterisation of the goddess in his other works and how we can apply them to the context of *De Antro*. In *De Antro* and in his *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων* (F 359.60-62 Smith = Eus. *PE* 3.11.31-32), Porphyry describes Athena as a symbol of *phronesis*,⁵⁰⁸ and he also identifies her with the Moon in *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων*, without giving any detail:

Ὅπερ δὲ Ἀπόλλων ἐν ἡλίῳ, τοῦτο Ἀθηνᾶ ἐν σελήνῃ· ἔστι γὰρ τῆς φρονήσεως σύμβολον, Ἀθηνᾶ τις οὕσα.

What Apollo is in the Sun, that is Athena in the Moon; for she is symbol of practical wisdom, a kind of Athrena.

In his commentary on the story of Atlantis in the *Timaeus* (F 22 Sodano),⁵⁰⁹ which is preserved in Proclus' commentary on *Timaeus* 24c7-d3 (*In Tim.* 165.16-23), Porphyry also associates Athena with the Moon because the soul acquires its spirited and mild character in the Moon. Accordingly, the dual aspect of Athena emerges as the lover of war and the lover of wisdom in the soul:⁵¹⁰

Ὁ μὲν γὰρ Πορφύριος ἐν σελήνῃ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν ὑποθέμενος ψυχὰς ἐκεῖθεν κατιέναι φησὶ τό τε θυμοειδὲς ἅμα καὶ τὸ πρᾶον ἐχούσας, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο φιλοσόφους καὶ φιλοπολέμους οὕσας, τῶν ἐν Ἐλευσίνι μυσταγωγούς, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἀπὸ Μουσαίου τοῦ Σεληνιακοῦ τὸ γένος τοῖς ἐν Ἐλευσίνι τῶν μυστηρίων ἡγουμένοις, ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἑρμῆς ἐκεῖ περὶ Σελήνην ἔστι παρ' αὐτοῖς καὶ τὸ Κηρύκων, ὥς φησι, γένος.

Porphyry, placing Athena in the moon, says that souls come down from there with both a spirited and a gentle side. Consequently they are both war- and wisdom-loving, escorts of the initiates at Eleusis, assuming that the family of those who lead the mysteries at Eleusis is from Musaeus of the Moon, and assuming further that

⁵⁰⁸ See Simonini 2010: 233: Athrena is the etymology from the verb ἄθρεῖν since she is the sort of person who looks at things.

⁵⁰⁹ Sodano 1964: 13-14.

⁵¹⁰ Trans. Tarrant 2007: 264

Hermes and the family of Heralds is among them there in the region of the Moon, as he claims.

If we apply this dual aspect of Athena to Porphyry's identification of the goddess in *De Antro* 32.24, I can suggest that, during the ascent of the soul, the wisdom-loving side of Athena predominates over her war-loving side. The war-loving side of the goddess manifests itself in the Odyssean struggle against the sea and water-divinities, which symbolise the material world. If Odysseus is assumed to be the soul under the process of ascending to the intelligible realm, Athena operates as the guiding *daimon* of Odysseus when she gives him beggar's garments to wear and advises him to leave all the valuable gifts of the Phoenicians in the cave, the material world.

Homer's description of Athena who is the first to meet Odysseus after disembarking on Ithaca seems to imply that Odysseus is in the lunar sphere of Athena and in the preparatory phase of his ascent towards the intelligible realm. This proposition may find support from Porphyry's commentary on the story of Atlantis. Porphyry's interpretation the war between Athens and Atlantis as symbolising the war between the souls and *daimones* is found in a number of fragments, as Tarrant states.⁵¹¹ The Moon is seemingly deemed to represent Athens associated with Athena in *Timaeus* 24c7-d3 (F 22 Sodano = Procl. *In Tim.* 165.16-23), as explained above. Porphyry also considers Hephaistos as 'skilful mind' (τὸν τεχνικὸν νοῦν) and the earth as the lunar sphere according to *Timaeus* 23d4-e2 (F 16 Sodano = Procl. *In Tim.* 147.6-24) and Athena as the Moon receives the seeds of skilful souls from Hephaistos and the earth.⁵¹² Because of Porphyry's identification of Athena with the Moon and the earth with the lunar sphere, we can read into *De*

⁵¹¹ Tarrant 2007: 76-7.

⁵¹² See Chapter 4.1.2 for the quotation of the passage. Porphyry also associates the Moon with Asclepius as the lunar intellect generated from Athena (F 20 Sodano = Procl. *In Tim.* 159. 25-27); Sodano 1964: 12.

Antro that Odysseus' meeting with Athena represents his reaching the lunar level of his ascent.

In his identification of Athena with *phronesis*, Porphyry, in some way, follows the Platonic tradition. According to Dillon, the idea that Athena symbolises the Platonic Forms in the mind of God derives from the Old Academy, particularly Xenocrates.⁵¹³ He remarks, 'Athena/Dike as the Logos of God is part of the Greek philosophical tradition upon which he (Philo of Alexandria) is drawing, and that tradition is an essentially Platonist one, tinged with Stoicism and enlivened with Neopythagorean mysticism and number-theory.'⁵¹⁴ In his *De Opificio mundi* (100), Philo of Alexandria implicitly refers to Athena and describes her as 'motherless' and 'produced from the head of Zeus. Because of being the Logos of God, the goddess functions as casting the Forms or *logoi* over the material world.

We find the etymology of Athena's name in *Cratylus* 407a8-c2 in which Plato says that contemporary interpreters of Homer believed that he represents Athena as 'mind' (νοῦς) and as 'understanding' (διάνοια). According to the maker of names, Plato claims that Athena is 'the mind of God' (ἡ θεοῦ νόησις) because of her possession of an unequalled knowledge about divine things (τὰ θεῖα νοοῦσα). As regards his connection the stem *rhe-* with flowing, in *Cratylus* 411d, Plato also points out that *phronesis* is the intelligence of conveying and flowing, comprised of φορά, νόησις and ῥόος, so that Plato's definition of *phronesis* suits the behaviour of one who advises and guides Odysseus by activating his rational side.⁵¹⁵

Regarding the question of how *phronesis* can be defined in the context of *De Antro*, it seems that, in Porphyry's reading of Homer, *phronesis* means knowledge of the future, as a result of experience and good judgment. In *De Antro* 32.20-22, Porphyry asserts, 'the cosmos is the finished product of the judgment (*phronesis*) of

⁵¹³ Dillon 2005: 105-6 for a discussion of Xenocrates' treatment of 'mainstream mythology' and Philo's interpretation of Athena.

⁵¹⁴ Dillon 2005: 106.

⁵¹⁵ I am grateful to Dr. A. Clements for discussion about the relevance of the *Cratylus*.

God and his intellectual nature, and not the result of a coincidence, random purpose or irrational chance' (ὁ κόσμος οὐκ εἰκῇ οὐδ' ὥς ἔτυχε γέγονεν, ἀλλ' ἔστι φρονήσεως θεοῦ καὶ νοερᾶς φύσεως ἀποτέλεσμα). Throughout the treatise, Porphyry implicitly or explicitly emphasises Homer's description of the cave with its symbolic elements as appropriate to the representation of significant philosophical concepts, religion, mysteries and astrology. For Porphyry, this must mean that Homer has a share of the intellectual nature and wisdom of the whole universe. The early warning and advice of Athena to Odysseus also prove that the goddess manifests herself as knowledge of the future. In fact, Porphyry directly assigns Athena's guidance of Odysseus to Homer, stating in *De Antro* 34.8-9 that it is the poet who says that 'every foreign possession must be put away in the cave' (δεῖν τὸ ἄντρον ἀποθέσθαι πᾶν τὸ ἔξωθεν κτῆμα).

Furthermore, Homer's placement of the olive tree near the cave of the nymphs is not a coincidence but the result of his excellence, since the olive tree as the plant of Athena also symbolises God's *phronesis*, and because of its intellectual nature and wisdom the olive tree stands apart from the cave (*De Antro* 32.24-28, 33 p.30.29-31):

(32.24-28, 33 p. 30.29-31) κρατογενοῦς δ' οὔσης τῆς θεοῦ, οἰκεῖον τόπον ὁ θεολόγος ἐξεῦρεν ἐπὶ κρατὸς τοῦ λιμένος αὐτὴν καθιερώσας, σημαίνων δι' αὐτῆς ὥς οὐκ ἐξ αὐτοματισμοῦ τὸ ὅλον τοῦτο καὶ τύχης ἀλόγου ἔργον γέγονεν, ἀλλ' ὅτι φύσεως νοερᾶς καὶ σοφίας ἀποτέλεσμα χωριστῆς μὲν οὔσης ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, πλησίον δὲ κατὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς το σύμπαντος λιμένος ἰδρυμένης. ἀειθαλῆς δὲ οὔσα ἡ ἐλαία φέρει τι ἰδίωμα οἰκειότατον ταῖς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τροπαῖς τῶν ψυχῶν, αἷς τὸ ἄντρον καθιέρωται.

(32.24-28, 33 p. 30.29-31) Since the goddess was born from the head of the God (Zeus), the theologian (Homer) found a suitable place, in consecrating the olive tree at the head of the harbour, signifying by means of the olive tree that the entire cosmos has not come into being spontaneously, and it was not the work of irrational chance; but that it is the finished product of intellectual nature and wisdom, existing

separately from the cave, as the olive tree is situated nearby at the head of the entire harbour. For the olive tree is evergreen, it presents a unique feature, very suitable for the changes (solstices) of souls in the cosmos, to whom the cave was consecrated.

To Porphyry, Homer's image of the olive tree and Athena as separate from the cave means that acquisition of *phronesis* is the first step in achieving a state of impassivity towards all kinds of pleasures, emotions, power and wealth which belong to the material world. In *De Antro* 33 p. 32.1-5, Porphyry underlines the 'evergreenness of the olive tree' (ἀειθαλῆς δὲ οὔσα ἢ ἐλαία), emphasising that 'the cosmos is governed by the intellectual nature and is guided by eternal and evergreen *phronesis*' (διοικεῖται δὲ καὶ ὁ κόσμος ὑπὸ νοερᾶς φύσεως φρονήσει αἰδίῳ καὶ ἀειθαλεῖ ἀγόμενος). The guidance of eternal and evergreen *phronesis*, located at the top of the cosmos, is apparently in sharp contrast with the process of genesis. The former is symbolised by Homer's description of the olive tree, whereas the latter is reflected in 'ever-flowing water,' ἀέναν ὕδωρ (*De Antro* 12.11)⁵¹⁶ at the bottom, which is under the protection of Naiad nymphs.

I suggest here a close connection between Porphyry's identification of Athena with *phronesis*, and the cathartic virtues in *Sententia* 32 mentioned before,⁵¹⁷ in which Porphyry formulates the Neoplatonic doctrine of virtues, namely the political, the cathartic, the theoretical, and the paradigmatic ones. The relevant passages of *Sententia* 32 can explain the levels of virtue at which Odysseus may be active, and how Athena or *phronesis* functions in the process of his ascent through the intelligible.

⁵¹⁶ Pl. *Leg.* 966e2: ἀέναν οὐσίαν is used for the substance of the material world. See Dillon 2005: 100-1 for a discussion of Xenocrates' use of the term.

⁵¹⁷ Simonini 2010: 240 also refers to *Sententia* 32 and says: 'nel *De antro* l'incontro con *phronesis*, sedere nudo sotto l'ulivo, è immagine la progressione dell'individuo sulla via della catarsi, in cui la saggezza consiste nel non seguire il corpo e nel pensare con purezza.'

In *Sententia* 32, Porphyry, following and quoting Plotinus' *Enneads* 1.2.1.16-21, claims that *phronesis* is connected with the reasoning faculty of the soul at the level of political virtue, in a similar way as courage connects with the part of the soul subject to anger; self-control with agreement and harmony of appetite and reason and justice with accomplishment (ἔστι φρόνησις μὲν περὶ τὸ λογιζόμενον, *Sententia* 32.10-11). The political virtues operate as intermediate virtues which prepare the soul to attain the next level, the cathartic virtues, which conduct the soul towards abstinence from bodily activities. At the level of the cathartic virtues, having *phronesis* means disallowing possession of self by bodily thoughts and weaknesses, and solitude of mind, a task accomplished through pure thinking. The political virtues, on the other hand, aim at harmony in human nature:⁵¹⁸

(32.18-32) αὗται μὲν γὰρ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀφισταμένης πρὸς τὸ ὄντως ὄν, αἱ δὲ πολιτικαὶ τὸν θνητὸν ἄνθρωπον κατακοσμοῦσι—καὶ πρόδρομοί γε αἱ πολιτικαὶ τῶν καθάρσεων· δεῖ γὰρ κοσμηθέντα κατ' αὐτὰς ἀποστῆναι τοῦ σὺν σώματι πράττειν τι προηγουμένως—διὸ ἐν ταῖς καθάρσεσι τὸ μὲν μὴ συνδοξάζειν τῷ σώματι, ἀλλὰ μόνην ἐνεργεῖν ὑφίστησι τὸ φρονεῖν, ὃ διὰ τοῦ καθαρῶς νοεῖν τελειοῦται, τὸ δὲ γε μὴ ὁμοπαθεῖν συνίστησι τὸ σωφρονεῖν, τὸ δὲ μὴ φοβεῖσθαι ἀφισταμένην τοῦ σώματος ὡς εἰς κενόν τι καὶ μὴ ὄν τὴν ἀνδρίαν, ἡγουμένου δὲ λόγου καὶ νοῦ καὶ μηδενὸς ἀντιτείνοντος ἢ δικαιοσύνη. ἡ μὲν οὖν κατὰ τὰς πολιτικὰς ἀρετὰς διάθεσις ἐν μετριοπαθείᾳ θεωρεῖται, τέλος ἔχουσα τὸ ζῆν ὡς ἄνθρωπον κατὰ φύσιν, ἡ δὲ κατὰ τὰς θεωρητικὰς ἐν ἀπαθείᾳ, ἥς τέλος ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ὁμοίωσις.

(32.18-32) While the civil virtues are the ornament of mortal life, and prepare the soul for the purificatory virtues, the latter direct the man whom they adorn to abstain from activities in which the body predominates. Thus, in the purificatory virtues, "prudence consists in not forming opinions in harmony with the body, but in acting by oneself, which is the work of pure thought. Temperance consists in not sharing the passions of the body; courage, in not fearing separation therefrom, as if death drove man into emptiness and annihilation; while justice exacts that reason

⁵¹⁸ Trans. Guthrie 1988: 28; see *Enn.* 1.2.3.11-15.

and intelligence command and be obeyed."⁵¹⁹ The civil virtues moderate the passions; their object is to teach us to live in conformity with the laws of human nature. The contemplative virtues obliterate the passions from the soul; their object is to assimilate man to the divinity.

In *Sententia* 32.45-50, Porphyry compares the political virtues with the cathartic virtues in terms of capacities of virtues which can purify the soul from twofold badness, one a result of the soul's association with inferior things, the other result of excessive passions. The political virtues enable the soul to liberate itself from passions while the cathartic virtues liberate it from evil, that is, from the association with its inferiors; this makes the cathartic virtues more honourable than the political virtues.⁵²⁰

(32.45-50) τὸ οὖν ἀγαθὸν αὐτῇ ἐν τῷ συνεῖναι τῷ γεννήσαντι, κακία δὲ τὸ τοῖς ὑστέροις. καὶ διπλῇ γε κακία· τό τε τούτοις συνεῖναι καὶ μετὰ παθῶν ὑπερβολῆς. διόπερ αἱ πολιτικαὶ ἀρεταὶ μιᾶς γοῦν αὐτὴν κακίας ἀπαλλάττουσαι ἀρεταὶ ἐκρίθησαν καὶ τίμια, αἱ δὲ καθαρτικαὶ τιμιώτεραι καὶ τῆς ὥς ψυχὴν κακίας ἀπαλλάττουσαι.

(32.45-50) For the soul, good consists in being united to her author, and her evil is to unite with lower things. Of evil, there are two kinds: the one is to unite with lower things; the other is to abandon oneself to the passions. The civil virtues owe their name as virtues and their value to their releasing the soul from one of these two kinds of evil [that is, of the passions]. The purificatory virtues are superior to the former, in that they free the soul from her characteristic form of evil [that is, union with lower things].

Elsewhere in *Sententia* 32, we are informed about the characteristics of all virtues: the paradigmatic virtues relate to Intellect and agree with its essence; the theoretical virtues relate to the soul contemplating Intellect and filling themselves

⁵¹⁹ *Enn.* 1.2.3: 13-19.

⁵²⁰ Trans. Guthrie 1988: 29: see *Enn.* 1.2.4.1-23.

from it. The cathartic virtues of the soul of man relate to those who are purified from body and from the irrational passions and, lastly, the political virtues relate to restraining the activity of the irrational soul and to moderating passions:⁵²¹

(32.71-78) Τέτταρα τοίνυν ἀρετῶν γένη πέφηνεν, ὧν αἱ μὲν ἦσαν τοῦ νοῦ, αἱ παραδειγματικαὶ καὶ σύνδρομοι αὐτοῦ τῇ οὐσίᾳ, αἱ δὲ ψυχῆς πρὸς νοῦν ἐνορώσης ἤδη καὶ πληρουμένης ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, αἱ δὲ ψυχῆς ἀνθρώπου καθαιρομένης τε καὶ καθαρθείσης ἀπὸ σώματος καὶ τῶν ἀλόγων παθῶν, αἱ δὲ ψυχῆς ἀνθρώπου κατακοσμούσης τὸν ἄνθρωπον διὰ τὸ μέτρα τῇ ἀλογίᾳ ἀφορίζειν καὶ μετριοπάθειαν ἐνεργάζεσθαι.

(32.71-78) We thus have four kinds of virtues: 1, the exemplary virtues, characteristic of intelligence, and of the being or nature to which they belong; 2, the virtues of the soul turned towards intelligence, and filled with her contemplation; 3, the virtues of the soul that purifies herself, or which has purified herself from the irrational passions characteristic of the body; 4, the virtues that adorn the man by restraining within narrow limits the action of the irrational part, and by moderating the passions.

The following passage of *Sententia* 32 is particularly important, for it may hold significant clues that help us identify which virtues Odysseus experiences, and the role of Athena as symbol of *phronesis* in this process:⁵²²

(32.83-96) τῶν μὲν γὰρ πολιτικῶν μέτρον ἐπιθεῖναι τοῖς πάθεσι πρὸς τὰς ἐν τοῖς κατὰ φύσιν ἐνεργείας· τῶν δὲ καθαρτικῶν τελέως τῶν παθῶν ἀποστῆσαι {τὸ} τέως μέτρον λαμβανόντων· τῶν δὲ πρὸς νοῦν ἐνεργῆσαι μηδὲ τοῦ ἀποστῆσαι ἐκ τῶν παθῶν εἰς ἔννοιαν ἐρχομένων· τῶν δὲ μηδὲν πρὸς νοῦν ἐχουσῶν τὴν ἐνέργειαν, ἀλλὰ τῇ αὐτοῦ οὐσίᾳ εἰς συνδρομὴν ἀφιγμένων <*>. διὸ καὶ ὁ μὲν κατὰ τὰς πρακτικὰς ἐνεργῶν σπουδαῖος ἦν ἄνθρωπος, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τὰς καθαρτικὰς δαιμόνιος ἄνθρωπος ἢ καὶ δαίμων ἀγαθός, ὁ δὲ κατὰ μόνας τὰς πρὸς τὸν νοῦν θεός, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τὰς παραδειγματικὰς θεῶν πατήρ. Ἐπιμελητέον οὖν μάλιστα τῶν καθαρτικῶν ἡμῖν

⁵²¹ Trans. Guthrie 1988: 30.

⁵²² Trans. Guthrie 1988: 31.

σκεψαμένοις, ὅτι τούτων μὲν ἡ τεῦξις ἐν τῷ βίῳ τούτῳ, διὰ τούτων δὲ καὶ ἡ εἰς τὰς τιμιωτέρας ἄνοδος.

The object of the civil virtues is to moderate our passions so as to conform our conduct to the laws of human nature. That of the purificatory virtues is to detach the soul completely from the passions. That of the contemplative virtues is to apply the soul to intellectual operations, even to the extent of no longer having to think of the need of freeing oneself from the passions. Last, that of the exemplary virtues is similar to that of the other virtues. Thus the practical virtues make man virtuous; the purificatory virtues make man divine, or make of the good man a protecting deity; the contemplative virtues deify; while the exemplary virtues make a man the parent of divinities. We should specially apply ourselves to purificatory virtues believing that we can acquire them even in this life, and that possession of them leads to superior virtues.

It is apparent that the theoretical and the paradigmatic virtues are only attainable hereafter, since the acquisition of the former would make a god of humans, and of the latter would make him the father of gods. These two virtues should be a privilege of only a small group of people, particularly the philosophers. In that case, we may conclude that the souls who fulfil the goal of achieving the theoretical and the paradigmatic virtues will no longer be subjected to embodiment. Although we know from his autobiographical experiences that Plotinus spiritually claims to have achieved the objective of the paradigmatic virtues by union with Intellect, it was not a permanent state because of his staying in the earthly life. Porphyry strongly believes that human beings may achieve the objective of the cathartic virtues, that is, achieve an entire detachment of the soul from the passions, in this life. According to him, the person who fulfils the cathartic virtues is called a divine man or good *daimon*, whereas Porphyry uses the epithet 'sage,' σπουδαῖος, for the person at the level of the political virtues.⁵²³

⁵²³ See Chase 2004b: 15 for the Stoic technical term for 'sage', σπουδαῖος.

The ascription of the virtues of *Sententia* 32 to the character of Odysseus described in *De Antro* 35 p. 34.1-5 leads us to deduce that the Homeric hero is situated at the early phase of the cathartic virtues because he dresses up as a beggar after stripping naked, with the help of the goddess Athena, namely *phronesis*. The predominance of *phronesis* leads Odysseus to contemplate how he would rid his soul of all the deceitful passions and foreign possessions which belong to the material world. Dressing up in beggars' clothes suggests that Odysseus is still living an earthly life and his inclination towards bodily needs has not as yet reached the minimum. Beggars' clothes seem to symbolise the bond which relates Odysseus to the material world. Porphyry considers 'being stripped of the rags' inadequate to overpower all toils, since passive involvement in the earthly life does not guarantee a permanent unity with the intelligible realm, even though we may advance to this unity in the hereafter. Knowledge of the material world will pave the way for Odysseus to become a *daimonic* man or a good man; however, he still has some difficulties to overcome. As for Athena, as a symbol of *phronesis*, she can be considered the guiding *daimon* of Odysseus, operating as a superior entity which the hero needs until he leads his life according to the principles of intellect.

Conclusion

As generally agreed, Porphyry's purpose in explaining the doctrines of Plato and Plotinus is mainly to develop parameters for the salvation of the soul, and throughout his various works, this purpose manifests itself in his ethical concern for the soul. The concept of the salvation of the soul is associated with the purification of the soul, and this purification is dependent on what part of the soul is targeted. For example, according to Porphyry, theurgy and rituals play significant roles in the purification of the lower (spiritual) part of the soul. On the other hand, a life dedicated to philosophy, and its ethical practice allow the soul to attain the intelligible realm and permanently escape from the cycle of genesis.

Beginning from the assumption that Porphyry uses his allegorical interpretation in *On the Cave of the Nymphs* to convey his own thoughts and to educate his disciples, most likely prospective philosophers, in important philosophical ideas, throughout my thesis I have offered an exegesis of *De Antro* in the context of his philosophical wider oeuvre. More precisely, I have endeavoured to show how the treatise fits in with his other more straightforward philosophical works, particularly with respect to his interests in the salvation of the soul and the relationship between soul and body. We know from his *Life of Plotinus* 15 that at a conference in Plotinus' school, Porphyry read a poem entitled 'The Sacred Marriage,' a philosophical allegory, based on the Homeric myth of the union of Zeus and Hera on Mount Ida with particular reference it seems, to the Eleusinian mysteries.⁵²⁴ This indicates that an allegorical reading of a text seems to be part of the curriculum of Plotinus' school, and that, like Cornutus, Porphyry possibly uses *De Antro* for didactic purposes.

⁵²⁴ Brisson 2004: 81-2.

Reading *De Antro* as part of Porphyry's corpus of works relating to the salvation of the soul, I have, in this thesis, systematically compared it to other works of Porphyry that mainly deal with this issue and are complementary to *De Antro*. In particular, I have proposed that relevant sections of *De Antro* should be read alongside, not only Porphyry's commentary on the myth of Er, his commentary on the *Timaeus*, *De Abstinentia* and *Sententiae*, the last two of which are assigned to the later period of his career. This proposal is also compatible with the claim that *De Antro* was written any time after he became a member of Plotinus' school, as was discussed in Chapter 1.

I have arranged the major topics of the thesis in accordance with the issues of allegory raised by Porphyry at the beginning of the treatise. These issues can be identified as the relationship between the concept of the cave as symbol of the cosmos and Matter, the union of soul and body, and the salvation of the soul.

Chapter 1 of this thesis, including Sections from 1 to 4 of *De Antro*, has examined the textual structure and composition of the treatise. As an introductory section, it also situated *De Antro* within the context of a long and rich tradition of allegorical exegesis and allegorical thinking, followed by many eminent literary critics, grammarians, and philosophers. My intention here has not been to write a comprehensive history of allegorical interpretation, which is obviously beyond the scope of the thesis, but merely to mark the significant milestones in its history that informed Porphyry's exegetical approach and methodology in *De Antro*. Most important among them – and therefore discussed in a separate section – were Plato and his stance on poetry and myths, the Stoics, including Cornutus and Crates of Mallos, and the Neopythagoreans, Numenius and Cronius, who are Porphyry's main sources in *De Antro* and highly influential figures in Neoplatonism.

In agreement with Dillon and Edwards,⁵²⁵ I have suggested that *De Antro* is a complementary text to Porphyry's commentary on the myth of Er in *Republic* 10,

⁵²⁵ See Chapter 1.5.1.

based upon the idea that *De Antro* and the *Republic* share two common key symbols, the cave and Odysseus. This affinity is reflected in the basic theme of the treatise and Porphyry's overarching aim: the ultimate goal of the treatise is to show the way of salvation for the individual soul, which is to lead a philosophical life. This implies that Porphyry's aim in *De Antro* is ethical – his common attitude in other commentaries, as I have shown at various places in my thesis – and is compatible with Plato's aim in the myth of Er.

I have then analysed the two key concepts of Neoplatonic allegory, image and symbol, which Porphyry also uses for the cave and Odysseus. These two concepts are, in fact, used by the Pythagoreans for educational purposes: the natural reality perceived by the senses is introduced through images, the abstract principles perceived by mind through symbols. I have argued that the cave bears both of these aspects: on the one hand, it is a natural reality, but on the other hand, with its mystical elements, it is an abstract principle grasped by the mind. The discussion has included Porphyry's methodology, particularly how he justifies interpreting Homer's verses by raising issues which are thought to be contradictory.

In this Chapter, I have also discussed an important point of *De Antro*: Porphyry's identification of Homer as a theologian, an idea being rooted in the view that texts are written by 'divinely inspired' poets. This identification is the key reason for Porphyry's interpretation of Homer's verses. As discussed throughout the thesis, these verses convey important messages about the intelligible realm, divinities and individual souls, but these messages are coded in symbols and riddles. Porphyry also considers the poet as a theological authority, thus turning Homer's verses into divine oracles.

In Sections from 5 to 9, Porphyry explores the philosophical and religious precedents of viewing the cosmos or material world as a cave, the identification that lies at the basis of his allegorical interpretation of Homer's lines. The image is a common one, which is found, for example, in the Pythagoreans, the Orphics, Plato,

Empedocles and in the cult of Mithras; and Porphyry elaborately argues its appropriateness (whence its popularity). In the first part of Chapter 2, under the title 'The Cave as Symbol and Image of Cosmos,' I have examined key relevant philosophical concepts relating to the material world in the Presocratic tradition such as Anaximander's *apeiron*, the flux theory of Heraclitus, and Plato's treatment of caves and caverns as hollows in the *Phaedrus* (109b5), for which Plato may have drawn on the Ionian philosophers Archelaus and Anaxagoras.

I have then analysed Porphyry's discussion of two ostensibly contradictory features of the cave in Homer's description: its loveliness and its darkness. I have examined the loveliness of the cave with reference to the material realm's 'participation in the Forms' (διὰ τὴν τῶν εἰδῶν μέθεξις, *De Antro* 6.10), starting from Plato's idea that the cosmos is generated from the Form of Good in *Timaeus* 29a, alongside the relevant parts of Porphyry's and Proclus' commentaries on the *Timaeus*. I have sought to show a connection between the material world and the second One at the level of Life in Porphyry's commentary on the *Parmenides*, an issue that could be developed further in future research. I have made a connection between the darkness of the cave, resulting from the fact that it is perceived by Intellect, and Plotinus' and Porphyry's conceptualisation of Matter and its participation in the Forms, and I have concluded that the cave's darkness reflects the ontological relation, immediate or mediated, between substrata of the cosmos from top to bottom, that is, from the intelligible realm to Matter.

The second part of Chapter 2 opened with an exploration of Porphyry's references to the Mithraic cave in the context of his *De Abstinencia* and Origen's *Contra Celsum*, taking into account some of the existing iconographical evidence. The discussion also covered Eubulus, Porphyry's source in *De Antro* 6.15, likely a Mithraist to whom Porphyry also refers in *De Abstinencia* for his classification of Magi, in order to show that there is a fine line between the doctrines of mysteries of Mithras and the Pythagoreans. However, the main concern of this part was to examine Porphyry's identification of Mithras as the Maker and Father of the cosmos

with the Platonic Demiurge in the *Timaeus* in comparison with Numenius' ontological principles. Taking into account how the epithet 'Maker and Father' operates in the Neoplatonic metaphysical and cosmological scheme in accordance with Porphyry's commentary on the *Timaeus*, I have concluded that Porphyry's Mithras is a demiurgic god whose creative aspect is predominant. Lastly, I have ventured to argue that Mithras, as Master of genesis, as he is portrayed in *De Antro* 24 p. 24.12, may be considered to have a cosmological aspect at the lower ontological level, similar to Hecate in the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

In the final section of Chapter 2, I have discussed Porphyry's references to the cave in Empedocles 31 B 120 and the cave of Plato's *Republic* in *De Antro* 8. Porphyry's quotation from the *Republic* ensures that the cave in question is the material world as a prison-like cave, filled with shadows, from which one must escape in order to access the intelligible realm that lies beyond it. I discussed that Porphyry's implication of analogies of the divided line and the Sun is an allusion to the movement of the state of minds from the visible realm to the intelligible realm, which we may associate with his doctrine of virtues, the political, the cathartic, the theoretical and the paradigmatic virtues in *Sententia* 32. This association is also deemed to be the beginning stage of enlightenment, that is, the realisation of the darkness of the cave or the material realm through intellect in *De Antro* 6.10-11, as Edwards also rightly observes.⁵²⁶

Chapter 3 has investigated the sections of *De Antro* which deal with the body-soul relationship against the background of Porphyry's metaphysics but also of common Greek symbolic thinking, which underlies Porphyry's associations and identifications of genesis with wetness and pleasures. Porphyry identifies the Naiad nymphs as *daimones* who preside over genesis (γενεθλίοις δαίμοσιν, *De Antro* 12.18), and similarly, he speaks of a certain '*daimon* of genesis' (τὸν γενέθλιον

⁵²⁶ See Chapter 2.2.

δαίμονα, *De Antro* 35 p. 32.28) - whom Odysseus must appease due to his blinding of Polyphemus, namely Thoosa.

Those brief statements, along with Porphyry's multifaceted identification of the Naiad nymphs as souls in the process of falling into generation, and *dunameis* that preside over genesis (*De Antro* 10.12-13), give an impression of Porphyry's demonology, but a rather inadequate one. In order to elucidate this, I have discussed the dual aspects of *daimones* in *De Antro*, based on the assumption that Porphyry's interpretive practice should be read from both a macrocosmic and a microcosmic perspective. True in essence to Plato's description of *daimones* in *Timaeus* 40d6-9 as the invisible gods, *daimones*, figuratively as Naiad nymphs, are closely related to entities which cause the descent of souls in Porphyry's commentary on the story of Atlantis in *Timaeus* 20d8-9 (F 10 Sodano), which is preserved in Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (*In Tim.* 77.6-24). I have related Porphyry's tripartite division of *daimones* and souls, some of which are in the process of genesis, others in the process of ascending to the higher realm, to the astrological (celestial) regions distinguished in *De Antro* 29.13-15. Another key issue discussed in the section of *De Antro* is the distinction between the guiding spirit and the idea of humans' souls as their *daimones*, the former having its source in *Timaeus* 90a, the latter in *Timaeus* 90c. Thus, I have suggested that Odysseus might be deemed one of the heroic or divine souls allocated to the South in *De Antro* 29.14, whereas Athena is his guiding spirit or god allocated to the East, ruling the rational part of Odysseus' soul and leading him to the divine. Based on the idea that 'the individual souls have received a *daimonic* lot' in F 10.8 of Porphyry's commentary on the *Timaeus*, Athena might operate as Odysseus' rational principle, since he has not, as yet, completed his self-improvement. This aspect of Athena is compatible with *Enneads* 3.4.3, in which Plotinus deems to be the guiding spirit an entity superior to us. The assignment of the goddess Athena to Odysseus' rational principle is also in accordance with her identification with *phronesis*, as discussed in Chapter 4.

According to Porphyry's treatment of the female mythological divinities, Amphitrite and the Naiad nymphs — as generative powers in *On Images*, as well as in *De Antro*, I have analysed the possible function of the Naiad nymphs as *dunameis* in the process of body-creation (σωματοουργία, *De Antro* 14.3). Owing to the fact that the formation of flesh proceeds 'through blood and from blood' (δι' αἵματος δὲ καὶ ἐξ αἱμάτων ἢ σαρκογονία, *De Antro* 14.10), I have argued that the Naiad nymphs may also be identified with blood, whose generative powers create the fleshy parts of the body. The statement 'blood and moist seed are dear to [the souls]' (αἷμά τε γὰρ ταύταις καὶ ὁ δίυγρος γόνος φίλος, *De Antro* 10.24, 11 p. 12.25), has prompted me to examine the formation of flesh with reference to Porphyry's conception of the development of embryos in *Ad Gaurum*. Because in *Ad Gaurum* the formation of flesh belongs to the first stage of the formation of the embryo in the womb before limbs and organs are articulated, I have come to the conclusion that Porphyry's interpretation of the Homeric image of the Naiad nymphs weaving a sea-purple garment reflects the creation of the embryo and the physiological phase.

Another philosophical concept in the context of embodiment in *De Antro* is the pneumatic body, an intermediary link between the soul and the body, which is developed from the concepts of *ochema*, the vehicle of the soul according to Plato in *Timaeus* 41e, and of the Aristotelian *pneuma*, as introduced in *On the Generation of Animals* 736b37-38. As the semi-corporeal entity situated between the soul and the body, the pneumatic body enables the soul to unite with the body while the soul gradually loses its purity during the process of descent into genesis. To complement and explain *De Antro* 11 p. 14.1, 12.14, I have used *Sententia* 29, in which Porphyry classifies the four major phases of the pneumatic body, as the soul obtains different substances. According to *Sententia* 29, the aethereal body is generated from the substances of the first five planets, and the solar and lunar bodies are obtained from the Sun and Moon. The earthly body consists of heavy and moist *pneuma* generated from exhalation (ἀναθυμίασις, *De Antro* 11 p. 12.27-30) in the sublunary region, reflecting the process of embodiment of the soul, as presented in *De Antro*. Lastly,

in this Chapter, I have discussed the Orphic poem preserved in *De Antro* 16 in order to analyse how Porphyry evaluates the deception of the divine principle through honey as a symbol of pleasure. Porphyry's analogy between Poros in Plato's *Symposium* and Cronos, who become inebriated by nectar and honey, respectively, indicates the dominance of irrationality in the soul.

In the first part of Chapter 4, I have discussed the various astrological exegeses of Homer's double gates provided by Porphyry, which is relevant to the journey of the soul through the sensible world. They are variously called the gates of Cancer and Capricorn or solstitial gates in the Mithraic cosmological model, the gates of the Sun by Homer, and the gates of the Sun and the Moon by the theologians. I have firstly engaged with Numenius' doctrine of the solstitial gates as preserved in *De Antro* (F 31 DP and F 32 DP) and Proclus' commentary on the *Republic* of Plato (F 35 DP), and then examined the gates of the Sun and the Moon in *De Antro*, which have received less scholarly attention. Regarding their astrological aspect, as presented in *De Antro* 22.10-14, I have argued that the gates of the Sun and the Moon are related to the diurnal and nocturnal rotations of the seven planets according to the planetary order. I have compared the ascending path of the soul towards the Sun to the escape of the liberated prisoner from the Platonic cave, which can be interpreted as the soul's union with the intelligible realm. At the microcosmic level the path towards the Sun refers to the soul guided by rationality, whereas the path towards the Moon refers to the soul under the guidance of its irrational part. Taking a further step, the discussion brought Porphyry's comments on the gates of the Sun and the Moon within the scope of his division of the noetic triad at the celestial level in his commentary on the *Timaeus* (F 79 Sodano), in which Porphyry mentions the dominant principles and goals of the Sun and the Moon.

In the second part of Chapter 4, I have examined the significant philosophical concepts in Porphyry's allegorical interpretation of Homer's image of Odysseus and Athena sitting under the olive tree and Odysseus' being stripped of his garments. I have argued that the core message of the treatise reflects Porphyry's identification

of the goddess Athena with *phronesis*, along with the olive tree, which Homer puts near the cave, symbolising *nous*, the intellect that generates the cosmos and permeates it. At the microcosmic level *phronesis*, by which the rational part of the soul is guided, inspires the soul to incline towards the level of Intellect that is, away from damaging influences of the body to which the soul is enslaved and which confuses it with desires, passions, fears and illusory impressions, and prevents it from attaining the intelligible realm. The body and its desires lead us to conflict and unjust behaviour in order to gain wealth, status, power, and pleasure. As set out earlier in Chapter 4, following Numenius, Porphyry with Plotinus reads the *Odyssey* as a whole in which Odysseus' laborious journey back to Ithaca and his escape from dangers, pleasures and other distractions along the way, symbolise the successful journey of the human soul to return to the 'fatherland' that is the realm of the intelligible. Homer's elaborate description of Odysseus' meeting with Athena, and of the cave of the nymphs and its surroundings, comes at an especially significant point in the poem. Having completed his long and laborious journey with the help of Athena/*phronesis*, Odysseus has returned to the place from which he started and in which he was born, and at Athena's suggestion he leaves all his material wealth and clothes in the cave. The Homeric hero, a soul who has stripped off his garments, is enlightened and liberated by wisdom, the ultimate goal of Neoplatonic philosophy.

I have suggested that Porphyry's identification of the goddess Athena with *phronesis* is an allusion to the cathartic virtues of *Sententia* 32, in which Porphyry discusses the four stages of the Neoplatonic doctrine of virtues. These stages gradually lead the soul to achieve human excellence through distinct mental endeavours. According to this doctrine, the cathartic virtues guide the soul away from bodily concerns. At this stage, *phronesis* directs the soul towards suppressing bodily thoughts and weaknesses, and operating in an introverted manner.

I have also examined two significant phrases in *De Antro* in connection with the purification of the soul or the ascent of the soul through the intelligible. The first

phrase 'stripped of his garments' (*De Antro* 35 p. 34.3) is a metaphor also used in *De Abstinencia*, meaning the soul's freedom from corporeal things. I have demonstrated that this phrase is closely connected with the soul's 'self-detachment' from the body, while still living its corporeal life, which Smith calls 'spiritual death, the idea which is also found *Sententia* 7 as being in the state of impassivity in this life. The second phrase 'the inexperienced or ignorant souls in the deeds of the sea and matter' (*De Antro* 35 p. 34.5-6) hints at a conditional situation which Porphyry interprets as Odysseus or the soul to be no more subjected to embodiment only when he has got rid of sea and matter. In this context, I have sought to what extent one should detach oneself from the earthly life according to Porphyry, who endorses a simple and self-sufficient life, and the minimum involvement with material things in *De Abstinencia* 1.35-1.37. Lastly, I have discussed Porphyry's doctrine of free will according to Porphyry's fragmentary treatise (F268 Smith), *On What Is In Our Power*, in which although only human souls have the power to choose the self-determined life, this life is not fully under our control because of the influences of inherited and acquired features in this world.

Having followed the journey of the soul from the realm of Matter to the intelligible realm, I have demonstrated the philosophical aspect of *De Antro* and Porphyry's ultimate aim of showing that 'philosophy is a way of life.' Whoever our guiding spirit be, whether Athena, Homer, Porphyry, or a certain Dillon philosophy, will make us better persons if we learn to perceive truths beyond what is said.

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