

From Author Presentation to Audience Perception: The Case of Empedocles
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Knowing about the lives of ancient authors has exercised many people's imaginations even in antiquity as illustrated by various biographies that have survived or are reported. Empedocles has received his own share of speculation. Aristotle emphasized his role as a scientist, or *physiologos* (*Poetics* 1447b17 ff.). The Neo-Platonists, on the other hand, underscored his theories of the soul and his connection to the Pythagoreans. There are even stray comments linking Empedocles to magicians, both as a *goēs* by Gorgias (DK 31A1 (§59)) and as a disciple of the Eastern Magi (Pliny *nat. hist.* 30.2.8-9). It is no wonder that earlier modern scholars hypothesized that different doctrines occupied Empedocles in different phases of his life, and thus separated the verses on the basis of subject matter into two poems, *Purifications* and *On Nature*. More recent interpretations have recognized the unity that underlies Empedocles' verses; this has led to the suggestion that Empedocles wrote only one poem (Osborne, Inwood), although not everyone is convinced (O'Brien, Kingsley). The three primary interpretations, however, of Empedocles remain, whether the scholar emphasizes magic, science, or religion. But how should our interpretations of text vary if we know how the author represents himself, and it is not one of these categories? In Empedocles' case, he presents himself as a god, albeit not as a Homeric god. This paper will establish in 15 minutes the sort of god that Empedocles says he is, and explore some consequences of this in interpreting his verses, specifically fragment 111, which is traditionally used to support the assertion that Empedocles is a magician.

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