

Wisdom and Rituals of Old: Divine Authority in Porphyry's *On the Cave of the Nymphs*
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On the Cave of the Nymphs (*Antr.*), which dates from the late third or early fourth century, is one of the few fully extant works by the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry. It is essentially a literary interpretation of eleven lines from the *Odyssey* (13.102-12), that is, an effort to understand a deeper meaning of Homer's description of the cave of the nymphs.

The bibliography on the *Antr.* is slight, and the most exhaustive treatments incorrectly evaluate the essay as being disjointed and confused. More importantly, modern scholarship has ignored specific interpretive features and nuances of the essay that place it firmly within the Platonic tradition.

My paper will approach the *Antr.* to amend these shortcomings. First, I shall offer my reading of the *Antr.* and contrast it with past readings. In doing so I shall argue that the treatise is unified and coherent, primarily because Porphyry consistently ignores the poet Homer as a source of information. Instead, he prefers to base his interpretation in authority that comes from ancient wisdom and ritual. Second, I shall explain how my reading connects Porphyry and the *Antr.* to an epistemology that is prevalent in the Platonic tradition, an epistemology in which ancient wisdom, and eventually ancient wisdom transferred through ritual, is highly regarded.