The aim of this article is to briefly discuss the ingenious interpretations of Od. 13.104 and 11.122–3 that were put forward by Numenius of Apamea. As our understanding of this fascinating second-century forerunner of Neoplatonism has significantly improved over the last years, Numenius’ importance is now generally recognized to be twofold. First, he was instrumental in establishing a framework within which numerous philosophers from Plotinus onwards would operate. Second, he skilfully employed allegoresis for pedagogical purposes, which not only helped to promote his exposition of philosophy, but also stimulated critical investigations into the nature of myth and poetry. In that, however, Numenius’ hermeneutics marks a serious departure from Plato: when embracing allegoresis, Numenius combined Platonicism with traditions sympathetic to the practice that Plato himself vehemently repudiated.

A remarkable feature of Numenius’ philosophy is his use of allegory and allegoresis for the purpose of expounding his views. Following the
established tradition, we may define allegory as a technique of composing a text (that is, a mode of expression) and allegoresis – as a technique of its reading (that is, a mode of interpreting). Let us illustrate this with some examples from Numenius. His portrayal (DP 18 = L 27) of the Demiurge as a ‘helmsman’ (κυβερνήτης) who sails on the ‘sea’ (θάλασσα) of matter is an example of allegory. His interpretation (DP 30 = L 46) of the Homeric Naiads (Od. 13.104) as ‘souls descending into generation’ (εἰς γένεσιν κοσμούσαι ψυχαί), on the other hand, is an example of allegoresis. As both these cases will be discussed below, suffice it to say here that in the former case Numenius figuratively presents an idea (acting, thus, as an allegorical writer), whereas in the latter case he unveils the hidden (symbolic) meaning of the poem (acting, thus, as an allegorical interpreter).

Crucially, however, when espousing allegoresis, Numenius defied Plato, who gladly expressed his views allegorically, but flatly rejected the practice of allegorical interpretation. Thus, for example, in the Republic Plato presents his famous allegory of the cave (514a1–517a7), but frowns upon any attempts to reveal the ‘hidden meanings’ (ὑπόνοιαι) of Homer’s poetry (378d3–8). Plato’s dismissal of allegoresis triggered many discussions among Platonists. For instance, Plutarch, who provides us with the vital information (De aud. poet. 19e–f) that by his time the earlier term huponoia was superseded by allegoria, is fairly ambivalent about allegoresis: he objects to it in his On Listening to the Poets, but practices it throughout his On Isis and Osiris. Importantly, there is no such ambivalence in Numenius, who frequently and consistently has recourse to allegoresis. A case in point is

3 The difference has been nicely put by J. Pépin, Mythe et allégorie. Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes (Paris, 1976), 488, according to whom the former consists in ‘hiding a message beneath the covering of a figure’ (‘cacher un message sous le revêtement d’une figure’), and the latter in ‘deciphering the figure to retrieve the message’ (‘décrypter la figure pour retrouver le message’). See further M. Domaradzki, ‘The Sophists and Allegoresis’, AncPhil 35 (2015), 247–58; M. Domaradzki, ‘The Beginnings of Greek Allegoresis’, CW 110 (2017), 299–321; and M. Domaradzki, ‘Democritus and Allegoresis’, CQ 69 (2019), 545–56.

4 In this study, two editions are used: E.-A. Leemans, Studie over den Wijsgeer Numenius van Apamea met Uitgave der Fragmenten (Brussels, 1937); and É. des Places, Numénius. Fragments (Paris, 1973). Although I provide my own translations, I have occasionally consulted R. Petty, Fragments of Numenius of Apamea (Westbury, 2012).

5 The relation between the two terms has been extensively discussed by Buffière (n. 2), 45–8; Pépin (n. 3), 85–92; J. Whitman, Allegory. The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 263–8; and C. Blönnigen, Der griechische Ursprung der jüdisch-hellenistischen Allegorese und ihre Rezeption in der alexandrinischen Patristik (Frankfurt, 1992), 11–19.

6 For example, in the passage cited above, Plutarch diagnoses (19f) that the allegorists ‘forcibly pervert’ (παραβιαζόμενοι καὶ διαστρέφοντες) the myths they purport to interpret.

7 For an example, see below, n. 16.
his innovative account of *Od.* 13.104 and 11.122–3, to which we shall now turn.

The two interpretations that are the focus of this article have been preserved by Porphyry in his *On the Cave of the Nymphs* (10 and 34), who incorporates Numenius’ views into his own allegoresis of the Homeric cave. Although this provides us with the invaluable context, it also makes Porphyry a somewhat problematic source for reconstructing Numenius’ original input, because it is not immediately clear when this third-century Neoplatonist actually quotes Numenius and when he merely paraphrases him. Furthermore, Numenius’ authentic contribution to Homeric allegoresis is difficult to separate from that of other thinkers, since Porphyry (rather vaguely) associates the first interpretation with ‘the Pythagoreans’ (*οἱ Πυθαγορεῖοι*; 8.11) and the second with ‘those surrounding Numenius’ (*οἱ περὶ Νομήνιον*; 34.6–7). Notwithstanding all this, Numenius’ paramount importance for the development of the Neoplatonist allegoresis of Homer’s *Odyssey* can hardly be impugned.

Given the challenges that the available evidence poses, it is advisable to place the extant testimonies on Numenius’ allegoresis of *Od.* 13.104 and 11.122–3 in the context of his other views. Thus, in what follows it will be suggested that, if Numenius’ interpretation of the Naiad nymphs is read in light of his account of ensoulment, and if his interpretation of the men who do not know the sea is read in light of his account of matter, then both these instances of allegoresis can be attributed to him with a great degree of probability. What emerges is a coherent picture of Homer’s eschatology: a hedonistic soul clothes itself in the wet garments of corporeality as it descends into the material world, but, after a cycle of atoning reincarnations, it disrobes as it returns to its noetic home.

While *Od.* 13.104 specifies that the nymphs to whom the cave is sacred are called *Νηϊάδες*, Porphyry cites (*De antro* 10 = *DP* 30 = *L* 46) an interpretation that identifies the Naiads with souls descending into *genesis* (that is, falling into the material world) owing to their becoming moist. This testimony undoubtedly provides us with a glimpse of

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8 Tellingly, des Places (n. 4) classified these two excerpts as *fragmenta* (30 and 33), whereas Leemans (n. 4) categorized them as *testimonia* (46 and 45).

9 In his classic discussion, Buffière (n. 2), 419, even went so far as to deny the relevance of Porphyry, claiming that, although *On the Cave of the Nymphs* ‘is signed by Porphyry’ (*est signé de Porphyre*), the latter ‘only popularized the thought of Numenius and Cronius’ (*n’a fait que vulgariser la pensée de Numénius et de Cronius*).
Numenius’ contribution to the ancient allegoresis of Homer, but it is somewhat challenging to determine what Numenius’ innovation precisely comprises. Porphyry says first (10.8–9) that we ‘specifically’ (ιδίως) give the name of Naiad nymphs to the ‘powers presiding over waters’ (τῶν ὑδάτων προεστώσας δυνάμεις), whereas they gave the name to ‘all souls in general that descend into generation’ (εἰς γένεσιν κατοικύσας ψυχῶς κοινῶς ἀπάσας). As the ‘they’ refers to ‘the Pythagoreans’ (8.11), the question of the Pythagorean roots of Numenius’ allegoresis has inevitably resurfaced, at least since the classic work by Armand Delatte.\(^\text{10}\) Of course, given the lack of reliable information on the Pythagorean allegoresis of Homer, no conclusive answer can be given.\(^\text{11}\) There are, however, at least two indirect arguments that provide fairly strong evidence for Numenius’ authorship of the above equation: on the one hand, it is justified in a manner that is consistent with Numenius’ method and, on the other, it sits very well with his account of ensoulment. Let us examine this briefly.

The aforementioned ‘Pythagorean’ interpretation is clarified by Porphyry (10.10–15) with several concepts that are explicitly attributed to Numenius:

'Ἡτούντω γὰρ προσεζόνειν τῷ ὑδατι τὰς ψυχὰς θεοπνῶ ὤντι, ὡς φησίν ὁ Νομενίμος, διὰ τούτο λέγαν καὶ τὸν προφήτην εἰρηκέναι ἐμφέρεσθαι ἐπάνω τοῦ ὑδάτος θεοῦ πνεῦμα τοῦ τε Αἰγύπτιος διὰ τούτο τοὺς δαίμονας ἀπαντας αὐχ ἵσταναι ἐπὶ στερεοῦ, ἀλλὰ πάντας ἐπὶ πλοίοι, καὶ τὸν Ἡλιον καὶ ἀκλόσ πάντας· οὕστινα εἰδέναι χρῆ τὰς ψυχὰς ἐπιποτωμένας τῷ ὕγρῳ τὰς εἰς γένεσιν κατοικύσας.

For they believed that the souls settle on water breathed-by-god [god-inspired], as Numenius says, who also maintains that this is why the prophet says that ‘the breath [spirit] of god was borne above the water’, and this is why the Egyptians place all daimones not on anything solid but all on a boat, the Sun and absolutely all the others, and that these ought to be understood as the souls who float upon moisture while descending into generation.

\(^{10}\) A. Delatte, *Études sur la littérature pythagoricienne* (Paris, 1915), 129–31. Delatte does not discuss the Naiad nymphs interpretation as such, but considers the ‘general theme’ (‘thème général’) of Porphyry’s allegoresis to be ‘manifestly of Pythagorean inspiration’ (‘manifestement d’inspiration pythagoricienne’) (129). This account has been convincingly challenged by Buffière (n. 2), 452–3 (see also n. 11 below). For an overview of the Pythagorean tradition to Numenius, see J. Dillon, ‘Pythagoreanism in the Academic Tradition: The Early Academy to Numenius’, in C. A. Huffman (ed.), *A History of Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge, 2014), 250–73.

\(^{11}\) Lamberton (n. 2), 31–43, who surveys the literature on the first Pythagoreans’ influence on the development of the allegorical tradition, finds the evidence for the early Pythagorean allegoresis of Homer to be ‘slim at best’ (43). With regard to the Naiad nymphs interpretation, he cautiously notes that Numenius’ authorship is ‘quite likely’ (71), but he does not pursue the matter further.
Porphyry ascribes to Numenius the view that the descending souls reside on water imbued with divine *pneuma* (‘breath’, ‘spirit’) and reports him to have buttressed this conviction with an allusion to Genesis 1:2\(^{12}\) and an interpretation of Egyptian religious belief. This use of a variety of sources to substantiate an opinion is remarkably consistent with what we know about Numenius’ method. Eusebius cites (*Praep. evang.* 9.7.1 = DP 1a = L 9a) Numenius’ famous postulate that when seeking the truth one should take into account diverse sources: from the ‘testimonies’ (μαρτυρίαι) of Plato, through the ‘teachings’ (λόγοι) of Pythagoras, to the ‘rites’ (τελεται), ‘beliefs’ (δόγματα), and ‘consecrations’ (ἵδρυσεις) of the Brahmins, Jews, Magi, and Egyptians. This suggests that Numenius would select those ideas that appeared to him useful for extracting ancient wisdom: Plato confirmed what Pythagoras revealed but the truth could also be discerned in the various cultural practices of non-Greek peoples. From this perspective, allegorizing the Homeric nymphs as souls drifting on water before incarnation does not seem particularly eccentric. Numenius drew on multifarious sources as he identified human souls with both Moses’ *pneuma theou* (‘spirit of God’) borne on water and the Egyptian *daimones* floating on boats. The Homeric Naiads presiding over waters fit well in the picture.

Although recourse to the authority of venerable tradition and foreign civilizations is not that original per se, the richness of Numenius’ sources is surely worth emphasizing.\(^{13}\) Numenius’ appropriation of the Old Testament sits very well with his recommendation that Jewish wisdom be utilized in the search for truth (see further DP 1b = L 9b, DP 1c = L 32, DP 8 = L 17, DP 9 = L 18, DP 10a = L 19 and DP 56 = L 34).\(^{14}\) While the same applies to Numenius’

\(^{12}\) It is possible that Numenius was here inspired by the Gnostics, on which see M. J. Edwards, ‘Atticizing Moses? Numenius, the Fathers and the Jews’, *VChr* 44 (1990), 69–72.

\(^{13}\) It has even given rise to the notorious controversy over Numenius’ ‘orientalism’. The leading proponent is undoubtedly H.-C. Puech, ‘Numénios d’Apamée et les théologies orientales au second siècle’, *Mêlanges Bidez* 2 (Brussels, 1934), 745–78. However, E. R. Dodds, ‘Numenius and Ammonius’, in *Entretiens sur l’antiquité classique* 5. *Les sources de Plotin* (Geneva, 1960), 1–32, who sought a more nuanced picture of Numenius’ position, ultimately concluded that Numenius ‘welcomed all the superstitions of his time, whatever their origin, and thereby contributed to the eventual degradation of Greek philosophical thought’ (11). For criticisms of excessive emphasis on Numenius’ ‘orientalism’, see Festugière (n. 1), 130–2; Merlan (n. 1), 99–103; and, more recently, M. Bonazzi, ‘Numenio, il platonismo e le tradizioni orientali’, *Xóipa: Revue d’études anciennes et médiévales. Hors-série* (2015), 225–40. For other balanced assessments, see Edwards (n. 1), 124–5; and Athanassiadi (n. 1), 201–2.

\(^{14}\) For a detailed and sober study of Numenius’ acquaintance with Jewish literature, see Edwards (n. 12), 64–75.
accommodation of the aforementioned Egyptian belief (see further DP 9 = L 18, DP 31 = L 43 and DP 37 = L 49), one can easily adduce parallel interpretations from the period. Thus, for example, Philo allegorizes the same verse from the Bible for his own purposes, when he deciphers (Gig. 22) the phrase θεοῦ πνεῦμα as signifying the ‘flowing air’ (ῥέων ἀήρ), that is, the third ‘element’ (στοιχεῖον) that ‘rides on the water’ (ἐποχοῦμενον ὕδατι), precisely on the basis of Genesis 1:2. Numenius’ explanation of the above-mentioned Egyptian religious belief, on the other hand, can be juxtaposed with the one we find in Plutarch, who clarifies (De Is. et Os. 364c) that the Egyptians pictured the Sun and the Moon as traversing their courses in ‘boats’ (πλοίοις) rather than chariots, thus, ‘hinting enigmatically at their nourishment and generation from moisture’ (αινιττόμενοι τὴν ἄφρ’ ὑγρόν τροφὴν αὐτῶν καὶ γένεσιν). Still, even if Numenius did take advantage of certain ideas that were already in the air, one can hardly deny the boldness of the interpretation that Porphyry credits him with: that the Naiad nymphs are souls resting on water is reflected in the Egyptian images of their deities as floating on boats and in the words of Moses about the divine pneuma borne on water. The next step is to provide a link between descending into generation and being wet.

Porphyry relates further that Numenius combined Heraclitus and Homer to establish a connection between moisture and pleasure. According to this testimony (De antro 10.16–17), Heraclitus said (DK 22 B 77) that for souls ‘to become moist is delight not death’ (τέρψις μὴ θάνατον ύγρησι γενέσθαι), and Numenius equated this ‘enjoyment’ (τέρψις) of the souls with their ‘fall into generation’ (εἰς τὴν γένεσιν πτῶσις). This identification of pleasure with humidity takes advantage of Heraclitus’ view that the fiery soul’s perdition results from its indulgence in hedonism (epitomized by excessive drinking), which leads to the dampening of the soul’s fire (see esp. DK 22 B

15 See D. Winston and J. Dillon, Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria. A Commentary on De gigantibus and Quod deus sit immutabilis (Chico, CA, 1983), 248. Although it cannot be proved that Philo played any role in the formation of Numenius’ positive assessment of Judaism, it cannot be ruled out, either. For a recent discussion, see G. E. Sterling, ‘The Theft of Philosophy: Philo of Alexandria and Numenius of Apamea’, StudPhilon 27 (2015), 71–85. Moreover, it may not be superfluous to note here that Philo, like Numenius, employed both allegory and allegoresis for the purpose of explicating his views; see M. Domaradzki, ‘The Value and Variety of Allegory: A Glance at Philo’s De gigantibus’, StudPhilon 31 (2019), 13–28.

16 See e.g. T. Hopfner, Plutarch. Über Isis und Osiris, Teil 2. Die Deutungen der Sage (Prague, 1941), 157–9; or J. G. Griffiths, Plutarch’s De Iside et Osiride. Edited with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary (Swansea, 1970), 426–7.
36, 117, 118). Thus, if Heraclitus said (DK 22 B 36) that ‘for souls it is death to become water’ (ψυχήσι θάνατος ὑδόρ γενέσθαι), then Numenius’ allegoresis of Heraclitus’ words (DK 22 B 77 = DP 30 = L 46) apparently consisted in replacing their literal meaning (‘souls are destroyed by water’) with a figurative one (‘souls are destroyed by delight’). The implication is that the soul retains its pneuma (that is, continues to be spirit), as long as it does not imbibe pleasure: sensual enjoyment moistens the soul and leads to its descent into a body. Hence, the soul’s wetness marks its entrapment in flesh.

However, this part of Porphyry’s testimony may appear somewhat uncertain. In Proclus’ Commentary on the Timaeus the same use of Heraclitus is explicitly attributed to Porphyry. When discussing the Porphyrian interpretation of the destruction described at Timaeus 22d3–5, Proclus reports (1.117.5–8) Porphyry to have quoted Heraclitus in support of his explanation of the death of ‘intellective’ (νοερῶν) souls in terms of their ‘becoming moist’ (ὕγρήσι γενέσθαι). This could prima facie suggest that it is Porphyry rather than Numenius who is responsible for the above citation of DK 22 B 77. However, two arguments speak in favour of Numenius’ authorship. First of all, we know that Numenius held Heraclitus in high esteem: Calcidius reports (In Tim. 297 = DP 52 = L 30) him to have explicitly praised the Ephesian philosopher. Thus, it is more than probable that Numenius did utilize Heraclitus for the purpose of his exposition: Porphyry may easily have used the same quotation from Heraclitus independently, or Proclus may be crediting him elliptically with a view that he culls from Numenius with approbation. Secondly, and...
far more importantly, Numenius’ use of Heraclitus accords very well with his account of ensoulment. Let us investigate this issue.

The final part of this testimony (De antro 10.18–20) contains an amalgamation of Heraclitus and Homer: the former’s words that ‘they live our death’ (ξῆν ἔκείνος τὸν ημέτερον θάνατον) are explained by the observation that ‘the poet calls those in generation “liquid”, because their souls are wet’ (διερούσι τούς ἐν γενέσει οντας καλεῖν τῶν ποιητήν τούς διύγρους τάς ψυχάς ἔχοντας). This coalescence of the views of Heraclitus (see DK 22 B 62) and Homer (see Od. 6.601) builds on the ambiguity of the adjective διερός, which makes it possible to associate being moist with falling into genesis and reveals that embodiment and hedonism are the death of the soul. The explication concludes with a telling analogy: ‘blood’ (αίμα) and ‘wet seed’ (διύγρος γόνος) are as dear to these descending souls as is water to plants. While it is clear that the passage ascribes to Homer the doctrine of incarnation, it must be somehow connected with Numenius’ account of the generation of the soul.22

Porphyry relates (Ad Gaurum 34.26–35.1 = DP 36 = L 48) that the soul’s entry into the embryo was of great interest to Numenius:

κάνταθα πολὺς ὁ Νομιμίνιος καὶ οἱ τὰς Πυθαγόρου ὑπονοιας ἐξηγούμενοι, καὶ τὸν παρὰ μὲν τῶν Πλάτωνοι ποταμῶν Ἀμέλησα, παρὰ δὲ τῶν Ἡσιοδοκα καὶ τῶν Ὄρφικος τὴν Στύγα, παρὰ δὲ τὰς Φερεκύδης τὴν ἐκρούν ἐπὶ τοῦ σπέρματος ἐκδεχομένων.

Here Numenius is important, as are the interpreters of Pythagoras’ hidden meanings who understand the river Ameles in Plato, the Styx in Hesiod and the Orphics, and the outflow in Pherecydes as semen.23

In his discussion of the ensoulment of human beings, Numenius allegorically identified the underworld rivers Ameles (Pl. Resp. 621a5) and Styx (Hes. Theog. 361 or DK 1 B 10 = Kern F 25), as well as

21 Which means ‘alive’ (Hom. Od. 6.201) and ‘wet’ (Ar. Nub. 337); for other examples of the latter meaning, see LSJ.
22 See esp. H. S. Schibli, Pherekydes of Syros (Oxford, 1990), 113–17. See also M. J. Edwards, ‘Numenius, Pherecydes and the Cave of the Nymphs’, CQ 40 (1990), 258–62; and H. Tarrant, ‘The Phaedo in Numenian Allegorical Interpretation’, in S. Delcommynette, P. d’Hoine, and M.-A. Gavray (eds.), Ancient Readings of Plato’s Phaedo (Leiden, 2015), 138–9.
23 In his otherwise excellent translation, J. Wilberding, Porphyry. To Gaurus on How Embryos are Ensouled and on What Is in Our Power (London, 2011), 32, renders the original ὑπονοια as ‘thought’, but ‘hidden meanings’ are clearly preferable given the allegorical context (thus, for example, Schibli [n. 22], 174; or Tarrant [n. 22], 139). Des Places (n. 4), 87, has ‘allegorical senses’ (‘sens allegoriques’); Petty (n. 4), 79, follows with ‘allegorical meanings’, E. Vimercati, Medioplatonicì. Opere, Frammenti, Testimoniame (Milan, 2015), 1433, suggests ‘allegorical thoughts’ (‘pensieri allegorici’); and G. Boys-Stones, Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to AD 250. An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation (Cambridge, 2018), 322, opts for ‘hints’.
the mysterious Pherecydean ‘efflux’ (DK 7 B 7 = Schibli F 87), with semen so as to show that souls descend into the human seed, which – as James Wilberding aptly notes – was apparently taken as ‘the fluid border between the sensible and intelligible world’.24 If the soul enters the embryo with the seed, then a connection between the material (‘corporeal’) and noetic (‘spiritual’) realm is necessary.25 This connection was provided by Numenius’ famous account of two souls in human beings. Porphyry relates (ap. Stob. Anthol. 1.49.25a = DP 44 = L 36) that Numenius distinguished two souls in humans: the ‘rational’ (λογική) one and the ‘irrational’ (ἄλογος) one. While the former is divine, the latter derives from matter. Though the details are unclear, Numenius apparently identified the soul originating from matter with seed so that the soul and semen were deposited simultaneously.26 Thus, his allegorical interpretation of the aforementioned rivers and outflow as σπέρμα linked ensoulment with incarnation: souls float upon semen, which carries them (like a river) to embodiment in matter (that is, into genesis). This suggests strongly that the whole interpretation of the Naiads as souls falling into generation was authored by Numenius: the descent into the material world begins with becoming moist, which is why the Naiads are souls settling on water before falling into the realm of becoming. That this allegoresis of Od. 13.104 comes from Numenius is corroborated by his depiction of matter and his allegoresis of Od. 11.122–3.

Given his philosophical background, it is hardly surprising that Numenius characterizes both matter (see esp. Calcidius, In Tim. 295–9 = DP 52 = L 30) and embodiment (see esp. Iamblichus ap. Stob. Anthol. 1.49.40 = DP 48 = L 40) as evil.27 Matter, in which souls become embedded, is the primary cause of souls’ corruption, for it is inherently irrational and unstable. Indeed, Eusebius has preserved Numenius’ telling descriptions of matter as being ‘irrational’

24 Wilberding (n. 23), 58. For brilliant discussions of Pherecydes’ ἐκροή, see M. L. West, Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient (Oxford, 1971), 25–6; and Schibli (n. 22), 114–17.
25 Reale (n. 1), 424, correctly points out that Numenius’ view of soul as ‘absolutely incorporeal’ (‘assolutamente incorporea’) makes it necessary for him to assume the existence of an intermediate phase (‘una fase intermedia’).
26 See Schibli (n. 22), 115; and Tarrant (n. 22), 139.
27 For discussions, see e.g. M. Baltes, ‘Numenius von Apamea und der platonische Timaios’, VChr 29 (1975), 247–57; Dillon (n. 1), 373–8; Deuse (n. 1), 62–8, 77–9; Frede (n. 1), 1050–4, 1070–4; Reale (n. 1), 423–4; Karamanolis (n. 1), 139–40; and, most recently, G. Boys-Stones, ‘Numenius on Intellect, Soul, and the Authority of Plato’, in J. Bryan, R. Wardy, and J. Warren (eds.), Authors and Authorities in Ancient Philosophy (Cambridge, 2018), 192–4.
(ἄλογος), on the one hand (Praep. evang. 15.17.3 = DP 4a = L 13), and as ‘having a desiring and flowing character’ (ἐπιθυμητικὸν ἥθος ἐχούσης καὶ ἱερούσης), on the other (Praep. evang. 11.18.3 = DP 11 = L 20). In light of everything that has been said so far, it is understandable why Numenius consistently allegorizes matter as water. Eusebius reports him to have frequently presented the generated world in terms of various aquatic images. Thus, for example, in the aforementioned fragment (Praep. evang. 11.18.24 = DP 18 = L 27), the Demiurge is a ‘helmsman’ (κυβέρνητης) who sails on the ‘sea’ (θαλάττα) of matter. In yet another fragment (Praep. evang. 15.17.2 = DP 3 = L 12), matter is a ‘river’ (ποταμός) that is ‘running violently and rapidly, deep and broad, unlimited in length and never-ending’ (ῥοώδης καὶ ὀξύρροπος, βάθος καὶ πλάτος καὶ μήκος ἀόριστος καὶ ἀνήνυτος). In still another fragment (Praep. evang. 11.22.1 = DP 2 = L 11), matter is that which is ‘between the waves’ (μετακυμών). These images of fluidity show, on the one hand, that, prior to receiving form, matter is capable of taking various forms and, on the other, that the material world is ever-changing. While water symbolizes, then, the ephemeral and malleable nature of everything that comes into being, an embodied soul is immersed in the surging sea of this genesis. With that, we come to the other testimony that will be briefly touched upon here.

Porphyry commends (De antro 34.6–10 = DP 33 = L 45) those ‘surrounding Numenius’ (περὶ Νουμήνιον) for the view that Odysseus is an ‘image’ (εἰκὼν) of a soul that ‘passes through [a series of] successive [stages of] generation and returns to those who [live] beyond every wave and [have] no experience of the sea’ (διὰ τῆς ἐφεξῆς γενέσεως διερχομένου καὶ οὕτως ἀποκαθισταμένου εἰς τοὺς ἐξω παντὸς κλωδῆνος καὶ θαλάσσης ἀπείρους). Numenius’ ‘associates’ must have included Cronius. Porphyry himself puts it in no uncertain terms earlier (De antro 21.3–4 = DP 31 = L 43) that Numenius and his ‘companion’ (ἔτοιρος) Cronius interpreted the cave as an ‘image’ (εἰκών) and ‘symbol’ (σύμβολον) of the cosmos. While hardly anything certain

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28 On the difficult phrase μετακυμώνες ἐχωμένην, see H. Whittaker, ‘Numenius’ Fragment 2 and the Literary Tradition’, SO 68 (1993), 96–9.

29 On the interchangeability of the two terms, see J. Dillon, ‘Image, Symbol and Analogy: Three Basic Concepts of Neoplatonic Allegorical Exegesis’, in R. Baine Harris (ed.), The Significance of Neoplatonism (Norfolk, VA, 1976), 247–62, esp. 254. Given the extent of the controversy that surrounds Numenius’ allegoresis of Homer, this article will not discuss his interpretation of the two ‘entrances’ (θύραι) to the cave (Od. 13.109–12) as the northern and southern gates of the zodiac through which the souls pass (DP 31 = L 43, DP 32 = L 44, DP 34 = L 47; and DP 35 = L 42), on which see Buffière (n. 2), 438–58; and Lamberton (n. 2), 66–72. N. Akcay’s recent Porphyry’s On
can be said about Cronius,\textsuperscript{30} this remark by Porphyry, and everything that has been said so far about Numenius, leave no doubt that Numenius allegorized Odysseus’ wanderings as symbolizing the soul’s exile to the material world.

What follows is an identification (\textit{De antro} 34.11–13) of ‘the men who know not the sea and eat no food mingled with salt’ (οἳ οὐκ ἰσασι θάλασσαν ἄνερες οὐδὲ θ’ ἀλεσσι μεμιμέονο εἴδαρ ἔδουσιν) at \textit{Od.} 11.122–3 with disembodied souls. The equation builds on the assumption that ‘the ocean, the sea and the waves [represent], also in Plato, the material constitution’ (πόντος δὲ καὶ θάλασσα καὶ κλύδων καὶ παρὰ Πλάτωνι ἡ ύλικὴ σύστασις). While this is clearly a reference to \textit{Politics} 273c2–e4, where god is the ‘helmsman’ (κυβερνήτης) who saves the ship of the universe from sinking in the ‘boundless ocean of unlikeness’ (ἀνομοιότητος ἀπειρον πόντον),\textsuperscript{31} it is consistent with Numenius’ portrayal of matter as water and his account of souls as floating on water to incarnation: those who have no knowledge of the ‘sea’ (that is, matter) are in fact souls that are no longer embodied (that is, ‘immersed in water and consuming brine’).

In connection with this, it is also worth noting that, in his \textit{Commentary on the Timaeus} (1.77.3–5 = \textit{DP} 37 = \textit{L} 49), Proclus cites Numenius’ celebrated interpretation of the Atlantis story as representing a ‘conflict’ (διάστασις) between two different souls: the ‘more noble’ (καλλιόνων) ones who are ‘nurslings’ (τροφίμων) of Athena, against others who ‘work at generation’ (γενεσιουργῶν) and ‘belong to the god presiding over generation’ (τῷ τῆς γενέσεως ἑφόρῳ θεῷ προσήκουσι).\textsuperscript{32} While the god that oversees \textit{genesis} is Poseidon (see \textit{Pl. Criti.} 113c2–3 and Procl. \textit{In Plat. Tim.} 1.173.14–15), he is obviously also the lord of the sea (see, for example, Hom. \textit{Il.} 15.190), who delays

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\textsuperscript{30} Vimercati (n. 23), 1460, n. 62, observes that it is difficult to say whether Cronius was ‘a fellow disciple (condiscopo) or a pupil (allievo) of Numenius’. However, Athanassiadi (n. 1), 195, aptly points out that the ‘precedence normally assigned to Numenius in our sources implies seniority’. Be that as it may, Dillon (n. 1), 379, is clearly right that Cronius ‘is plainly not of the same level of importance’.

\textsuperscript{31} Let us recall that, according to Eusebius (\textit{Praep. evang.} 11.18.24 = \textit{DP} 18 = \textit{L} 27), one of the images that Numenius employed to describe the Demiurge was precisely that of a helmsman. See further Buffle (n. 2), 425; Dodds (n. 13), 18; Dillon (n. 1), 370–1; and Deuse (n. 1), 66–7.

\textsuperscript{32} The above translation partly follows Dillon (n. 1), 378, and partly Tarrant (n. 18), 170. For discussions, see esp. Edwards (n. 22), 258–62; and Tarrant (n. 18), 60–84. See also Baltes (n. 27), 242–3; and Akcay (n. 18), 149–50.
Odysseus’ homecoming (by making the hero wander the waters of *genesis*). Thus, in line with his doctrine of two souls in human beings (see above), Numenius interpreted the battle between the Athenians and Atlanteans as an allegory of the choice between wisdom (personified by Athena) and generation (personified by Poseidon). The former entails return to the intelligible world, and the latter drifting on the sea of *genesis*. Accordingly, Athena leads to liberation from the body, and Poseidon to enslavement in the body.

Let us recapitulate. This article has argued that, when taken together, the above testimonies do warrant attributing to Numenius the authorship of allegorical interpretations of *Od.* 13.104 and 11.122–3 (even though neither of them is explicitly ascribed to him alone). Numenius’ allegoresis coheres entirely with his other views on the generation of the soul, the misfortune of embodiment, and the evil nature of matter. In his allegorical interpretation of Homer, Numenius used various sources and fused diverse concepts with a view to explicating the cyclical journey of the soul. The following is the gist of his allegoresis. The humidity of the cave symbolizes the material world, and the wetness of the soul symbolizes embodiment. As souls descend into the realm of becoming (ruled by Poseidon), they become exposed to all sorts of hedonistic temptations. At first, these souls only float on water (as can be seen in the iconography of Egyptian religion and in the words of Moses), but as they are immersed in the sensual reality and embrace the life of pleasures, they sink deeper and deeper into the depths of *genesis* (the ‘sea’ of delight and illusion). When they dissociate from the body, these souls return to the noetic world (where they ‘neither know the sea nor eat food mixed with salt’). Odysseus is an εἰκών of a soul achieving just that: the hero is liberated from the cycle of reincarnation, stripped of the body, and restored to the unchanging intelligible realm of disembodied souls that have nothing to do with the material world and no longer have to battle with the body and its desires.

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